

**DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM**

6<sup>th</sup> October 2015

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**MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2015**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Peter King (Corporation Road Community School (in the Chair)); Sam Towle (Darlington School of Maths and Science); Paula Ayto (Reid Street); Brian Watkinson (The Federation of Mowden Schools); Craig Alderson (High Coniscliffe Church of England Primary School); Richard Gartland (Education Village); Dean Judson (Hurworth School); Clare Devine (Beaumont Hill); Catherine Thompson (West Park Academy); Jennifer Moorhouse (Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle); Mike Shorten (Carmel College); Kay Kelly (Rise Carr College); Christine Large (Diocese of Durham and Newcastle); Lynn Millar (Borough Road Nursery); Shirley Welsh (Whinfield Primary); Christine Boyce (St Teresa's Roman Catholic Primary School); Sara Davidson (Longfield Academy); Lindsay Long (PVI).

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Rachel Kershaw (Head of School and Pupil Support Services); Brett Nielsen (Finance Manager, Neighbourhood Services and Resources Group); Eleanor Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer); Paul Richardson (16-19); Elaine Sayers (Finance Officer).

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Cyndi Hughes (Lead Member Children and Young People).

**APOLOGIES**

Jenni Cooke (Service Director – Children, Families and Learning); Mike Fryer (Hummersknott); Elizabeth Charlton (PVI).

**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. George Dent Nursery**

The Forum referred to a previously circulated paper. It was explained to the Forum how George Dent Nursery School is the only LA maintained school in Darlington to occupy a building that is not owned by the LA or by a Diocese, therefore, it currently incurs an annual rental charge of £13k. It was asked if the Forum would consider funding the current financial year's rent from the central early years budget.

The Finance Manager clarified to the Forum that no agreement had been made to fund the school's request in 2016/17 and that this would be reviewed as part of the 16/17 formula setting. The Finance Manager clarified that currently the 2015/16 budget was all allocated and there were no plans to change any allocations at this time, therefore any agreement would need funded from unallocated underspend from previous years. It was also stated by the Finance Manager that as far as he was aware the school had not seen a decrease in funding on a per pupil basis since the new formula was introduced.

After questions were asked and a discussion held it was put to the Forum that a vote should be made on whether a one off payment of £13k could be taken from the underspend brought forward from the last financial year.

The vote went in favour of the request by a majority of 16 to 1.

## **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 10 March 2015 were agreed as a true record.

### **Matters Arising**

Councillor Hughes asked that from here forward she is noted on the minutes as Councillor Cyndi Hughes (Lead Member Children and Young People).

## **4. School Forum Procedures**

The Forum referred to previously circulated papers. It was explained that there has been very few amendments in the "Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guidance" issued by the EFA in March, therefore, no significant changes will have to be made to this Forum's Terms of Reference.

The Finance Manager had completed a self assessment of the operation of the Forum and asked members for their views.

The Finance Manager asked the Forum to take note of the following points:-

- Paragraph 9 in the terms of reference needs amending to state that substitutes can vote on behalf of the member they are representing.
- It was asked if members who currently have no substitute in place nominate one.
- A number of School Forum members are retiring at the end of this term, therefore nominations for replacements would be requested as soon as possible. This will enable, where necessary, voting to take place and have new members in place by September 2015.
- Draft minutes from meetings should be available for viewing earlier than at present.
- Induction for new Forum members needs to be reviewed and improved.

Forum agreed to the recommendation to alter paragraph 9 of the Terms of Reference

#### **5. Budget Update 2014/15**

The Forum referred to a previously circulated paper. The details of which confirmed the final underspend for 2014/15. It was pointed out to the Forum that at the March meeting the projected underspend for 2014/15 was £206,635. This has now increased by £162,586 to £369,221.

It was noted that £13,000 of this underspend has just been allocated to George Dent for their 2015/16 rent (Agenda Item 2).

#### **6. Budget Update 2015/16**

The Forum referred to a previously circulated paper. The Finance Manager went through the updates and answered questions.

It was agreed by the Forum that as the EFA do not allocate the 2 year olds budget until July, Forum would look closer at the early year's budget in their October meeting.

The Forum agreed to the allocations and recommendations put forward in the report.

#### **7. DSG High Needs Services Reviews Progress Report**

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. Forum were talked through the work completed so far and the findings from the review taking place of the Speech and Language Resource Base (hosted by Northwood Primary School) and the Low Incidence Needs Service.

Forum were also updated on the work started with the Social, Communication and Outreach Service (SCOS) hosted by Hurworth School, and the Beaumont Hill Outreach Services to mainstream schools.

The recommendations were that the Forum note the progress on these matters.

## **8. Primary Speech and Language Strategy**

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The Schools Forum Officer highlighted the main facts.

Schools Forum agreed to the recommendation to adopt the Speech and Language strategy and noted the actions as a way forward.

## **9. School Transport**

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report.

The changes for the non-statutory transport arrangements policy which includes the increase in costs to parents for the academic year 2015/2016 were pointed out. It is expected that forecast figures and more detailed financial information will be available to the Forum prior to their next meeting.

The re-tendering process is still underway and it is anticipated, upon completion, when new contracts are in place, the overall cost of transport will be reduced. It is hoped, eventually, it will be self-funding and get to the point where there is no cost to the Schools Forum.

The working group want to find a sustainable option to enable the continued delivery of discretionary transport. In order to do this the LA has commissioned the services of Paul Robson who has expertise in this area. Paul will undertake research and present options to the working group for consideration.

The Schools Forum will be updated as the information becomes available.

## **10. DSG High Needs Funding Reform Progress Report**

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report. The main points were highlighted and explained.

The Forum were notified that a costed provision map developed by Stockton Borough Council would be used by Darlington. After May half term it will be shared with schools and they have until October to complete it for all pupils who have SEN support needs in excess of £6000. The Local Authority will then process and collate the information in November, with a view to a decision being made on the DSG High Needs Funding Formula by December.

Forum noted the content of the report.

## **11. Any Other Business**

The Finance Manager asked the Forum to note the dates of the meetings for the academic year 2015/16. They are:-

06/10/2015 – 2pm Committee Room 1  
12/01/2016 – 2pm Committee Room 1  
08/03/2016 – 2pm Committee Room 1  
17/05/2016 – 2pm Committee Room 1

The Chair offered thanks and best wishes to those Forum members who are retiring and will not be returning in October.