

**DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM**  
16<sup>th</sup> January 2018

---

**MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2017**

---

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

P King (The Federation of Mowden Schools (in the Chair)); M Shorten (Carmel College); D Judson (Hurworth School); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); M Butler (Education Village); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); J Moorhouse (Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle, Carmel College); E Hickerson (Rise Carr College); M Fryer (Federation of Abbey Schools); N Gibbon (St Aidan's CE Academy); K A Lyle (The Rydal Academy); D Vizzard (St George's Academy); E Calvert (William House Nursery), Kate Reid (Polam Hall School).

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

S Nyakatawa (Interim Head of Education); B Nielsen (Finance Manager); E Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer); E Sayers (Finance Officer); S Lewington (Clerk)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Cyndi Hughes (Lead Member Children and Young People); J Steel (Dove Academy Trust).

**APOLOGIES**

P Richardson (Post 16); M Taylor (St Bede's); C Large (C of E) & Julia Thompson (Borough Rd Nursery School)

**1. Welcome, Introduction & Apologies**  
**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 and no matters arising.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 were agreed as a true record.

It was noted that the Finance Manager had contacted ESFA (item 4 of the previous minutes), the response received from ESFA simply made note to the DSG guidance documentation.

### **3. School Forum Officer Update**

Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The purpose of which was to update Forum on the review of services.

The Schools Forum Officer explained that there were 4 main points to note.

Over the summer there has been a review of the contracts for the Future in Mind project.

There are a few places still available in the resource bases, however, this is likely to change as there have already been another 2 applications.

As a result of annual reviews there have been a few changes to some of the services and some criteria has changed.

The Schools Forum Officer referred to paragraph 12 of the report. There is to be a new project 'Emotional Learning Support Assistants' set up which will build on work already started. This is to be offered to all schools and schools need to sign up to allow the project to go ahead. So far there are 9 schools showing interest.

There is to be a staff graduation of the mindful schools project to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> November and Longfield School have agreed to host the event.

The Chair queried paragraph 10 which mentioned the training plan run by the social communication outreach service for ASD Leads, and the fact that there will now be a charging policy because of 'no shows'. The reasons for implementation of a charge for no shows was explained and accepted by the Forum.

Forum noted the recommendation (paragraph 22) of the report.

### **4. Terms of Reference**

Forum referred to a previously circulated draft terms of reference.

As the new academic year had commenced and the membership of Forum had been renewed, it is appropriate to refresh the terms of reference. The draft terms were presented for discussion and update.

Paragraph 17 states that the term of office will run for all Forum members until March 2020, at which time School Forums may cease to exist in line with the national funding formula.

There were no revisions required from Forum members and the terms of reference were agreed.

## **5. 2017/18 Budget Update**

Forum referred to a previously circulated report the purpose of which was to update Forum on the current 2017/18 budget.

The Finance Manager explained to Forum that the budget had been amended due to early years allocation changes. There were no other changes in the budget.

Forum discussed the figures within the report, the main points were as follows:-

The large pressure within the high needs budget, with no material savings in other budget areas to offset the pressure, therefore there is an expected year end deficit budget position. Any year end overspend will be rolled forward into 2018/19 as first call against future budget allocations.

The 2017/18 pressures are ongoing from previous years but have increased as demand for special needs has increased, in 2016/17 the number of assessments requests for high needs services has doubled.

It is expected that high needs pressures will continue to grow in future years as demand increases, the new high needs strategy will therefore look to deliver high needs differently to bring budgets back into line.

It was asked if the overspend has it been benchmarked with other authorities. Authorities are experiencing the same pressures both locally and nationally.

It was noted that there is significant spend on high needs places out of the borough and that currently there is a providers market due to demand for places. It was suggested that a solution should be found to provide more provision in borough for our own children.

There is currently a team working on future high needs strategies and provision. The results of which will be available in March 2018.

Stakeholders are to be engaged with the work that is currently under way, to ensure all views are included in the new strategy.

It was requested that an update on the high needs strategy be included on all future Forum agendas.

Forum noted the recommendations (paragraphs 27 & 28).

## **6. 2018/19 Funding Formula & Budget Setting**

Forum referred to a previously circulated report the purpose of which was to update Forum on the two ESFA publications concerning the schools and high needs national funding formulas. It was confirmed that the vast majority of the content (and hence practice) is the same as was included within the consultation.

The following points were discussed:-

There will be a “soft funding” formula in 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Forum referred to paragraph 20 of the report which detailed the breakdown of the allocated blocks. The Finance Manager explained that the Early Years block was not shown as no allocations had not been received, however it was expected that the unit values Darlington receives will be the same in 2018/19.

Forum’s attention was drawn to paragraph 59 onwards and the impacts on Darlington.

Four schools budget shares will change due to changes to how resource bases are funded.

Based on the indicative budgets, there will be approximately £1.1 million additional funding in the schools block next year. There is an option to move 0.5% from the schools block to the high needs block (£321,000) without seeking Secretary of State approval. If this transfer takes place, there will still be a deficit of around £800k in the high needs block.

Funding available in 2018/19 does not allow full implementation of the national funding formula due to transitional arrangements.

It was stated that the results of the high needs review should be known before any decision is made to transfer funding from the schools block to the high needs block. (It was noted that, unfortunately there is insufficient time for this).

Forum was referred to paragraph 75 onwards. There will be a consultation going out to schools within the next couple of weeks. This will provide schools with Darlington formula proposals for 2018/19, showing the effect on each individual school. The outcome of the consultation and proposal for Darlington’s 2018/19 formula will be discussed at an extra Forum meeting to be held on 21<sup>st</sup> November.

## **7. Election of Chair & Vice Chair**

As this is a new term of office and the membership has been renewed, it is now become appropriate to re-elect the positions of Chair & Vice Chair.

Forum was briefed on the process for electing the Chair and Vice Chair.

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

**21<sup>st</sup> November 2017, 2pm Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Darlington**