

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY 8TH MARCH 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT:

P King (The Federation of Mowden Schools (in the Chair)); R Gartland (Education Village); C Thompson (West Park Academy); K Kelly (Rise Carr College); J Thompson (Borough Road Nursery); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); M Shorten (Carmel College); J Moorhouse (Carmel College); C Peacock (Holy Family RC Primary Academy); D Judson (Hurworth School); C Alderson (High Coniscliffe C of E Primary School); E Calvert (William House Nursery (PVI)), A Collishaw (Longfield Academy)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

B Nielsen (Finance Manager); E Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer); C Archer (Head of Early Years); E Sayers (Finance Officer); S Lewington (Clerk).

APPOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Cyndi Hughes (Lead Member Children and Young People); Mike Fryer (Hummersknott); Susan Johnson (Longfield Academy); Paul Richardson (Head of 16-19); Christine Large (St John's C of E Academy); Clare Devine (Beaumont Hill); Maura Regan (Carmel College); R Kershaw (Head of School and Pupil Support)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

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 12th January 2016 were agreed as a true record.

3. Budget Update 2015/16

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The Finance Manager talked Forum through the report and pointed out any significant changes to the variances that had not previously been reported.

It was questioned why some of the projected £300,000 underspend had not been allocated to Schools in the budget share as many are facing financial pressures. It was mentioned that the underspend was only a projection at this stage and also due to proposed changes in funding from April 17 that potentially there would be a need to hold funding to cover the transitional period. The point was noted and would be considered in the next budget planning round.

It was also asked if work had been done on 2 year old place numbers and the possibility that the Authority had commissioned too many places, as schools are carrying many vacancies. It was stated that work had been done and that lack of take-up was down to parental choice and that parents cannot be forced to send their children to this provision.

It was agreed that the early years regulations would be checked to see if it is possible to release some funding to fund vacant places in order to secure places for the future.

The contents of the report were noted.

4. School Funding Formula & Budget Updates 2016/17

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report, the purpose of which was to provide and update on any changes to the 2016/17 funding formula and budget setting since the January meeting.

Forum was notified that the 2016/17 funding formula had been agreed by the EFA.

Forum was provided with information regarding copyright licences that the EFA procure centrally (Appendix 1). Schools were asked to note this in order that they are not paying for these licenses as well.

Forum referred to paragraph 7 in the report whereby at their January meeting the early years funding formula rates were agreed.

Forum were notified that a review of the rates had taken place due to a number of factors affecting providers. The national living wage will be introduced from April 2016 and will potentially impact on 2 year old nursery provision because of the increase in wage bills. Forum was asked to consider increasing the 2 year old hourly

rate from its current £4.98 to £5.10 per hour from April 16, this would be funded by carry forward underspend. This would be an increase of 12p per hour and actually 25p per hour over what the Government funds. It was stressed that this would be a one off and for 2016/17 only, as it is hoped that Government will be increasing the funding for childcare provision from April 2017. No change was proposed to the previously agreed rates for 3 & 4 year old nursery provision.

The one off increase to the 2 year old rate was agreed from April 16. No change was made to the 3 & 4 rates.

Forum were updated on the Home and Hospital budget requirement as the one put to them at the January meeting was incorrect and had therefore been withdrawn.

There are 30 places commissioned but in the last year the service has been accommodating in excess of this, therefore it is proposed that the budget for places be increased to 32.

It was put to Forum that feedback coming from the Secondary Heads meeting was that the Home & Hospital Service is a valued service. The Primary Heads meeting had requested further information regarding the service as a number of schools had not used the service. It was asked that a piece of work be done around the service. The Chair asked the School Forum Officer to make this her next priority.

Forum noted the content of the report, agreed the one off increase in two year old funding for 2016/17 and agreed to a request for a MFG regarding this increase in the 2 year old rate.

5. School Forum Officer – Work Update

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The School's Forum Officer talked through the contents of the report and updated Forum on the review of the High Needs services.

It was asked if all Resource Bases except Heathfield are full as it is believed there are places available at Mount Pleasant. The School's Forum Officer was asked to check this with Mount Pleasant and provide an update at the next meeting.

The content of the report was noted.

6. Any Other Business

School Forum Membership

The Finance Manager explained to the Forum that the term of office for membership to the Forum is for a 2 year period. This term of office is due to finish at the end of March, therefore the membership will need to be renewed. It was asked that any

member wishing to step down from the Forum let the Finance Manager know by the end of the March 16.

The Forum was also informed that there is a Secondary vacancy on the Forum, as Sam Towle has resigned.

Press Release

The Chair informed Forum that he was contacted by a reporter asking for a comment about the press release for the new School Funding Formula where Darlington had been specifically mentioned.

The Finance Manager gave Forum a brief outline of the consultation on the new Schools Funding Formula that had been released yesterday. Forum was notified that the deadline for the consultation is 17th April. It was also noted that a consultation had been released on High Needs funding with the same deadline. A further consultation on Early Years funding is planned later in the year.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 17th May, 2pm.

