

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 9 January 2020
in the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

Present:

Brian Bartlett	- Primary School Governors (Academy)
Colin Belford	- Secondary School Headteachers (Maintained)
Matthew Bishop	- Primary School Governors (Maintained)
Sara Byrne	- Primary School Governors (Maintained)
Penny Chislett	- Post-16 Education
Lyn Dance	- Special School Head Teacher
Elisa Entwistle	- Alternative Provision Schools
Peter Hales	- Primary School Governors (Academy)
Andrew Harris	- Community Representative
Kirsten Harrison	- Secondary School Headteachers (Academy)
Kate Hawkins	- Special School Governors
Amanda Horniman	- Early Years Providers
Dan Johnson	- Primary School Headteachers (Maintained)
Gwyneth Keen	- Early Years Providers
David Metcalf	- Primary School Headteachers (Maintained)
Will Morgan	- Secondary School Headteachers (Academy)
Sarah Murphy	- Unions
Alexander Norman	- Secondary School Governors (Academy)
Jacqui Phillips	- Secondary School Governors (Academy)
Steve Savory	- Primary School Headteachers (Academy)
Clare Steel	- Special School Headteachers
Rob Wilcock	- Secondary School Governors (Academy)
Stuart Wilson	- Secondary School Headteachers (Academy)

Officers:

Tim Browne, Head of Service, Commissioning

Neil Egles, Schools Finance Manager

Suzanne Hall, Finance Business Partner Children and Young People

Philip Haslett, Head of Education Strategy and Development

Apologies:

Lisa Jones, Primary School Headteachers (Maintained)

Chris Spencer - Director of Children's Services

Adam White, Secondary School Governors (Maintained)

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

36. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were received.

37. MINUTES

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

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the chair subject to the amendment below: -

Minute 32.9: 'and to understand more fully why the needs of some pupils could not be met by maintained special schools'. It was agreed that this should be changed to 'could not be met by publicly funded schools'.

38. GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION 2020/21

The Finance Business Partner Strategic Finance set out the overall position for children's services, and reminded Forum members that the consultation was open until 17 January 2020 so that they could respond individually if they so wished.

The Forum noted the report and had no comment to make on the county council budget proposals.

39. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2020/21

The Head of Education Strategy and Development presented the detail of the report which identified that the funding position for 2020/2021 represented an increase in the total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of £27.6m (6.1%) from the current 2019/20 DSG.

The Head of Education Strategy and Development informed the Forum that after taking into account the previously agreed growth fund of £1.5m, the funds remaining in the schools block settlement were enough to allow each formula factor rate and the minimum funding levels to be implemented 100% at the National Funding Formula (NFF) level and for the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) to be set at +1.84%.

The Forum noted that this was in line with the factor rates that were reported at the indicative budget stage at the 14 November 2019 Forum meeting; the only change being to use the updated census data numbers which produced the summary formula and which were included in the report at Annex A.

It was explained that this left a balance of £0.882m in the 2020/21 schools block. The Local Authority (LA) proposal was that this balance be used as a one off contribution towards the high needs block. It was for the Schools Forum to agree, or not, to this proposal. However, it was noted that if the Schools Forum did not agree to the proposal the DfE would adjudicate.

The Forum was informed that the LA proposal was broken down into three parts; that the balance on the schools block to be used by the High Needs block as follows:-

- Support for management of attendance - £43,000,
- Additional capacity for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - £16,000,
- Use £0.823m to partially offset the costs of the 1 in 40.

For information the Schools Forum had received an additional report discussing attendance and the additional MASH capacity and the Head of Service for the MASH was in attendance to engage with members with regard to the MASH.

The modelling exercises and discussions that had been undertaken by officers were explained to enable members to understand the factors underlying the LA proposal.

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Forum members engaged in a robust debate to test the principles underlying this proposal, what alternative options had been considered, and whether this would be the most effective use of this money. The Director of Education, Head of Education Strategy and Development, the Finance Manager – Schools Strategy and Capital and the Finance Business Partner Strategic Finance responded to the many questions from Forum members.

The main points of the discussion were: -

- That the outcome from the modelling demonstrated that there was not a way of apportioning the £0.882m balance in the schools block such that all schools would receive an equal amount. If allocated it would result in some schools being on the National Funding Formula and others above it;
- Concern from forum members that using this money in this way undermined the national argument that High Needs were under funded;
- That if this money was allocated through the funding formula a number of schools would not receive any money;
- That the DfE was clear that only the NFF factors could be used; local funding formulas or one off allocations of funding were not allowed;
- That the forum had previously agreed that the LA should allocate funding to match the NFF as far as was possible and that was what the proposed formula would do;
- That the forum needed to carefully consider the relationship between the schools and high needs funding blocks in its decision making as they were intrinsically linked;
- That it was difficult to support any proposal that took money away from the schools block;
- That the current funding of the 1 in 40 from High Needs block was a direct transfer of High Needs funding to the schools block and the £0.882m transfer would partially support this;
- Members acknowledged the significant pressures on the high needs block;
- Members recognised that pupils with high levels of need needed support;
- That some schools, both primary and secondary, were disproportionately affected by the number of high need pupils on their roll(s);
- That utilising some of the surplus amount to support the MASH and attendance work to the benefit of all schools was a positive option.

Following a robust and challenging debate, acknowledging that the LA put forward this proposal in good faith to support the High Needs block and therefore vulnerable pupils, and that the alternative options put forward by some Forum members were not viable, **the Schools Forum agreed to recommend that the balance on the schools block could**

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be moved to the High Needs block to be used as a one-off contribution in 2020/21 as follows:

- **Support for management of attendance - £43,000**
- **Additional capacity for MASH - £16,000.**
- **Use £0.823m to partially offset the costs of the 1 in 40.**

It was noted that a consultation process on options going forward for High Needs would be required later this year; this would necessitate difficult discussions.

The Forum was informed that the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) included funding for on-going responsibilities of Local Authorities for the statutory duties that they hold for both maintained schools and academies. The allocation was based on a formula using pupil numbers (90%), free school meals (Ever 6, 10%) with an area cost adjustment applied. The indicative rate per pupil for 2020/21 was £31.94 and there has been an increase of £20,123 related to the net increase in pupil numbers.

It was explained that these funds covered the following costs:-

Central School Services Block	£M
Copyright licences	0.493
Schools Forum	0.127
Admissions Coordination	0.750
Centrally Retained Duties	1.209
TOTAL	2.579

It was noted that the cost of copyright licences reflected the 2020/21 charge; there was no change to Schools Forum and Admissions and the balance was adjusted against centrally retained duties.

The Schools Forum agreed to recommend the allocation of the central school's services block as set out above.

The Schools Forum agreed to recommend that the council agree the school funding formula for 2020/2021 as set out in Annex A of the report.

40. EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2020/21

The Head of Education Strategy and Development explained the rationale for the recommendations in the report.

Following a short debate the Schools Forum accepted that the recommendations were an acceptable way forward with the caveat that it be acknowledged that the GLD (good level of development) also applied to primary schools (Reception) and this should be borne in mind when allocating this funding.

The Schools Forum therefore agreed to recommend that:-

1. **The Early Years carry forward balance of £1.47 million be used as follows:**
 - **Retain £0.22 million (15%) of the underspend to provide contingency should any unforeseen costs arise;**

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- **Allocate £1 million to providers based on the full academic year hours (option 1) and adjust for deprivation factors (option 3);**
- **Retain £0.25m to support early year improvement projects to improve the GLD. Details of projects to be provided to members of School Forum.**

2. The additional allocated 8p per hour be added to the hourly rate passed to Early Years providers for both 2 year olds and 3 and 4 year olds. And that there is a consultation with Early Years providers on a number of options in respect of the early years formula including the deprivation and quality supplement payments for 3 and 4 year olds.

41. HIGH NEEDS

The report to the Schools Forum identified that the forecast for the High Needs budget was showing increased expenditure of £122,200 since the last Schools Forum meeting in November 2019. This meant that the forecast in-year deficit would rise to £7,035,700 and the cumulative High Needs deficit to £9,919,300.

Schools Forum members acknowledged that in a needs-led environment it was difficult to predict the future level of need. However, members agreed that it was important that the budget provided a much more accurate forecast than in 2019/20. This would provide a more stable basis from which to be able to deliver and make longer term plans for recovery. Importantly it would also enable the council to provide a more accurate picture of the funding pressures to the Department for Education (DfE) and the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Members noted that at the current level of overspend the LA would be asked by the DfE and ESFA to submit a recovery plan.

In response to questions the Schools Forum was informed that following feedback from the working group on the proposed approach to funding inclusion and early intervention, the scope and length of the proposed pilot have been revised to ensure greater stability and time to test the model. There has also been agreement from Cheltenham Headteachers to pilot the approach. A further discussion was taking place on the 10th January 2020, with the Cheltenham Association of Headteachers (CASH), to finalise the details. It was acknowledged that it would be important to keep the Alternative Provision sector informed on the progress of the pilot.

The Schools Forum agreed to recommend: -

- **That the High Needs budget for 2020/21 is based on a continued rising level of need, resulting in 355 additional funded EHCPs;**
- **That a formal consultation on High Needs spending is planned and delivered to report at the September 2020 schools forum meeting;**
- **That we commence a pilot of the proposed approach to funding inclusion and early intervention.**

42. SCHOOLS FORUM WORKPLAN 2020

The Forum noted the workplan.

43. F40

There were no updates at this time.

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Chairman

Meeting concluded at 4.10 pm