

Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum, Queen's Park High School, Chester, 3 July 2017 (approved at Schools Forum meeting 9 October 2017)

Present:

Sue Anderson

Hilary Berry

Cheryl Bullen

David Charlton (Chair)

David Curry

Sarah Curtis

Ian Devereux-Roberts (sub for Chris Priddey)

Kate Docherty

Steve Dool

Greg Foster

John Freeman

Kerry Forrester (sub for Sarah Worthington)

Sarah Lee

Kath Lloyd

Samantha Myers-Whittaker

John Murray

Sue Pearson

David Rowlands

Katie Tyrie

Harry Ziman

Representing:

PVI (Private, voluntary and independent) early years' providers

CWAPH Chair

Primary headteachers

Secondary headteachers

Secondary headteachers

Primary headteachers

Primary headteachers

Primary headteachers

Academies

Unions

Secondary governors

Primary headteachers

Academies

Primary governors

Special headteachers

Academies

Primary governors

Secondary governors

Nursery headteachers

Academies

Officers:

Natalie Cole

Charlotte Fenn (Clerk)

Paul Plested

Official observers:

Councillor Meardon

Observers/public:

None

1 Introductions and apologies

Apologies were received from Paula Adolph, Marie Allen (not reported at meeting), Carol Gahan, Duncan Haworth, Kerry Kirkwood, Luci Jones, Geoff Wright, Caroline Vile (not reported at meeting), Sarah Worthington and Sue Yates.

David Charlton reported that Marie Allen, the Russet School, had been elected as Special Academies representative and Geoff Wright had been re-elected as Union representative.

2 Minutes and matters arising of last meeting

2.1 Part two minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2017

The part two minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2017

Item 3 Education Funding: Stage two consultation

David Charlton reported that he and a colleague had meet with Nick Gibb only, as opposed to DfE Ministers recorded in the minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2017 were agreed as a correct record subject to the above amendment (page 5, 4th paragraph).

2.3 Matters Arising

Harry Ziman sought clarification as to who had responsibility for Queen's Park High School's deficit on becoming an Academy. Officers confirmed that the DfE had treated their conversion as a sponsored Academy and therefore the deficit was the LA's responsibility. It was noted that it had been funded from LA funds and not DSG.

David Curry asked if there was any further update regarding the direction of travel in relation to the National Funding Formula (NFF). Officers confirmed that they had not received any further NFF information from the DfE.

Forum members sought clarification regarding the public section pay cap of 1% overall, and a reference by HR at a recent workshop to teachers receiving a 2% pay increase. Officers were unable to clarify the situation; however Paul Plested agreed to look further into their query.

3 High Needs sub group – update

John Freeman, High Needs sub group Chair, provided a verbal overview of discussions and areas covered at the sub group meetings. Minutes from the 20 April meeting had been shared in the interest of transparency.

It was noted that the group had meet twice (20 April and 16 June) with a further meeting scheduled for 17 July. The first two meetings had concentrated on gaining a clearer understanding of what high needs funding was available, current spend, reasons for the increase in demand, impact of the High Needs National Funding Formula and implications of the proposed alternative provision free schools. The group had also looked at the work being done by the Cheshire West Education Improvement Board (CWEIB) on improving inclusion across the borough, the benefits of Satellite classrooms, joint working between special schools and their local primary and secondary school and the planned High Needs Strategic review.

John Freeman acknowledged that progress had been slow and alternatives to the SEN funding proposals opposed by Schools Forum at the March 2017 meeting had not yet be found; however this would be the main focus for the 17 July meeting.

David Charlton, as Schools Forum Chair, agreed to share the work being done by the High Needs sub group with the CWEIB.

4 Maintained School Balances Financial Year 2016-2017 and Academy Balances 2015-2016

Natalie Cole introduced the report which informed the Forum of the final outturn position of CWAC maintained schools and tabled appendix A which reported balances for CWAC Academies.

Forum members questioned what the recovery timescales were for schools in deficit. Natalie Cole reported that normally it would be three years but some were over five years.

Questions were raised as to how comparable the balances were with other Local Authority academies. It was noted that they were difficult to compare as they were the published figures at a point in time and did not represent future spending plans or pressures. It was acknowledged that Academies may well be being cautious due to the uncertainties around the national funding formula.

David Charlton sought Forum members' opinion as to whether the Academies data was useful and should be provided again next year. The consensus was that the data was useful and should continue to be provided to Schools Forum annually.

Resolved that Schools Forum note

- i. the outturn position and movement in balances for both schools and academies; and
- ii. the mechanisms in place to support schools with deficit balances (maintained schools only).

5 2017-2018 School Funding Arrangements – National Data Comparison

Natalie Cole introduced the report which provided an overview of the national analyses of schools block funding formulae.

Forum members' attention was drawn to the main observations from the data under paragraph 5. It was noted that there was little movement across the factors in terms of use by Local Authorities, values and proportions of overall funding applied, which was likely due to the pending move to a national funding formula.

Resolved that the Schools Forum note the comparison between the national data and Cheshire West and Chester's data.

6 Trade Union Facilities – charges to central budget

David Charlton introduced the paper which set out the planned expenditure from the trade union facilities budget which included a request from the NASUWT for additional funding.

John Murray declared an interest as The Chester Catholic High School received funding for the ASCL representative.

Greg Foster was invited to comment on the proposal. Greg Foster was not in support of allocating additional funds to the NASUWT and questioned whether it was the Schools Forum's remit to decide how the funds were allocated.

It was acknowledged that there was currently no protocol on allocating funds for facilities time and dealing with requests for changes to allocations. It was noted

that HR had made representation for changes in the past and it was felt that future requests should be made to Schools Forum by a HR representative.

The group felt the national executive role, taken on by the current representative, should not be funded by CWAC and should be funded by the union and there was no evidence of increased membership that would support an increase to the NASUWT allocation.

Resolved that the Schools Forum

- i. not support the request for additional reimbursement to the NASUWT (vote: unanimous); and
- ii. tasked Officers with agreeing a protocol with the unions on the allocations for facilities time and when requests could be made for changes.

7 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2016-2017 – Final Outturn

Paul Plested introduced the report which set out the final outturn position for centrally held DSG budget. It was noted that the final outturn position was better than forecasted at the Third Review in March giving over to an underspend.

David Charlton questioned why the High Needs overspend was lower than forecast, was this due to Panel being tougher? Officers reported that it was largely down to prudent forecasting; a contingency for top up funding had been built in for extra pupils and part year effect meant some charges would hit next financial year. However it was noted that there would still be pressures on the High Needs budget moving forward.

Resolved that the Schools Forum

- i. note the final outturn on the 2016-2017 centrally held DSG; and
- ii. endorsed the retention of the unspent £0.672m from the 2016-2017 allocation in reserves to offset forecast pressures in high needs in 2017-2018 and if not required, to be considered as resources available to set the 2018-2019 budget (vote: unanimous).

8 Annual review of Schools Forum membership constitution and terms of reference

Charlotte Fenn, Schools Forum Clerk, reported that Officers have determined that the pupil ratio did not warrant a revision to membership at this time and no formal revisions to the Schools Forum regulations have been issued by the DfE.

Resolved the Schools Forum note that there are no changes to the current constitution and terms of reference other than updating outdated agency and service references.

9 Any Other Business

9.1 Early Years Funding Consultation

Natalie Cole reported that the Early Years reference group met last week to review the formula factors; there had been no consensus to move away from the current formula factors.

The group were proposing to hold a consultation in the Autumn Term once the reference group had received and reviewed the DfE guidance on supplements etc.

Katie Tyrie, who was on the reference group, raised concerns regarding possible legal challenges from parents due to not being able to provide the increase in entitlement from 15 hours to 30 hours as no additional funding was being allocated. It was difficult to manage parental expectations, in particular with children with medical needs and one to one support.

It was acknowledged that there was a need to look at different ways of providing support as there was no additional funding. Officers agreed to seek clarification regarding Early Years specialists support and report back at the next meeting.

9.2 Schemes for Financing Schools (SFS)

Natalie Cole reported that there were no statutory revisions to the SFS.

10 Next meeting

It was noted that the Schools Forum Finance sub group meeting on Tuesday 11 July was likely to be cancelled as Officers had not yet received the National Fair Funding announcement from the DfE.

Next Schools Forum meeting Monday 9 October 2017 Queen's Park High School
4.30 - 6.30.