

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM
10th March 2020

MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY, 14TH JANUARY 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT:

D Judson (Swift Academies (Chair)); M Butler (Education Village); C Large (St John's CE Academy, CE Diocese); M Shorten (Carmel College); M Fryer (Governor, Hummersknott); KA Lyle (The Rydal Academy); J Moorhouse (Carmel Academy Trust); D Vizzard (St George's); P King (Fed of Mowden Schools); N Gibbon (St Aidan's CE Academy); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); S Hudson (Rise Carr College); J Mogridge (Polam Hall)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

A Martin (St Aidan's CE Academy)

APOLOGIES

S Crowther (Mt Pleasant); E Calvert (William House); H Dummett (Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools); P Richardson (DBC); KReid (Polam Hall)

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and a round of introductions took place.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of Meeting 21st November 2019

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 21st November 2019 were agreed as a true record.

3. Budget Update 2019/20

The Finance Manager outlined items in the previously circulated report highlighting the overspend in the high needs block.

It was noted that the high needs projected spend figures presented at the October meeting were expected to increase as they were based upon one term's data and therefore did not include any placement changes during the autumn and spring terms.

The main changes to the variances reported within high needs budgets were highlighted at paragraph 8 of the report. Although the overspend in high needs has increased, the revised projection is in line with the estimated 2019/20 position that is included within the 2019/20 DSG recovery plan.

A discussion took place as to why Darlington had a larger proportion of out of area children compared with other LA's. It was noted that Darlington do not currently have enough provision in borough. The new capacity that is proposed within the high needs recovery plan will reduce this shortfall.

Recommendations

School Forum noted the current budget position.

School Forum noted the high needs budget pressures.

4. High Needs Recovery Plan

The Head of Education expressed his thanks on behalf of the Local Authority, for the decision of schools to move 0.5% from the schools' block to the high needs block in 2020/21.

The Head of Education confirmed that the high needs spend projections are in line with the 3 Year recovery plan, submitted last June. Work is ongoing with regard to transforming high needs/SEN provision within Darlington, which will inform next years and future years budgets. A paper will be brought to the March School Forum meeting, which will provide detail regarding future high needs provision to Forum members.

Work is ongoing with regard to the new resource bases at Red Hall and Rise Carr. Planning is in progress, construction work has already started at Red Hall and is to start in April at Rise Carr. Both bases are on target to open in the 2020/21 academic year.

It was also confirmed that Councillor Paul Crudass will be attending future Forums.

5. School Funding Formula & Growth Fund 2020/21

The Finance Manager updated the Forum with regard to the school funding formula and growth fund for 2020/21 included within the previously circulated report.

Modelling had been undertaken on receipt the actual DSG allocations for 2020/21 and with the use of some previous years underspend, it is now affordable to use all the 2020/21 NFF unit values for all the factors used in Darlington's local formula.

The budget shares for each school were shown on Appendix 1. These budget shares are calculated by the Local Authority, but the grant received by academy schools may differ as they are funded through ESFA, who may make adjustments for previous agreements with schools.

The Finance Manager outlined that the proposed growth fund criteria for 2020/21 is the same as in 2019/20. The amount of funding required in 2020/21 is less as two schools growth period has ended.

Recommendations

School Forum noted the funding formula budgets for 2020/21.

School Forum approved the growth fund criteria and budget for 2020/21

6. Early Years Update

The School Forum Officer discussed the previously circulated report and discussed Table 1 showing the split of funded two-year-old places accessed, across different types of setting in Darlington.

Paragraph nine was highlighted and it was confirmed that the LA are following DfE rules and funding regulations. However, further work will be done to identify the numbers of Rising 3s and any issues will be further investigated.

Recommendations

School Forum noted the report

7. Budget Setting 2020/21

The Finance Manager highlighted the allocations of the Dedicated Schools Grant as set out in the report.

Early Years Block

SEN inclusion has overspent in the last two years therefore, it is proposed to increase the budget to £200,000 for 2020/21. This increase will be funded from the reserve and hence does not affect the proposed hourly rates.

Modelling had been undertaken in early years following the receipt of the DSG allocations. It is calculated that an increase of 10p per hour for the 3 & 4 year old rate would be possible in 2020/21, an increase of 2p per hour on the 8p per hour discussed at the last Forum. It was highlighted that due to the early years DSG allocation changing in-year, that this did represent a risk of overspend, however this would be covered through reserves.

When the hourly rate increase for 3 & 4 Year old entitlement was modelled, consideration was also given to increasing the deprivation supplements rather than the hourly rate. However it was decided to increase the hourly rate, as this has previously been more favourable with providers and this will benefit all providers for every child placed. No other changes are proposed to any of the funding rates for 2020/21 from those previously notified.

Central Block

The Finance Manager highlighted to the Forum (from the previously circulated paper) the funding position and the proposed use of the central schools block for 2020/21. Discussion took place regarding the historic commitments and the proposed breakdown of the 2020/21 budget was discussed.

It was questioned if the historic commitments keep reducing would this come out of the schools' block. It was confirmed that this would not affect schools budget shares calculations, however schools budgets maybe impacted if schools decide to continue funding the services previously funded from the historic commitments themselves. There are no statutory requirements for the music service or union cover items funded through the historic block. It was confirmed that the Virtual Headteacher is a statutory requirement.

Recommendations

Forum noted the 2020/21 DSG Allocations

Forum noted the proposed early years funding rates and agreed the central allocation.

Forum agreed the proposed usage of the central schools block 2020/21.

8. Any Other Business

No other business

Date/Time/Location of next meeting

Tuesday, 10th March 2020

2 pm Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Darlington