

**DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM  
12<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

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**MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY, 18 MAY 2021**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

D Judson (Swift Academies (Chair)); M Butler (Education Village); M Shorten (Carmel College); KA Lyle (The Rydal Academy); P King (Fed of Mowden Schools); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); S Hudson (Rise Carr College); K Reid (Polam Hall); H Dummett (Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools); S Crowther (Mount Pleasant); N Gibbon (St Aidan's Academy); P Richardson (Head of Skills & Employability); David Leane (Carmel College, Catholic Diocese); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); C Large (St John's CE Academy, CE Diocese); E Long (Play Hut).

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

B Nielsen (Finance Manager); T Murphy (Head of Education & Inclusion)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

**APOLOGIES**

E Sayers (Finance Officer); J Moorhouse (Carmel Academy Trust); Councillor Clarke

**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 9th March 2021**

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 9<sup>th</sup> March were agreed as a true record.

### **3. Early Years Block Funding Update**

The Finance Manager outlined items in the previously circulated report highlighting changes to the early years block in 2020/21 and 2021/22. Confirmation of the maintained nursery lump sum for September 21 to March 22 was highlighted.

#### Recommendations

Forum noted the changes to early years funding for 2020/21 and 2021/22.

### **4. Budget Update 2020/21**

The Finance Manager outlined the final budget position for 2020/21 as per the previously circulated report.

The following key items were highlighted to Forum:

- The final budget position was an in year overspend of £438,863. The overall DSG deficit is £5,233,271 once previous years deficits are added.
- The early years block is estimated to underspend, however the final true outturn position will not be known until November once the final 2020/21 allocation adjustment is received.
- Year end balances for early years would be ring fenced to cover clawbacks with any balance being used in future years formulas.
- Year end balances for the schools block are mostly already committed, with any additional to be used in future years formula.
- Year end balances within the central schools block would be used to smooth reductions in the historic central schools block over future years.
- The high needs deficit would be carried forward for recovery through the high needs recovery plan

#### Recommendations

Forum noted the year end budget position

Forum approved the carry forward of budget proposals from 2020/21 into 2021/22

### **5. High Needs Update**

The Assistant Director of Education & Inclusion updated the Forum regarding high needs. Key points included,

- That the new SEN units at Redhall and Rise Carr College are on target to open in September, with initial pupil identification underway.

- The Tees Valley Free school DfE have appointed a multi academy trust to operate the school. This will be for 100 pupils across primary and secondary, Darlington will have 25 places. Planned opening is September 2022.
- That a meeting had taken place with DfE regarding Darlington's high needs recovery plan. The DfE had noted that Forum were involved in the process. The focus is initially on an in year balance between spend and budget. Some areas have had high needs DSG deficits written off. However there are a number of caveats regarding this and close monitoring through the DfE of recovery. It is expected that those areas will reduce their high needs expenditure.
- A further allocation of SEND capital has been received for 2021/22 of £500,000, schools are invited to a meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> May to be involved in the allocation process.
- The criteria for new places was discussed and if these were dependent on an EHCP as some may not have taken place due to CV19. EHCP is a criteria, however the Head of SEND can discuss cases with schools. It was reported that all targets regarding ECHP had been met.

## **6. 2021/22 Academic Year meeting dates**

The Finance Manager noted the Forum dates for the next academic year.

## **7. Any Other Business**

The Finance Manager reminded the group that the term of office for this Forum ends in August. All members will be contacted to see if they wish to remain a member of the Forum. Any vacant positions will be recruited in line with previous systems. Once the group is constituted Chair and Vice Chair arrangements will be confirmed.

### **Date/Time/Location of next meeting**

**12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 2pm**

**Microsoft Teams**