

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM
21st November 2019

MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT:

D Judson (Swift Academies (Chair)); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); M Butler (Education Village); C Large (St John's CE Academy, CE Diocese); S Crowther (Lingfield Academy Trust); M Shorten (Carmel College); S Hudson (Rise Carr College); M Taylor (St Bede's RC Primary); M Fryer (Governor, Hummersknott); E Calvert (William House Nursery); J Armitage (The Rydal Academy); M Charlton (Whinfield Primary School); J Moorhouse (Carmel Academy Trust)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

B Nielsen (Finance Manager); T Murphy (Head of Education & Inclusion) E Marshall (Education Partnerships Officer) E Sayers (Finance)

APOLOGIES

P King (Federation of Mowden); H Dummett (Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools); K Reid (Polam Hall School); D Vizzard (St George's); N Gibbon (St Aidans CE Academy); KA Lyle (Rydal Academy); P Richardson (16-19 Education)

1. Welcome, Introduction & Register/Declaration of business interests

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of Meeting 17th June 2019

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 17th June 2019 were agreed as a true record.

3. Terms of Reference and Membership

The Finance Manager presented the previously circulated paper on the Terms of Reference and outlined any changes from the previous terms.

Forum agreed the revised Terms of Reference.

It was noted that Joe Hughes the Diocesan Representative substitute had left and that this would now be Deborah Fox.

Also Nicola Gibbon from St Aidan's Academy should be Nicole and not Nicola.

The Finance Manager informed the Forum that no nominations had been received from the group for the posts of Chair or vice Chair, however the existing Chair and Vice Chair had confirmed they would be willing to continue.

Forum members all agreed to continue the existing Chairing arrangements.

4. Budget Update 2019/20

The Finance Manager presented the previously circulated paper on the Budget Update for 2019/20.

Budget changes from the original budget were outlined as per paragraphs 4-9, the overall budget changing to £21.3 million.

Forum were notified that the projected year end spend positions are subject to change throughout the remainder of the year as current projections are based upon one terms information only.

The main variances are mostly within the high needs area and were detailed within paragraph 16.

Overall in 2019/20 the budget is projected to be overspent by £1,240,560 mainly from continuing high needs pressures. The overall estimated budget position is a deficit of £4,031,166 once the brought forward deficit from 2018/19 has been included.

Forum noted the current budget position and the ongoing pressures within the high needs budget.

5. High Needs Update (Verbal)

It was confirmed that the LA had submitted a recovery plan but had received no response from ESFA to date.

The Tees Valley Free Special school is still progressing, with "expression of interest" being sought for the operator of the school. Assessment of submissions is likely to be in November/December, with results being known in the new year. This commission is being led by the DfE so is outside of the Council's control.

It was confirmed that approval had been given by Cabinet for Red Hall and Rise Carr College new resource base constructions, work is due to start shortly with completion expected to be in 2020/21.

6. School Funding Formula 2020/21

The Finance Manager presented the previously circulated paper on the school funding formula arrangements for 2020/21, with the following key points,

- Actual DSG allocations will be received in December 2019 based on the October 2019 census.
- The majority of the factors continue to use the same criteria in 2020/21 as in 2019/20.
- A new factor “Minimum per Pupil” factor will become mandatory which guarantees £3,750 at primary and £5,000 at secondary per pupil. This is across the majority of factors, and does not replace the AWPUP.
- The DfE have removed the funding floor factor, however as the MFG in 2020/21 is required to be a positive value and is based upon the 2019/20 baselines, the loss of this factor should not affect the amounts distributed to schools in Darlington.

The Finance Manager noted that since the paper was written provisional allocations had been received for the DSG in 2020/21. For Darlington this provisionally allocates an additional £2.9 million into the schools block.

The formula funding tool has now been received along with the provisional schools block allocation, hence modelling will be undertaken to see the effects upon the local formula. Once the modelling is complete the LA will consult with schools as necessary.

A Special Schools Forum meeting has been arranged to take place on Thursday, 21st November at 10.00am to consider any consultation issued.

No guidance or allocations have been issued for the early years block, however the DfE have notified there will be an uplift in the two year olds funding and three and four year olds funding for most authorities.

The high needs block provisional allocation for 2020/21 has also been received and this provisionally allocates an additional £1.5 million into the block.

The rules for high needs remain the same with the ability to transfer funding in from other blocks. The Local Authority will explore a transfer from the schools block to the high needs block and add this to any consultation.

The provisional allocation for the central schools block is the same in 2020/21 as in 2019/20, however the historic element has a reduction of 20% upon the current year allocation. This will mean that some of the services that are funded from this block will need to be decreased or stopped.

It was requested if briefing sessions could be undertaken regarding any consultation. This was agreed and a date would be sent out to all schools.

A concern was raised regarding early years, where children are being placed in schools prior to qualifying for 3 & 4 year old funding. This is causing issues for private providers. TM confirmed that Helen Ellison has been made aware of this and that a paper will be brought to next regular Forum in January

7. School Forum (Education Partnerships Officer)

The Education Partnerships Officer presented the previously circulated paper. Based upon the SEND Strategy objectives, resource base admissions change from September 2019 for children with EHCP's (unless in exceptional circumstances). Children currently accessing a resource base place that do not have an EHCP will not mandatorily be required to be assessed for a plan, unless their needs require this in the future. All new applications for resource bases will be routed through the EHCP process and therefore the resource base panel will no longer be required.

The Officer highlighted the Cognition and Learning service (Beaumont Hill Academy) now offers training for nursery, primary and secondary settings. The Speech and Language Outreach (Northwood Primary School) will be re-launched and will offer focused support for settings to adopt a 'communication friendly school' approach.

The specialist equipment policy has been updated. The application of the policy is built around the reasonable adjustment duty. The request for schools to contribute an arbitrary amount of £500 to each request has been waived, however each application will be tested by the LA and contributions to equipment may be expected.

A pop up school for GRT EHE Years 7-11 will be held in January 2020 and will focus on increasing awareness of routes into employment and the ideal outcome to support development of careers plans subject to age and careers guidance best practice.

Various projects are planned and highlighted in paragraph 23 on the paper.

8. Any other business

No other business.

Date/Time/Location of next meeting

Thursday 21st November at 10.00am – Pease Suite – Dolphin Centre