
MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY 4TH OCTOBER 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT:

P King (The Federation of Mowden Schools (in the Chair)); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); M Shorten (Carmel College); D Judson (Hurworth School); J Moorhouse (Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle); S Pelham (Polam Hall Free School); S Johnson (Longfield Academy); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); M Butler (Education Village); J Thompson (Borough Rd Nursery School); E Hickerson (Rise Carr College); E Calvert (William House Nursery (PVI)); P Richardson (16-19)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Cyndi Hughes (Lead Member Children and Young People)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

M Fryer (Hummersknott School); C Alderson (High Coniscliffe CE Primary)

1. Welcome and Introductions

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

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest expressed.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising.

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 17th May were agreed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

3. National School Funding Formula, High Needs Funding Formula, Darlington School Funding Formula 2017/18

School National Funding Formula

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report.

It was pointed out that the results of the School National Funding Formula and National High Needs Funding Formula consultations launched by the DfE due to be published in July would now be published in Autumn, therefore no decisions regarding the final proposal would be made until early 2017. Any changes to be implemented will now be introduced from April 18, meaning there will be limited changes for now.

The Finance Manager talked Forum through the contents of the report highlighting the key points. It was proposed that Darlington use the same funding formula factors in 2017/18 as is used in the current year, however, if any changes are required these will need to be agreed at January Forum prior to the final funding formula being submitted to the EFA.

The Finance manager brought to Forum's attention that Education Services Grant (ESG) previously paid direct to the local authority was now part of the DSG allocation. The local authority still retain the statutory duty to provide services previously funded by ESG therefore a request was made to transfer this element of the DSG to the local authority. This would be cost neutral to schools.

National High Needs Funding Formula

Forum were referred to paragraphs 48 to 59 of the report which concern the mainstream SEN changes. A discussion took place around the options available (paragraph 56). It was asked if a piece of work needed to be undertaken before a decision could be made. It was pointed out that this work had been started previously but not finished, the issue being workload and capacity. It was mentioned that this will be a large piece of work and that it may not be possible to complete by January. There was also a question as to if this work was still required pending the introduction of the national formula from April 2018.

It was agreed that the for the time being the preferred option for secondary schools was A and the preferred option for primary schools was C. It was also agreed that there should be some further work regarding option C that can be brought to Forum at a later date.

Forum agreed to use the same funding formula factors in 2017/18 as in 2016/17. Forum agreed allow a central top slice to the local authority of £240,000 to replace the ESG funding that is now paid through DSG.

Forum noted the possibility of de-delegation for maintained schools.

Forum agreed to explore further the arrangements for mainstream SEN.

4. Early Years National Funding Formula

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The report referred to a consultation on the national funding formula which closed on 22nd September, the results of which will be published in the autumn.

Some of the main points highlighted by the Finance Manager were;

- The national funding formula will commence for the existing 15 hours from April 2017.
- It will commence for the additional 15 hours from September 2017.
- A simpler formula based on universal rates.
- There will be a maximum that can be held centrally
- Universal base rates for all settings by 2020
- Lump sums paid to maintained nurseries will be replaced by a supplementary funding for 2 years.
- Darlington's indicative rates for 2017/2018 are less than the national average.
- EYPP rates are to remain the same.

A comment was made about the long term sustainability of maintained nurseries with the removal of the lump sum and there will not be enough funding to keep going. It is also going to be the same for maintained nurseries up and down the country and Darlington need to be talking with other authorities about ways in which to become more sustainable.

The Forum were asked to note the content of the report.

5. Budget Update 2016/17

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The Finance Manager talked Forum through some of the updates asking Forum to note that they are still subject to change.

The Finance Manager pointed out to Forum the increase in the 2015/16 underspend for both the 2 year old budget and the 3 & 4 year old budget. This additional underspend is to be added to the 2016/17 early years budgets in line with Forum's previous decision.

It is expected that the 2016/17 underspend will be approximately £770,000, however, this figure contains a number of projections and is therefore likely to be much less. An updated position will be presented to Forum at their January meeting.

It was recommended that Forum notes the current budget position.

6. School Forum Officer Work Update

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The School Forum Officer explained the work she had been carrying out on the high needs services since the last meeting.

The School Forum Officer mentioned that other than Hurworth not all resource bases are full.

There is a new Social Communications Outreach Coordinator post to start this term, this post is to build upon work that has already been started.

The traveller service is a service that is there to support all children with cultural needs.

Forum were reminded that schools should have their Accessibility Strategy available on their website and to note that Ofsted will check for compliance. A reminder is to go out to all schools letting them know how this should be done and what it should look like.

It was recommended that Forum note progress on the review of services and monitoring activity and other related activity.

7. Budget Setting 2017/18

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The Finance Manager went through and highlighted the main points.

He mentioned that allocations should be received just before Christmas together with the formula tool and is currently awaiting the outcome of consultation. Forum was asked to note that this is the budget in a raw state at this stage.

Forum members were asked if they want any budgets amending at this stage of the process, nothing was highlighted.

It was mentioned that school sport is not in the budget. At this time alternative funding streams are being sought.

Forum were told that an updated budget for 2017/18 will be brought to the January meeting.

Forum were asked to note the content of the report.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Date/Time/Location of next meeting

Thursday 12th January, 2pm Committee Room 1, Town Hall