

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY 16TH MAY 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT:

P King (The Federation of Mowden Schools (in the Chair)); M Shorten (Carmel College); D Judson (Hurworth School); S Johnson (Longfield Academy); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); M Butler (Education Village); S Crowther (Mount Pleasant); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); J Moorhouse (Carmel College); J Thompson (Borough Rd Nursery School); C Large (St John's Academy); E Hickerson (Rise Carr College); E Calvert (William House Nursery (PVI)); C Peacock (Holy Family RC Primary).

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);

APOLOGIES

P Richardson (Post 16); M Fryer (Hummersknott); J Steele (Lingfield Education Trust)

1. Welcome and Introductions

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

Declarations of Interest

There was a possible declaration of interest from Hurworth regarding item 5 on the agenda.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 7th March 2017 were agreed as a true record.

Matters Arising

Points were raised relating to item 9 from the minutes previously circulated regarding the LAPP budgets and discussion followed.

Steve Nyakatawa updated the Forum that a meeting had taken place with Red Hall Primary and work is in progress regarding setting up service level agreement arrangements for the proposed service.

It was mentioned that there had been a strength of feeling and frustration at the Primary Heads meeting regarding the use of the 2016/17 LAPP money, as schools had struggled with their own budgets as they had agreed not to spend the LAPP budget for an interim period of time, this LAPP money has been used to contribute towards the High Needs overspend.

It was asked if the technical issue about the use of revenue funding for the Red Hall service set up costs had been resolved. It was noted that a possible solution had been found if required.

It was mentioned that there is the special provision capital fund allocation of £500,000 over 3 years, announced on 4 March 2017. This is to support local authorities (LAs) to make capital investments in provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Local authorities can invest in new places and improvements to facilities for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans in mainstream and special schools, nurseries, colleges and other provision. This allocation is to meet local need. The local authority must plan and make decisions in consultation with local stakeholders to ensure that the range and quality of provision reflects the needs and aspirations of children and young people in the area. The LA is required to complete and publish a concise plan to show how it is intended to invest this funding. It was noted that this is one off money and whilst it will build places it is not revenue so won't sustain them.

3. 2016/17 Budget Update

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report.

The Finance Manager mentioned that there is an underspend within the budget but this has reduced since Forum's last meeting. There is a year end underspend of £238K to carry forward to the next financial year.

Forum referred to paragraph 10 which detailed the large overspend within the 2016/17 High Needs budget which has been covered by underspend within other budget areas within the overall DSG allocation.

As there is a shortfall between the 2017/18 budget and the actual DSG received, it is proposed that this shortfall is covered by the carry forward from 2016/17.

There is a possibility that the introduction of the 30 hours free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds from September could require funds from the underspend, because, as yet, it is not known what the take up will be.

The underspend may also need to be used to offset any pressures that may arise within the high needs budget during 2017/18.

It is not envisaged that there will be any underspend within 2017/18 budget.

Paragraphs 15 and 16 were noted and paragraph 17 was agreed. For paragraph 18 it was agreed that underspend carried forward from the 2016/17 budget can be ring fenced for the early years 2018/19 funding formula but any underspend that may occur from the 2017/18 budgets should be looked at separately at the end of the 2017/18 financial year.

4. 2017/18 Budget Update

Forum referred to a previously circulated report.

It was noted that the budget had decreased due to recoupment. Paragraph 6 of the report highlighted the changes within the budget.

Post 16 Places - The amount of funding transferred into the DSG allocation for 2017/18 was £486k, based upon 81 places. Places have now increased to 91 and therefore an extra £40k has been recouped, over resources received. This was not built into the budget, so causes a pressure.

Growth Funding – The EFA have recouped £60k, less than was built into the budget, therefore this frees up resource.

It was asked if a letter of complaint should be sent to the EFA in respect of the £40k shortfall.

It was brought to Forum's attention that place funding could be clawed back from Beaumont Hill due to the Ofsted report.

A discussion was held about how expensive out of area specialist placements are and the huge lack of provision within Darlington for students with specialist needs.

Forum noted paragraph 11 and agreed to paragraph 12.

5. Social Communication Outreach Service (SCOS)

Forum referred to a previously circulated report.

Forum was asked to consider the continuation of the post of Assistant Co-ordinator at Hurworth School.

It was explained to Forum the benefits and efficiencies this post has provided and how reports are now turned around so much faster (often within days and not weeks).

Forum were asked to consider funding the post for one more year, funded from the 2016/17 underspend. This had been brought up at the Primary and Secondary Heads meetings and had gained huge support from both.

Funding of the post for future years will return to Forum for consideration again next year.

Forum agreed the recommendation (paragraph 12).

6. School Forum Work Update

Forum referred to a previously circulated report, the purpose of which was to update Forum on the review of the high needs services and related activity.

It was confirmed that there had been over 10 applications for September starts in the Resource Bases it is expected that most bases are close to full in September.

A meeting was held between Durham Music Service (DMS), Head of Education and the School Forum Officer. DMS have approached the LA to request an uplift to the remissions funding for delivering the music provision for FSM children, however, DMS have noted that this is not possible from the DSG as this is funded from the central budget which cannot be increased in 2017/18. The Forum noted the request from the Manager of DMS to attend a Joint Heads meeting where this can be discussed further.

The Future in Mind group are to reconvene and school representation will be sought.

The LA Accessibility Strategy has been agreed. It is relevant to maintained schools and meetings are set up to review their Accessibility plans and actions. All schools will be required to ensure actions are complete to audit and review their Accessibility plans by 30th June 2017. All reviewed documents will be linked to the Local Offer. A traded service is also being offered to Academies.

Forum noted the recommendations within the report.

A discussion was had and questions were asked about some of the high needs services within Darlington. The main points were:

- Is it the policy that the Mount Pleasant resource base places are just filled with students from Darlington? The School Forum officer explained that all requests for places can also come out of authority. All places are reviewed by a resource base panel and recommendations are made subject to consultation with the school that hosts the resource base.
- Parents need to know what's on offer for children with specialist needs and need to see how good the facilities are. The School Forum officer clarified that all schools SENCOs will have information on provision and this can be shared with parents. It is also on the Local Offer and schools should sign post parents to this. Parents do tour the bases and can do so in liaison with the Families Information Team.
- It was requested that a presentation showcasing the facilities and services of resource bases should be made to Primary Heads.
- How do panel select which children receive the services? Is it money based or just dependent on needs? The School Officer clarified that panel review children's needs, place funding is set at £10,000 per place.

There was discussion around high needs funding and strategic need in Darlington within the context of special school places. It was re-emphasised that the high needs budget is overspent. The Head of Education explained that a high needs review will be taking place. The School Forum Chair requested that the School Forum officer is involved in the high needs review.

Date/Time/Location of next meeting

10th October 2017, 2pm Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Darlington