

# GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 21 June 2017  
in the Council Chamber - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

## **Present:**

Colin Belford	-	Secondary School Headteachers
Melissa Bradshaw	-	Special School Headteacher
Martin Doidge	-	Primary School Governors
Andrew Harris	-	Secondary Head Teachers
Gillian Hayward	-	Secondary School Governors
Amanda Horniman	-	Early Years Providers
Dan Johnson	-	Primary School Headteachers
Lisa Jones	-	Primary School Headteachers
Gwyneth Keen	-	Early Years Providers
Elizabeth Knox	-	Secondary School Governors
Karen Lewis	-	Primary Head Teachers
Ian Marshall	-	Primary School Governors
Cllr Brian Robinson	-	Alternative Provision Schools
Rosy Savory	-	Clifton Diocese
Andrew Steward	-	Trade Unions

**Observers:** Cllr Richard Boyles – Cabinet Member: Children and Young People

**Also in Attendance:** Jackie Kelly, Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers  
Clare Steel, Gloucestershire Association of Special School Headteachers  
Chris Widden, Gloucestershire Governors' Association

**Officers:** Linda Uren, Commissioning Director: Children and Families  
Stewart King, Lead Commissioner for Education and Skills  
Tim Browne, Head of Education  
John Reilly, Specialist Adviser (High Needs)  
Suzanne Hall, Finance Business Partner  
Molly MacLeod, Development Manager, Restorative Approach  
Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser

**Apologies:** Graham Doswell, Primary School Governors  
Rachel Howie, Gloucester Diocese  
Emma Jarman, 14-19 Provision  
Will Morgan, Secondary School Headteachers  
Sara Morris, Primary School Governors  
Marie Owen, Special School Governors  
Steve Savory, Primary Head Teachers  
Jim Stenson, Secondary School Governors  
Stuart Wilson, Secondary Head Teachers

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## **26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **27. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

## **28. MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting of 16 March 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **29. A LOCAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR CHILDREN - FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION IN LIGHT OF THE GENERAL ELECTION OUTCOME**

- 29.1 The Forum discussed the Education Planning Session, which was held on 11 May 2017. At the session a wide range of perspectives about how the education system might evolve over the next few years were shared and consideration was given to how everyone could work together to get the best outcomes for children and young people in Gloucestershire.
- 29.2 The Forum considered how the key issues identified at the Planning Session could be taken forward. It was noted that Colin Belford, Secondary headteacher representative, would be meeting with representatives of the Local Enterprise Partnership, to discuss opportunities for work-based training for young people, particularly those at risk of exclusion, and for capital investment.
- 29.3 It was agreed that a working group would be set up to look into producing guidance for schools on multi academy trusts and other forms of collaborations involving different mechanisms. Martin Doidge, Amanda Horniman, Lisa Jones, and Ian Marshall, all agreed to be part of the group.  
**ACTION: Stewart King**
- 29.4 It was noted that there may be no role for the Forum from 2018/19 on mainstream school funding. As a result, the Forum's future in its current form was uncertain. Consequently, there was support for the Forum to eventually evolve into an education partnership. In recognition of this it was agreed that there would be a standing item on the Forum's meeting agenda of relevance to this wider remit. This had commenced with the High Needs report on this meeting's agenda. In relation to the wider remit, the group of Gloucestershire school leaders who were invited to the Planning Session on 11 May 2017, were also invited to participate in this part of future Forum meetings.  
**ACTION: Joanne Bolton**

### **30. INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS**

- 30.1 Linda Uren, Commissioning Director: Children and Families, gave an outline on the findings of the Ofsted inspection which took place between 27 February and 23 March 2017. Whilst there were examples of some good work, the inspection identified substantial challenges in the safeguarding and child protection practice, and this was graded as 'inadequate'. The Forum heard about the improvement programme in place, which was being worked through with schools, partners and the safeguarding network.
- 30.2 The Commissioning Director: Children and Families, informed members of the Forum that she would retire in August 2017; Alison Williams had been appointed as the Interim Director of Children's Services until then.
- 30.3 The Chair on behalf of the Forum, took the opportunity to thank Linda Uren for her very valuable involvement with the Forum over the years, and wished her well for the future.

### **31. HIGH NEEDS**

- 31.1 The Forum received a detailed report and presentation on the Development of a Strategic Plan for High needs. (For information – A copy of the presentation slides has been uploaded to the Council's website, and a copy is included in the signed minute book).
- 31.2 Stewart King, the Lead Commissioner for Education and Skills, explained that the assumption was that the National Funding Formula for High Needs would go ahead on something close to the proposal set out in the December 2016 consultation paper. He made the point that Gloucestershire was a 'loser' on the National Funding Formula proposals. As a consequence the likely position was a cash standstill over the period 2017/18 to 2020/21.
- 31.3 The budget position for High Needs was not sustainable past 2018/19 and beyond with spending pressures/rising trends right across the High Needs block. Officers emphasised that radical changes would be needed in how needs were assessed and met and how the available funding was prioritised.
- 31.4 The Forum noted that John Reilly, current interim headteacher at Laker's Academy, would be employed by the authority full time from September, to work on developing the Strategic Plan for High Needs. John Reilly attended the Forum meeting to share his initial thoughts.
- 31.5 The Lead Commissioner for Education and Skills referred to the design principles for a new model for High Needs which were outlined at Annex B to the report. He explained that if the programme was successful it would mean that needs were understood and plans were good; schools and other providers were confident and

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able to meet additional needs; and the county wide system would effectively support children in their local communities including those with complex needs.

31.6 The Forum considered different ways of managing High Needs within the context of rising demand with a strictly limited resource and very limited flexibility. There was a wide-ranging discussion on the ideas being put forward, and the following points were raised:

31.6.1 The number of children needing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was rising year on year as an increasing number of children were coming into the reception year with complex special needs. It was reported that each EHCP cost £5,000, and there was evidence to suggest that the specific 1:1 teaching assistant support requirement in some EHCPs was not always effective in meeting needs. Officers explained that there was a need for a different approach and they outlined to the Forum what this could mean.

31.6.2 There was a degree of support amongst Forum members for pursuing the idea of reducing the number of EHCPs through the devolving of funding to schools via the Resource Allocation System (RAS) for needs as a whole. However, there was recognition that if this approach was taken then the expectations of parents over the level of support for their child would need to be managed carefully. It was also acknowledged that there would be some children who would still need 1:1 teaching assistant support.

31.6.3 It was anticipated that this approach would eventually result in there being approximately 1000 fewer EHCPs. A member of the Forum did raise the issue as to how it would be ascertained that a child's needs were being met without an EHCP. In response, the Lead Commissioner for Education and Skills provided assurances that under this approach the needs of the child would still be understood. He added that there could be a design element within the RAS which would provide a threshold to identify when a child did need an EHCP.

31.6.4 The Forum was informed of the plans for In-County (complex needs), the key areas of focus would be children with Social, Emotional & Mental Health difficulties and Autism Spectrum Disorder. The plan was to invest to extend the IRIS/Alternative Provision approach via individualised packages and connect across education, social care and health.

31.6.5 The Forum discussed the vision for Alternative Provision. The Lead Commissioner for Education and Skills explained that the plan was to significantly reduce the number of permanent exclusions to 0%. This would be undertaken by having a bedrock of good, inclusive in-school provision behaviour and relationship management. There would be an individualised package for each pupil; the support would be shorter and more intensive, and would have a strong focus on therapeutic interventions. Schools would 'own'/direct the alternative provision. He reported that there was an emerging view that a single countywide model was not feasible, and that we need to explore area-based solutions. Some Forum members expressed concern about how this would work, and reference was made to reasons

why some children may not be able to attend mainstream settings. It was acknowledged however that there would be a revised offer for students that did not fit mainstream, or who needed intensive support.

- 31.7 The Forum heard from Molly Macleod, Development Manager Restorative Approach, who gave an outline of the key features of the restorative practice approach. This was an evidence based approach, which used a core set of beliefs, principles and a way of being with people that would build and maintain healthy relationships, a sense of community and a shared sense of accountability. It was reported that evidence from elsewhere in the country, particularly in Leeds, indicated that the restorative approach greatly benefited schools in terms of behaviour management, which had a direct impact on reducing exclusions. Pilots were taking place at a secondary school and two primary schools in the county. Linda Uren, Commissioning Director: Children and Families added that consideration would need to be given as to how restorative practice could be rolled out for a whole system approach. The Forum suggested that to start with, the restorative practice approach should be introduced into at least one primary school and one secondary school in each district. It was agreed that officers would discuss this with their primary and secondary colleagues.

**ACTION: John Reilly/Stewart King**

- 31.8 There was a degree of support amongst Forum members for the new ideas being put forward. However, there were also some concerns expressed by Forum members about the risk of not being able to properly meet the needs of children with SEND/the quality of provision dropping as a consequence of the increasingly limited resources.

- 31.9 The Forum acknowledged that developing a High Needs strategy was a major piece of work. In recognition of this the Forum asked to be provided with a plan showing the milestones/decision points in the High Needs programme, and also an outline of the projects taking place.

**ACTION: Stewart King.**

- 31.10 It was also agreed that there would be a standing item on High Needs on each future Forum's meeting agenda.

**ACTION: Joanne Bolton**

- 31.11 It was agreed that the Lead Commissioner for Education and Skills would speak to Clare Steel, Chair of GASSH, following the meeting, to discuss how representatives of special schools could be involved in any project groups.

**ACTION: Stewart King**

## **32. OUTTURN AND SCHOOL BALANCES 2016/17**

- 32.1 Neil Egles, Schools Finance Manager, presented a report on the 2016/17 Outturn position for Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and non-DSG, and maintained school balances at the end of the 2016/17 financial year.

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- 32.2 The Forum was informed that the outturn position was a net overspend of £1.152M representing 0.28% of the 2016/17 DSG budget. A further £5.694M of balances were remaining from 2015/16 resulting in the total DSG balances at the end of 2016/17 being £4.542M representing 1.10% of the 2016/17 DSG.
- 32.3 The Forum noted the use of the DSG balances at the end of 2016/17 as set out in the report.
- 32.4 The Forum noted that 208 maintained schools were in surplus, and 15 were in deficit. 123 mainstream schools (58%) held revenue balances at the end of 2016/17 above the claw back thresholds (5% of ISB Secondary/ 8% of ISB Primary). The excess amount above the thresholds represented £7.1M (41%) of the total £17.3M mainstream revenue balances held.
- 32.5 It was reported that the Council's Deficit Scrutiny Group had also reviewed maintained schools holding surplus balances relating to the financial year 2016/17. Schools with the largest balances had been asked to provide the reasons for their surplus and their plans for future expenditure. The Forum noted that the senior officer group was satisfied with the plans provided, and that the group would continue to monitor the schools to ensure planned expenditure took place as identified in their submission.
- 32.6 The Forum discussed whether claw back should be applied to maintained school balances at the end of the 2016/17 financial year. The Forum was reminded that any funds clawed back would need to be allocated through the formula in the following year. This could result in a position where some of the clawed back funds had to be reallocated back to schools it was clawed back from.
- 32.7 The Forum was of the view that the best method of reviewing excess surplus continued to be through the work of the Council's Deficit Scrutiny Group. The Forum therefore agreed that no claw back should be applied to maintained school balances at the end of the 2016/17 financial year. However, the Forum again decided that it would be prudent for a claw back provision to continue to feature in the Scheme for Financing Schools, but that claw back would be instigated in exceptional circumstances only.
- 32.8 The Forum was informed of the Children and Families outturn position as outlined in Annex B of the report. The Forum noted that the outturn position was an overspend of £3.83M. This was due to the sustained increase in the demand for social care, and the resulting pressures and overspends within children's services.

### **33. F40**

The Chair confirmed that there was no F40 update, as an announcement on the national Funding Formula was still awaited.

### **34. MEETING DATES 2018**

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34.1 The Forum noted the 2018 meeting dates as outlined below. The meetings commence at 2pm in Shire Hall:

Thursday 11 January 2018  
Thursday 15 March 2018  
Thursday 10 May  
Thursday 21 June  
Thursday 20 September  
Thursday 15 November

34.2 It was agreed that the future meeting dates would be circulated and published on the Schools Forum webpage.

**ACTION: Joanne Bolton**

**Chairman**

Meeting concluded at 4.05 pm