

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

14th January 2019

MINUTES OF MEETING THURSDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT:

D Judson (Swift Academies (Chair)); M Butler (Education Village); C Large (St John's CE Academy, CE Diocese); S Crowther (Lingfield Academy Trust); M Shorten (Carmel College); M Taylor (St Bede's RC Primary); M Fryer (Governor, Hummersknott); E Calvert (William House Nursery); KA Lyle (The Rydal Academy); J Moorhouse (Carmel Academy Trust); D Vizzard (St George's Primary School); P King (Federation of Mowden Schools); N Gibbon (St Aidan's CE Academy); H Dummett (Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools); K Reid (Polam Hall)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

B Nielsen (Finance Manager); E Sayers (Finance); C Kipling (DBC)

APOLOGIES

S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); S Hudson (Rise Carr College); T Murphy (Head of Education & Inclusion); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary)

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 15th October 2019

It was noted that the minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 15th October 2019 had omitted the following points,

- The basis on which the funding formula models would be made
- The request to hold an Education Strategy Group meeting, which had not taken place

The remainder of the minutes were agreed.

3. High Needs Recovery Plan

The Finance Manager informed the Forum that he had now received a written response on the 30th October regarding the recovery plan submitted in June.

The points raised in the response by the DfE included,

- That they would expect the plan to develop over time keeping Schools Forum involved and updated.
- They were pleased with the detail that had been provided and noted that in 2021/22 the in-year budget stabilised.
- The savings identified were considered realistic and achievable.
- Some further detail was required on how EHCP numbers were calculated, especially at post 16.
- Noted that in future years no provision was made to transfer funding from the schools block to the high needs block as the Local Authority would have to seek Forum approval. That transfers between the blocks would need to be considered in light of the extra high needs funding.

4. Early Years Funding 2020/21

The Finance Manager presented the previously circulated paper regarding early years funding, as the DfE has now published the hourly funding rates for 2 year old and 3 & 4 year olds entitlement for 2020/21.

For Darlington the 2 year old funded rate will be £5.28 per hour, an increase of £0.08 on the 2019/20 rate and £4.52 for 3 & 4 year olds, an increase of £0.08 on the 2019/20 rate.

No information has been received regarding the Early Years Pupil Premium rate or the Disability Access Fund.

The DfE also confirmed that the supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools will be continued in 2020/21.

It was confirmed that this allocation was only for one year (2020/21), as no further years information was provided.

Forum agreed the proposal to pass through the additional 8 pence funding for the 2 year old and 3 & 4 years old hourly rates.

5. School Funding Formula 2020/21

The Finance manager talked to the previously circulated paper.

22 Responses on behalf of 33 schools were received. Overall this meant that 82.5% of schools provided a response.

Part A

The vast majority (81%) of schools did not agree with the Local Authority's proposal to transfer 1% from the schools block to the high needs block. However overall 94% of schools agreed to a transfer of 0.5% or more from the schools block to the high needs block.

Part B

96% of responses agreed to the continued use of the same funding formula factors.

There was a split on responses to the options to distribute additional funding, but option D had the most agreement at 50%.

A comment was received in the consultation regarding the historic data used within the modelling, the Finance manager noted that the data used is what is provided by the DfE alongside the provisional 2020/21 DSG allocations and is intended to show the effect of the new formula on the current year so allowing a direct comparison. Due to timing it would not be possible to collect and calculate with more up to date information.

The Finance Manager noted that following receipt of the consultation results, the Local Authority had taken on board the views of schools and hence the Local Authority was now proposing to transfer 0.5% from the schools block, as this was supported by most schools. To continue to use the existing formula factors and to model next years formula on option D as this received the most support.

Discussion took place regarding the paper with the following points noted,

- It was noted that the historic data in the models was less useful to a number of schools due to large changes in pupil numbers and also for schools funded on estimated numbers.
- It was noted that in option D more schools had lower gains than in other options, so it was not expected that option D would have the most support
- It was raised that an opportunity had been missed with regard to targeting funding where needed. The parameters of the funding formula do not allow funding to be targeted to individual schools unless they have a unique characteristic. Discussion took place upon how funding could be allocated to those schools where it is needed and how this could be done with more equity.

- The Finance Manager noted that a decision was not required on part D today as there is the opportunity to look at further models once the actual formula tool and DSG were received, however due to timings, these would be limited.
- The Finance Manager informed the group that whichever option is selected the funding formula for 2020/21 would look at all resources available, including growth funding, which is not included within the provisional DSG allocations, along with any underspend currently held in the schools block.
- Further discussion took place regarding the selection of model to use in the formula. It was noted that in any option some schools would gain less than they would in other options and it was not possible to make all schools benefit by the same due to the parameters of the formula.
- It was mentioned that if further modelling is undertaken with the actual data (in December) that the differences between the models are likely to be the same, as although schools will receive different amounts based on new pupil numbers the changes between models will be the same due to the characteristic and the formula protections.
- Discussion took place regarding remodelling once the actual APT and allocations are released in December and the possibility to look again, taking schools views. It was raised however that a consultation exercise had already been undertaken and that this should be used as the basis for budget setting, as this feedback should not be disregarded.
- With regard to part A, a question was raised about how this transfer affects the existing recovery plan. It was noted that the current recovery plan only has a budget transfer in 2019/20 as that was all Forum could agree at the time the plan was composed. No transfers were built into the plan for 2020/21 or 2021/22. The plan in 2020/21 has a deficit position and the agreed additional transfer of funding from the schools block to the high needs block in 2020/21 would, along with the increase in the high needs block, mean a likely balanced budget in 2020/21. Therefore not increasing the accumulated deficit further, as the accumulated deficit will be required to be recovered.
- It was asked if a further transfer would be requested for 2021/22. It was noted that at present it is unknown if a transfer could be made in 2021/22 but if the option was available, this would be explored as the accumulated deficit would be £5million at the end of this year. It was noted however that only a transfer for 2020/21 was being considered at this meeting.
- Discussion took place regarding the accumulated deficit. At present no information has been provided as to when this will need to be recovered.

School Forum agreed to the recommendation under Part A, that a 0.05% transfer of funding from the schools block to the high needs block would be made in 2020/21.

School Forum agreed that option D within Part B, should be used as the starting point for the funding formula.

6. Any other Business

No other business.

Date/Time/Location of next meeting

Tuesday, 14th January 2020, 2 pm Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Darlington