

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 19 September 2019
in the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

Present:

Brian Bartlett	- Primary School Governors (Academy)
Penny Chislett	- Post-16 Education
Elisa Entwistle	- Alternative Provision Schools
Andrew Harris (Chair)	- Community Representative
Kirsten Harrison	- Secondary School Headteachers (Academy)
Kate Hawkins	- Special School Governors
Amanda Horniman	- Early Years Providers
Dan Johnson	- Primary School Headteachers (Maintained)
Lisa Jones	- Primary School Headteachers (Maintained)
David Metcalf	- Primary School Headteachers (Maintained)
Will Morgan	- Secondary School Headteachers (Academy)
Sarah Murphy	- Trade Unions
Alexander Norman	- Secondary School Governors (Academy)
Clare Steel	- Special School Headteachers
Rob Wilcock	- Secondary School Governors (Academy)

Observers: Cllr Richard Boyles, Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years

Officers:

Tim Browne, Director of Education
Philip Haslett, Head of Education Strategy and Development
Neil Egles, Finance Manager, Schools Strategy and Capital
Suzanne Hall, Finance Business Partner
Gareth Vine, Universal Commissioning Manager
Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser and Clerk to the Forum.

Apologies:

Cllr Patrick Molyneux, Cabinet Member: Economy, Education and Skills
Colin Belford, Secondary School Headteachers (Maintained)
Matthew Bishop, Primary School Governors (Maintained)
Sara Byrne, Primary School Governors (Maintained)
Peter Hales, Primary School Governors (Academy)
Rachel Howie, Gloucester Diocese
Liam Jordan, Clifton Diocese
Gwyneth Keen, Early Years Providers
Jacqui Phillips, Secondary School Governors (Academy)

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

Steve Savory, Primary School Headteachers (Academy)
Adam White, Secondary School Governors (Maintained)
Stuart Wilson, Secondary School Headteachers (Academy)

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made

22. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

23. MINUTES

23.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 June 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23.2 The following points were made in regards to the actions from the last meeting:

23.2.1 Clawback

As requested at the last meeting of the Forum, officers had sought clarification from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), on how any clawed back surplus funds were allowed to be used. Officers had also checked whether or not it was permissible for any school balances clawed back from mainstream schools to be used in the High Needs Block.

It was reported that the Schools Forum and the local authority had flexibility to agree a mechanism for clawing back unused school balances from maintained schools and to agree how to use any funding clawed back. However, any mechanism should have regard to the principle that schools should be moving towards greater autonomy and should not be constrained from making early efficiencies to support their medium-term budgeting.

It was the experience of officers that schools holding large surplus balances would have plans in place for the funds. It was pointed out that some secondary academies were holding substantial surplus balances. It was made clear by the ESFA that they had no mechanism to claw back funding from academies and there was currently no intention for them to create one.

Having considered the claw back mechanism in more detail, it was decided by the Forum that in order to treat all schools equitably and align with the view of the DfE that schools should be moving towards greater autonomy, the clawback provision would be removed from the Gloucestershire County Council Scheme for Financing Schools.

23.2.2 Lobbying and Media

Philip Haslett, Head of Education Strategy and Development, explained that in light of the recent Government funding announcements the local authority would no longer be moving forward with the funding events which were due to take place in each of the six constituencies, as had been previously planned.

24. GOVERNMENT EDUCATION FUNDING SPENDING REVIEW

24.1 Philip Haslett, Head of Education Strategy and Development, gave a presentation on the details of the recent funding announcement and what this could mean for Gloucestershire.

24.2 The Forum was informed that the headlines were:

- £14 billion of extra funding in primary and secondary education between now and 2022/23;
- An investment of £700 million in Special Educational Needs Disabilities (SEND);
- £400 million of funding for 16-19 education providers such as further education and sixth form colleges;
- £66 million for Early Years, targeted at increasing the hourly rate paid in nurseries;
- £1.5 billion each year to continue to fund additional pension costs for teachers.

24.3 Neil Egles, Finance Manager - Schools Strategy and Capital, explained that the continued protections would ensure that all mainstream schools saw a funding increase in pupil funding; capped schools would see the most gain as they moved towards the National Funding Formula (NFF) much more quickly.

24.4 The Forum noted that the Institute of Fiscal Studies had stated this level of funding should be sufficient to reverse cuts to schools of 8% over the past decade. There was recognition amongst members that this represented a healthy package and it had been received very positively by the sector. Officers reported that they had undertaken some initial modelling and were cautiously optimistic that the funding package would be sufficient to deliver the requirements of the funding formula. However, further detail was needed to develop the funding model and thus fully assess what this meant for Gloucestershire schools.

24.5 Members of the Forum acknowledged one particular area of concern in the funding announcements - the potential impact on schools of the pay award for newly qualified teachers (starting salary due to rise to £30,000.00 in 2022/23). Officers explained that it was not yet clear how this would be delivered, but it would have a wider affect to pay scales and as such, would increase existing staff costs; further detail was awaited.

25. SCHOOL FUNDING 2020/21

25.1 Philip Haslett, Head of Education Strategy and Development, introduced the report on school funding in 2020/21. He explained that the recent announcements and the

associated changes to school funding that were required, meant that the ESFA had not been able to provide indicative Dedicated Schools Grant budgets; changes to the NFF rates; or changes to the Authority Pro-Forma Tool rules that local authorities had to follow when submitting their school budget formulas. Officers anticipated that this information would be received in time for an update to be presented at the next Schools Forum meeting on 14 November 2019.

- 25.2 Officers explained that just prior to the publication of the report they had received further details from the ESFA, and those details were set out in the report. A key point was that the Government had confirmed its intention to work closely with schools, local authorities and others on a move to a 'hard' NFF for schools where budgets would be set on the basis of a single national formula. The Forum noted the changes to the NFF as outlined in the report.
- 25.3 The Forum noted that the mobility factor (targeted additional funding to the schools with the highest levels of pupil turnover outside the usual points of entry), had not been included in Gloucestershire's 2019/20 school funding formula. However, it would now be included in the 2020/21 formula due to it being included as a formula factor within the NFF. Previously this factor had been based on historic spend, but it would now be based on a formula. Some schools in Gloucestershire would receive an allocation of funds in accordance with this formula factor; however, detail on the formula that would be used for this was needed for a full understanding of how this would work.
- 25.4 The Forum noted that officers would be undertaking further modelling work throughout October as further details were announced by the Government. More information on what the announcements meant for Gloucestershire schools would be available at the next Forum meeting on 14 November 2019.
- 25.5 The Forum was able to make decisions on the amount of the growth funding to be allocated and the de-delegations for 2020/21.
- 25.5.1 The Forum agreed a top-slice from the Schools Block for growth in 2020/21 of £1.429M, subject to being updated for any change in the basic need Age Weighted Pupil Unit rates for 2020/21.
- 25.5.2 The Forum considered the proposals for de-delegations. Sarah Murphy, Trade Union representative, presented the report on Local Authority Teaching Union Facilities 2019. She emphasised the importance of the de-delegation provision for union facilities, explaining that the funding allowed teaching unions to provide Gloucestershire schools access to effective statutory and collective consultation, bargaining and individual representation from trained and accredited local teaching union officials. School leaders and managers also had access to a valuable resource in the resolution of workplace issues and disputes. Local officers were able to respond to the large proportion of queries for informal advice from members, via phone and email, which resulted in issues being dealt with without having to involve the school or without escalation to any formal procedure. The Chair on

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

behalf of the Forum thanked the Trade Union representative for her report. The Forum noted the report.

25.5.3 In response to a question, it was clarified that secondary schools and academies could buy-in union facilities through the local authority's traded services arrangement. There was a mixture of some schools opting to buy-in the trade union facilities arrangements and others that did not. The Trade Union representative pointed out that it was a statutory requirement for all local authority maintained schools to meet statutory and procedural entitlements to union representation, and the de-delegation for union facilities had been established as being the most cost effective way of schools meeting this requirement.

25.5.4 Members of the Forum felt that it would be useful to receive benchmarking information on the arrangements and de-delegation amounts for union facilities, in other comparable authorities. It was agreed that the Forum would be provided with this information during the next budget setting round in September 2020.

ACTION: Philip Haslett/Sarah Murphy

25.5.5 The Forum's maintained schools' representatives present at the meeting (by sector) agreed de-delegation at the per pupil rates shown in the report for: In-year increases in pupil numbers – primary; Targeted intervention – primary; Union facilities – primary; Local authorities' duties (primary and secondary).

26. HIGH NEEDS

26.1 Philip Haslett, Head of Education Strategy and Development, introduced the report which provided an update on the year to date High Needs budget.

26.2 The Forum was informed that the High Needs Block remained in a deficit position, with a deficit carry forward of £2.88M from 2018/19 and an in-year forecast of £4.26M, total of £7.14M. The areas of significant overspend were being driven by a continued rise in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) which had resulted increased place costs for further education colleges; independent special schools; and special schools. Officers explained that by the Forum agreeing the change to the '1 in 75' rule, to '1 in 40' (this rule compensates schools that attract a disproportion number of children with high needs), the costs to the High Needs block had reduced by £2M (i.e. preventing an additional £2M being added to the total figure of in-year deficit for High Needs).

26.3 It was recognised that there has been a rise in complexity and depth of need in children and young people, which had increased the numbers of EHCPs and the associated costs. In addition, schools were less equipped to deal with increased need due to the reductions in budgets, and were therefore seeking funding via an EHCP. Officers outlined the intention to look at models to try to reduce the reliance on EHCPs to support children and young people with additional needs.

26.4 In response to a question, the Head of Education Strategy and Development explained that in order for the budget to become sustainable, costs to the High

Needs block relating to EHCPs needed to reduce by £2-3 million. This represented an approximate 10-20% reduction in the number of EHCPs.

- 26.5 Tim Browne, Director of Education, stressed that there was not enough funding available to meet the level of need. Each EHCP cost approximately £6,000 (this figure related to the undertaking of the statutory process only). He added that better use needed to be made of the available resources, without getting locked into a restrictive statutory process. This would enable support to be tailored and apportioned earlier and more accurately.
- 26.6 There was some concern raised around the plans to reduce the number of EHCPs. However, there was also recognition that the plans to reduce the number of children with an ECHPs were founded on the development of a new model to make funding available to schools in a more accessible way, allowing for earlier intervention and support. There was recognition that if the new model was to be successful then the Early Help support provided by school and the LA team would need to be enhanced from the current way of working.
- 26.7 It was noted that in the new year, the Schools Forum Working Group's focus would be on the improvement of the graduated pathway, and the EHCP process.
- 26.8 The Forum was informed that work being done to reduce exclusions had been effective. In 2018/19 the work of the inclusion service and the restorative practice team contributed towards an 18% reduction in permanent exclusions. Support and intervention from the inclusion service avoided around 80 permanent exclusions, which would have cost the High Needs budget approx. £1M. It was noted that the Schools Forum Working Group would be meeting in October and November 2019 to consider the development of new approaches to managing exclusions, with a view to running a pilot in the Spring Term.
- 26.9 It was reported that if the recently announced additional funding for education was apportioned in a similar way to the additional Government funding that was announced in December 2018, £200 million of funding would be retained by the DfE to support the free school programme and £500 million allocated to High Needs. If this was the case, Gloucestershire could expect to receive around £5 million for High Needs revenue. If all £700 million was allocated to High Heeds revenue, Gloucestershire could expect to receive around £7 million for revenue.
- 26.10 Officers emphasised the point that if the funding was received at either of those levels it would not be a panacea, but would bridge the gap. It would allow for respite to implement the High Needs Strategy, and would bring the budget back into balance. New models still needed to be developed, as the current way of working was not sustainable. Officers updated the Forum on the progress made against the key areas of activity in the High Needs Strategy, which were being delivered to reduce costs and improve the service available to children and young people.
- 26.11 The Forum noted the update.

27. EDUCATION CAPITAL

- 27.1 Gareth Vine, Universal Commissioning Manger, introduced the report on the annual budget for the 2019/20 Children and Families Capital programme. He explained that in-between the date of the publication of the report, and the date of the Forum meeting, the forecast spend against the Capital Scheme changed. Therefore, the Forum was provided with an update different to that set out in the report.
- 27.2 He explained that the capital schemes were forecast to spend approximately £21.339M in 2019/20. The revised forecast indicated a slippage of £6.676 million from the original spend for this year of £28.015 million. The Forum was advised that this was due primarily to more accurate programmes developed by project teams for newer schemes they developed, together with some delays encountered through the planning process. Whilst this indicated a reduced forecast spend for this financial year it did not impact on the cost of an individual project or its delivery date.
- 27.3 In response to a question, it was confirmed that none of the free school bids were for special schools. Clare Steel, Special School headteacher representative explained that she was deeply concerned that there were not enough special school places for the children who needed them. In response, Tim Browne, Director of Education, explained that he understood the concerns and made reference to there being a national SEND crisis. He commented that in other areas, where the local authority had increased the number of special schools/places, the number of children needing a place still continued to grow, and the budget deficit continued to increase, thus indicating that increasing the number of places available could not be the only solution. He emphasised that there needed to be a systemic change, specifically how the available resources could be used more effectively, to improve outcomes for children and young people with special needs.
- 27.4 The Forum noted the project updates as outlined in the report.

Chairman

Meeting concluded at 3.32 pm