

Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum, Queen's Park High School, Chester, 12 February 2018

Approved by Schools Forum 9 July 2018

Present:

Marie Allen
David Charlton (Chair)
David Curry
Steve Dool
Kate Docherty
Kerry Forrester (sub for Cheryl Bullen)
John Freeman
Carol Gahan
Duncan Haworth
Philip Hopwood
Luci Jones
Kath Lloyd
Kathryn Magiera
John Murray
Sam Myers-Whittaker
Sue Pearson
Sue Yates
Harry Ziman

Representing:

Academies - Special
Secondary headteachers
Secondary headteachers
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Primary headteachers
Primary headteachers

Secondary governors
Primary governors
Primary governors
Special governors
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Primary governors
Dioceses
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Special headteachers
Primary governors
Secondary headteachers
Academies - Primary/Secondary

Officers:

Natalie Cole
Charlotte Fenn (Clerk)
Mark Parkinson

Official observers:

Observers/public:

1. Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received from Anna Jones, Sue Anderson, Hilary Berry, Cheryl Bullen, Sarah Curtis, Ian Devereux Roberts, Councillor Meardon, Katie Tyrie and Caroline Vile.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising of Last Meeting

2.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 Item 2.2.1 Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF) for 2018-2019

Forum members asked if a new Early Years Minister had been appointed following the recent cabinet reshuffle and the letter drafted by Councillor Meardon sent. As far as anyone was aware no minister had been appointed as yet; the matter regarding to whom the letter should be sent was left for Councillor Meardon to pursue.

2.2.2 Item 4 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Allocations for 2018-2019 and Budget Setting

In response to the request for statistics on exclusions and comparisons with our statistical neighbours, Mark Parkinson confirmed that data had been requested but not yet received; the Schools Forum Clerk was asked to follow up on this action.

Natalie Cole reported that modelling as to the impact when more schools hit the de-minims for 2019-2020 had been presented to the Finance sub group. It was noted that it would still be affordable and would not have a detrimental impact on other schools due to the 0.5% cash increase.

2.2.3 Item 7 Any Other Business - Academy Representative Vacancy (primary/secondary)

David Charlton reported that no nominations for an academy representative had been received by the January deadline. Academy members reported that they were aware of colleagues who were interested in representing Academies on the Schools Forum but had not yet been nominated by their Trust. It was decided that the deadline be extended to mid-March and the Schools Forum clerk was asked to recirculate the request for nominations.

3. Early Years Funding Formula for 2018-2019

Natalie Cole took Forum Members through the report which detailed the proposed budget allocation for the early years block and funding of the two, three and four year old entitlements for 2018-2019.

Natalie informed Forum members that the only change to the formula was the increase in the base rate. Forum members' attention was drawn to appendix B and the factsheet, which had been produced for providers, which showed the allocations for each of the early years funding elements and the proposed budgets for 2018-2019.

Forum members sought further information regarding the central spend funding in particular the £400k allocated to Early Years Consultants. Mark Parkinson responded that the figures included salary on costs, the placement officer Sue Lawson was responsible for the take up strategy, the Early Years Consultants, lead by Sarah Lister, worked with early years providers, nurseries and child minders carrying out moderation, looking at quality of provision and good practice. It was noted that the Early Years Workers were based in Childrens Centres. Offices agreed to provide a breakdown of the £400k and the number of early years providers and child minders.

It was noted that the Early Year subgroup would be reviewing the use of the formula funding in due course.

David Charlton informed Forum members that although Katie Tyrie, Nursery Heads representative, had been unable to attend the meeting she had emailed to say that she supported the proposal.

David Curry informed the group that, in the absence of Sue Henderson, he was happy to support the proposal as it was broadly in line with what had been discussed by the Early Years sub group.

Resolved that the Schools Forum approved the proposed increase in base rate funding for 2018-2019. (Vote: unanimous).

4. Special Educational Needs (SEN) Funding for Mainstream and Special Schools – Funding from the High Needs Block 2018-2019

Natalie Cole introduced the report which provided an update for Schools Forum on proposed changes to allocations from the High Needs Block for 2018-2019 for commissioned places and top up funding.

Natalie drew Forum members' attention to paragraph 3 which outlined a number of recommendations by the High Needs sub group which had been endorsed at previous Schools Forum meetings.

Forum members' attention was drawn to paragraph 5 which outlined the proposed commissioned places for 2018-2019. It was noted that most of the special schools were full and the commissioned numbers broadly mirrored where pupils were.

Natalie referred members to paragraph 10 which outlined the proposed changes to special schools band funding rates. It was noted that the Education and Skills Funding Agency, in response to the LA's request to disapply the permitted -1.5% regulations, required the LA to gain the agreement of the schools affected by the proposals. Natalie reported that agreement had been sought from the schools affected, three schools had refused to agree; two schools were not affected as the permitted -1.5% reduction applied in their case.

Mark Parkinson informed Forum members that it had been agreed at the High Needs sub group that a letter should be sent out to the three schools asking them to explain their decision to the sub group and advising them of the financial impact if they refused to agree to the proposals. School Forum members asked for the letter to include an acknowledgement that it was being sent with their support.

The group had a frank discussion regarding the schools' decision not to agree to the proposal and the financial impact. It was acknowledged that the three schools may not be fully aware of the impact of their decision or the financial pain other schools would be experiencing. If the efficiency factor proposal was not adopted the overspend would continue to grow and the situation would still need resolving for 2019-2020 resulting in a reduction in top up rates for mainstream schools in future years.

Forum members acknowledged the amount of work done by the High Needs sub group in recommending the package of measures to address the High Needs spend. John Freeman, who chaired the High Needs group, informed Forum members that the group had tried to be fair to all sectors and constructive with the proposals put forward, none of the options considered were particularly palatable. Sue Yates pointed out that for some of those on the group the impact on their own school was significant.

Philip Hopwood sought confirmation as to which three schools had not agreed. Mark Parkinson report that the three were Greenbank, Dorin Park & The Russett.

Officers were optimistic that the schools would agree to the proposal, once the consequences and impact on other schools had been explained.

Natalie drew Forum members' attention to table 2 which provided a breakdown of commissioned places in other provisions. It was noted that there was no change to places for resource provision. Natalie reported that following the amalgamation of West Cheshire College and South Cheshire College CWAC were no longer responsible for commissioning places as the college now came under Cheshire East.

Harry Ziman sought clarification as to whether the reduction to sixth form commissioned places would have an impact on the ability for pupils to access a place. Natalie responded that this would not restrict places; payment would only apply when a SEN pupil attended.

Forum members' attention was drawn to paragraphs 7-9 which outlined the changes to resource provision funding following changes by the ESFA to the funding mechanism for pre-16 places.

David Charlton put to the vote proposals two and three together (commissioned places in other provisions and changes to resource provision funding) and proposals one and four (commissioned places in Special schools and changes to special school band funding rates).

Resolved that the Schools Forum agreed the four proposals within the report on financial arrangements for pupils with special educational needs in 2018-2019:

- i. Commissioned places in other provisions and Changes to Resource Provision funding (vote: unanimous);
- ii. Proposed commissioned places in Special schools and proposed changes to special school band funding rates (vote: unanimous); and
- iii. that the letter sent to Greenbank, Dorin Park and The Russett acknowledged that it had the full support of the Schools Forum.

5. Central Spend budgets 2018-2019

Natalie Cole introduced the report which outlined the proposed level of prescribed central spend budgets for 2018-2019. Forum members' attention was drawn to paragraph 4 which outlined the net decrease for central expenditure on children under five.

Resolved that the Schools Forum approved the proposed changes to the level of central spend budgets for 2018-2019 for the activities defined in the Section 251 statement. (vote: unanimous).

6. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2017-2018 Forecast Third Review

Natalie Cole introduced the report which provided an update on the financial forecast outturn position for 2017-2018 for centrally held DSG as reported at the Third Review.

Forum members' attention was drawn to paragraph 3 which summarised a number of key variances which contributed to the net overspend for 2017-2018 of £0.180m.

Resolved that the Schools Forum note the Third Review position on the DSG.

7. Any Other Business

Non-teaching staff pay award

Duncan Howarth raised concerns regarding rumours of a proposed pay raise, from 1 April, for some non-teaching pay scales of around 9% and the impact it would have on school budgets. It was believed that the proposal was currently with the Unions. Officers

were unable to provide any further information but agreed to look into it further and ask HR to send out clarification.

8. Next meeting

Next meeting 19 March 2018 - there were no proposed items for this meeting and unless any urgent business should arise this meeting would be cancelled.

Next meeting 9 July 2018.