

**DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**11<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

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**MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

D Judson (Swift Academies (Chair)); P Ayto (Reid Street (Vice Chair); M Butler (Education Village); P King (Fed of Mowden Schools); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); S Hudson (Rise Carr College); H Dummett (Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools); J Blackham (Mount Pleasant); P Richardson (Head of Skills & Employability); J Skirving (Bishopton Redmarshall CofE, CE Diocese); J Moorhouse (Carmel RC College, RC Diocese)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

B Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources Group); T Murphy (Head of Education & Inclusion) ; E Clennell (Finance Manager)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillor Clarke; Mrs Hull (observer), N Mantle (DFE),

**APOLOGIES**

J Aconley- Foster (Finance Officer); K Reid (Polam Hall); M Ramsay (St Johns Academy), M Shorten (Carmel); N Gibbon (St Aidans Academy); M Fryer (Hummersknott), P Norman (St Bedes RC)

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the new members.

**2. Minutes of Meeting 18th May 2021**

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 18<sup>th</sup> May were agreed as a true record.

### **3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Dean Judson (Swift Academies) was elected as Chair and Paula Ayto (Reid Street) was elected as Vice Chair, unanimously by the members for the next two-year term.

### **4. Budget Update 2021/22**

The Assistant Director outlined the budget position for 2021/22 as per the previously circulated report.

It was noted that the projections to the year-end were based upon one term of information and dependant on pupil numbers, therefore the projections were likely to change.

#### Recommendations

Forum noted the year end budget position

Forum noted the ongoing high needs budget pressures

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

The Assistant Director of Education & Inclusion updated the Forum regarding high needs. Key points included. Forum noted the on-going high needs pressure.

- The new SEN units at Redhall and Rise Carr College are now open and are accepting pupils to cater for SEMH needs to add to the local offer.
- The Education Strategy Group is looking at longer term trends and will be shared at forum including the impact of independent specialist schools in the area.
- Demand for placements at Education Village and Beaumont Hill are increasing and work is being done to look at capacity and to see how this can be supported.
- The timeliness of assessments has not been impacted by the increased numbers and is at 97% which is significantly above the notional rate of 58%
- The deficit is currently at £5.4m and has followed a trend of increased need for a number years. The 4-5 year High Needs recovery planning tool will be available shortly and the updated information will be shared at the next forum.
- Post 16 placements have a significant over-spend due to a number of placements that have continued.
- The SEN budgets are on target but again these are subject to change, we should have a better position at the next forum.
- The mainstream top ups are currently projected to overspend by £120k.

#### **5. Early Years**

- The final allocation is not known until the census information is received and is subject to clawback.

#### **6. Schools Block**

- Teacher's pay and pension will be added to the formula from 2022/23.
- There is still the ability to transfer 0.5% from the Schools lock to High Needs block subject to forum approval.
- Business rates will be paid directly by the ESFA and the budget share will be adjusted accordingly.

#### **7. Any Other Business**

- When the hard formula comes in the Central Block will disappear. There are historic commitments in the Central School block and some services funded from here may be at risk. Alternative sources of funding may have to be sought as the LA are unable to pick up the costs.
- There is an opportunity to visit the new SEN units and the Assistant Director for Education will discuss this further with Head Teachers.
- The increased fuel charges are an area of concern, the NGFF premises values were not increased, the Local Authority have not seen any information to indicate that additional funding will be given for this. The DFE representative (N Mantle) at the meeting has agreed to look into this and feedback to the group if there is a specific response.
- Future meetings will continue to take place on Teams but with a longer term view to revert to face to face meetings once the LA has advised that these can recommence.

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

**11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 2pm**

**Microsoft Teams**