

Minutes of Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum held at Christleton High School, Christleton, on 10 December 2019 - approved 14 January 2020

Members	Representing	Attendance
Schools and Academies		
Alan Brown	Primary headteachers	Attended
Julie Chambers	Primary headteachers	Attended
Sarah Curtis	Primary headteachers	Apologies
Ian Devereux Roberts	Primary headteachers	Attended
Kate Docherty	Primary headteachers	Attended
Duncan Haworth (Chair)	Primary governors	Attended
Kath Lloyd	Primary governors	Attended
David Nield	Primary governors	Attended
Vacancy	Primary governors	Vacancy
Vacancy	Primary governors	Vacancy
David Curry	Secondary headteachers	Attended
Mike Holland	Secondary headteachers	Apologies
Bryn Heeley	Secondary headteachers	Substitute
John Freeman	Secondary governors	Attended
David Rowlands	Secondary governors	Attended
Mike McCann	Special headteachers	Attended
Phil Hopwood	Special governors	Attended
Katie Tyrrie	Nursery headteachers	Attended
Andy Stewart	PRU	Attended
Stephanie Cade	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Amanda Harrison	Academies - mainstream	Absent
Luci Jones	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Jason Lowe	Academies - mainstream	Apologies
Lyndsay Watterson	Academies - mainstream	Apologies
Vacancy	Academies - mainstream	Vacancy
Marie Allen	Academies - special	Apologies
Non Schools		
Paula Adolph	PVI early years providers	Absent
Sue Anderson	PVI early years providers	Attended
Kathryn Magiera	Diocese	Absent
Caroline Vile	Diocese	Absent
Greg Foster	Unions	Absent
Geoff Wright	Unions	Absent
Rob Pullen	CWAPH	Attended
Vacancy	16-19 providers	Vacancy
Non-voting Observers		
Councillor Nicole Meardon	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Apologies
Officers in attendance		
Mark Parkinson	Director of Education and Inclusion (job share)	
David McNaught	Director of Education and Inclusion (job share)	
Natalie Cole	Finance Manager	
Charlotte Fenn	Clerk	
Public/Observers		
Chris Priddey	Sandihay Primary	

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were noted.

Duncan Haworth welcomed David McNaught, Director of Education and Inclusion job share with Mark Parkinson, to the meeting. David was due to officially start in January but was attending key meetings as part of his induction.

2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting

2.1 To agree the minutes from the meeting held 8 October 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on the 8 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 Item 1 Introductions and apologies - Schools Forum Vacancies

Charlotte Fenn reported that three nominations had been received for the Academies vacancy and an election was currently being conducted, the deadline for ballot papers was Monday 16 December. It was noted that no nominations had been received for the two primary governor vacancies prior to the original deadline which had been extended to Friday 13 December; one nomination had subsequently been received. Rob Pullen was asked to bring this up with CWAPH to encourage governors to put themselves forward.

2.2.2 Item 3 Apprenticeship levy

Duncan Haworth reminded Forum members that any feedback or questions regarding the apprenticeship levy should be directed to Rosemary Hodgson, HR Officer.

2.2.3 Item 5 Implementing mandatory minimum per pupil funding levels Government consultation

Duncan Haworth reported that the Forum's response had been submitted but the outcome of the consultation had not yet been published because of purdah.

2.2.4 Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) 2019-2020

Duncan Haworth informed Forum that over 100 schools had attended the briefing sessions and a further session, for bursars, was to run in the New Year.

2.2.5 Item 9 Early Years Provider Hub

Sue Anderson asked for an update on the Early Years Provider hub as nothing had been communicated to PVI providers. Natalie Cole reported that her understanding was that the current contract was to be extended in order to process provider payments in January. Natalie agreed to send out a communication to update PVI providers.

3. Indicative Dedicated Schools Grant Allocations for 2020-2021 and Initial Budget Setting Proposals

Natalie Cole introduced the report which provided details on the provisional allocation figures for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2020-2021.

Natalie referred Forum members to paragraph four and the table containing the final DSG 2019-2020 and indicative 2020-2021 allocation. It was noted that the net increase in DSG funding of £10.245m included a 20 percent reduction (£297k) in the protected historic commitments element of the Central School Services block; Forum members were made aware that £1.3m was at risk of being removed in future years.

Natalie reported that demands on the High Needs block continued to rise. These demands could be covered this year by reserves but reserves going forward would be minimal and not able to cover the increase in demand.

Forum members' attention was drawn to paragraph 10 and the Schools block funding formula proposals approved, in principle, by Cabinet on 27 November.

Natalie reported that the review of split site factor was in progress. Schools had been contacted to provide the actual costs incurred in order to better reflect the additional costs incurred exceptionally for a small number of schools; a further report would be brought back to Forum in January.

Forum members were reminded that the financial modelling in appendix C and D was based on last year's pupil numbers and would be updated following the receipt of the census data and allocations in December.

Natalie went through the policy options outlined in appendix B, which included a proposal for LA funding to replace some of the reduction to the Central Schools Services block funding, subject to Council approval in February 2020.

David Neild made reference to the Council's 'Play your part consultation' and asked how likely was it that the Council would support the proposal to fund part of the Central Schools Service block reduction (ref appendix B 6b). Officers responded that no decisions would be made until the Council budget was set in February 2020.

Clarification was sought regarding LA funding increasing staff costs (ref appendix B 6d-e). Mark Parkinson explained that this funding was to cover the funding gap in existing staff costs (including SEN and Education Psychologist teams) which previously had been covered through vacancy management but this was no-longer sustainable. Questions were raised as to how staffing levels compared to other LAs. Mark responded that these teams were no larger than other LAs but were stretched dealing with the number of children in the system.

Natalie referred Forum members to the table on pages 14-15 which outlined the historic commitments within the Central Schools Services block and requested Forum's views and comments on the following proposals to reduce commitments by £100,000:

- Withdraw Duke of Edinburgh activities funding – £25,000
- Reduce Cheshire West Education Improvement Board (CWEIB) funding - £25,000
- Reduce School Improvement and Intervention Team funding - £50,000.

David Curry informed Forum that his school had benefited from the Duke of Edinburgh funding receiving valuable advice and support in setting up their activities, but questioned whether the withdrawal of funding might discourage others from starting up activities. Mark Parkinson responded that advice and support could continue but as a traded Edsential service but asked that the Heads associations consider the impact of withdrawing funding.

Forum asked for clarification as to what CWEIB currently funded and the impact of a reduction in funds. Officers reported that the CWEIB had accumulated £100,000 of unspent funds from the last two years, but under the independent chairmanship of David Charlton a number of projects had recently been funded, including post 16 network and school to school support. The teacher recruitment website had also been funded through CWEIB.

David Curry, CWASH representative on CWEIB, reported that a number of bids from schools had been received to fund initiatives but few had been supported by CWEIB as the bids had not been of sufficient quality. David also suggested that the current turnover of secondary heads and lack of promotion of the CWEIB may have had an impact on the low level and quality of bids.

In general Forum wished CWEIB funding to continue but also acknowledged that funds needed to be prioritised and used where most effective.

Mark Parkinson informed Forum that the only alternative would be to increase the level of reduction to School Improvement and Intervention Team in order to reduce the level of reduction to the CWEIB.

Questions were raised as to whether a reduction to CWEIB could be made then reinstated in the future. It was noted that, under the regulations, any reductions would be permanent; also the DfE was reducing the overall funding year on year.

Natalie sought Forums views on a proposal to create a fund, through a transfer of funds from schools block, to support outreach and satellite models to address the increase in High Needs demand. These funds would be available to primary and secondary. Mark Parkinson explained the thinking behind the proposal and referred to recommendations in the High Needs review which included investment in outreach and satellite models in order to manage the pressure on special schools and the increasing out of borough placements. This could be addressed by meeting more children's needs in mainstream with support, for example, from nearby special schools to build up the skills of staff.

Forum discussed how this proposal might work and acknowledged the benefits this proposal could bring; further modelling and case studies would be needed.

Questions were raised as to when there was an element of health problems were we pursuing funding from Health. Mark Parkinson confirmed that support was being received from Health in relation to EHCP.

Questions were raised as to why there was an increase in High Needs demand. It was noted that the reasons were complex but CW&C was not unique and mirrored the demand across the country.

Questions were asked as to whether the number of pupils being placed out of borough was higher than those coming in. It was noted that most of the out of borough placements were to independent schools rather than other LA's. Pupils were coming in from Cheshire East as fewer special schools had been located in Cheshire East following the Local Government Review, though this was now being addressed and the number of Cheshire East pupils was reducing.

Mark Parkinson reported that out of borough placements to independent non-maintained special schools were significantly reduced through the 2013 High Needs Review. CW&C had since then had much lower levels compared to other LAs. This was now starting to increase again as Special Schools do not have the capacity to take more children. And the proportion of children with statutory plans in mainstream secondary was lower than statistical neighbours.

Resolved that the Schools Forum:

- i. note the indicative allocations and implications for budget setting detailed in the report;
- ii. note the initial DSG budget proposals; and
- iii. note the next steps for confirming the DSG budget proposals for 2020-2021 in January 2020.

4. De-delegation – Proposals for 2020-2021

Natalie Cole introduced the report which proposed the services to be de-delegated by maintained primary and secondary schools for 2020-2021.

Natalie referred Forum members to the de-delegation response to the consultation in paragraph seven which supported the continuation of de-delegation for all items.

Forums attention was drawn to the proposed rates for de-delegation in paragraph 10.

Resolved that the Schools Forum agree the services to be de-delegated to the Local Authority for 2020-2021 as set out in the paper under paragraph three (Vote: Primary unanimous; Secondary unanimous).

5. Any Other Business

Funding Gypsy Romany Traveller (GRT) Pupils

Mark Parkinson informed Forum that an approach had been made from Sharon Wyatt, Headteacher at Horn's Mill Primary, regarding funding for GRT pupils. Mark had

responded to the school explaining the process but had agreed to raise their concerns with Forum. Natalie Cole explained that there was no mechanism to target funding for GRT children in the funding formula and the eligibility factors of FSM and low attainment were not hitting GRT children. Questions were raised as to why GRT pupils were not hitting the FSM factor, Officers agreed to look further into the census data and FSM.

Natalie informed Forum that, under the funding regulations, there was provision to de-delegate funds to support under performing groups, which CW&C had never used. As an example, Natalie stated that a de-delegation rate of a £1 per pupil would create a £20,000 fund but further modelling would be done by Officers for consideration by Forum.

Mark sought agreement from Forum to ask Councillor Meardon to take forward Sharon's case and get it on the national agenda. Officers had asked Sharon to draft a response which would be brought to the next meeting for endorsement by Forum.

Resolved that Schools Forum agreed

- i. to take up the funding of Gypsy Romany Traveller Pupils at a national level by sending a letter by both Councillor Meardon and Schools Forum chair; and
- ii. Officers to bring a draft letter to next Forum for endorsement prior to submission.

6. Next meeting

Next meeting Tuesday 14 January 2020, Queen's Park High School.