

## **DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM**

**13<sup>th</sup> January, 2015**

**PRESENT** - Peter King (Corporation Road Community School) (in the Chair), Craig Alderson (High Coniscliffe Church of England Primary School), Paula Ayto (Reid Street Primary School), Christine Boyce (St Teresa's RC Primary School), Elizabeth Charlton (PVI), Clare Devine (Beaumont Hill School), Richard Gartland (Education Village) Susan Johnson (Longfield Academy of Sport), Dean Judson (Hurworth Academy), Kay Kelly (Rise Carr College), Lindsay Long (PVI), Lynn Millar (Borough Rd Nursery School), Jennifer Moorhouse (Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle), Mike Shorten (Carmel College), Catherine Thompson (West Park Academy), Sam Towle (Darlington School of Maths and Science), Brian Watkinson (The Federation of Mowden Schools), Paul Richardson (16-19 Education) and Shirley Welsh (Whinfield Primary School).

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** - Jenni Cooke (Service Director – Children, Families and Learning), Brett Nielsen (Finance Manager, Neighbourhood Services and Resources Group), Rachel Kershaw (Head of School and Pupil Support Services), Elaine Sayers (Finance Officer), Eleanor Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer) and Chris Archer (Early Years Manager/Lead Officer)

**APOLOGIES** - Mike Fryer (Hummersknott Academy) and Councillor Cyndi Hughes.

**DS32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**DS33. MINUTES** - Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Forum held on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2014.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

**DS34. BUDGET UPDATE 2014/15** – Pursuant to Minute DS25/Oct/14, the Finance Manager, Neighbourhood Services and Resources Group submitted a report (previously circulated) updating the Schools Forum on the 2014/15 Dedicated School Grant (DSG) position.

The Finance Manager highlighted that the current budget was £28,252,317 and that there had been no change to the budget since the last meeting of this Forum. The submitted report outlined a projected saving of approximately £236,000 however this would be subject to fluctuation dependent on the number of children accessing a service/place during the remainder of the financial year.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

**DS35. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA AND GROWTH FUND 2015** – Pursuant to Minutes DS27/Oct/14 and DS31/Oct/14, the Finance Manager, Neighbourhood Services and Resources Group submitted a report (previously circulated) updating

the Schools Forum regarding the school funding formula and the pupil growth fund for 2015/16.

It was reported that the formula agreed at the October 2014 meeting of this Forum, had been submitted to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) in line with the 31<sup>st</sup> October deadline and was approved by the EFA as being compliant in November 2014. The EFA had also approved the request to adjust the minimum funding guarantee calculation to allow a one off distribution of the 2013/14 underspend and use of a sparsity factor to include Bishopton and Redmarshall Primary School.

The report outlined the changes in the funding formula (since the October submission) using the revised datasets and modelling tool provided by the EFA. The Finance Manager outlined that the value of the overall formula had increased from the October submission and therefore modelling had been undertaken with regard to the unit rates to find the “best fit” with regard to balancing the formula to resources available.

Discussion ensued on the School’s Budget Shares 2015/16 attached at Appendix 1 of the submitted report and the AWPU values.

Forum was notified that the formula must be submitted to the EFA by 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

The submitted report also outlined the Growth Fund, the EFA allows the Local Authority to top slice the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to create a fund to support schools which have been requested to provide extra places to meet the basic need within the Authority. It was highlighted that the criteria for the creation of this growth fund stipulated that “the growth fund may not be used to support schools in financial difficulty or general growth due to popularity”.

Members were informed that in line with the EFA rules that the proposed growth fund for 2015/16 would operate in the same manner as agreed for 2014/15 and the criteria for accessing the fund was outlined within the submitted report at paragraphs 21-24.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted and that the proposed criteria for the operation of the growth fund in 2015/16 be agreed by this Forum.

**DS36. BUDGET SETTING 2015/16** – The Finance Manager, Neighbourhood Services and Resources Group submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2015/16.

The Finance Manager clarified the values of top up for Rise Carr in paragraph 30 as £10,513.93 (top up) and £20,513.93 (full cost) as the early version of the papers that were circulated included a type error.

The provisional DSG for Darlington had been received on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014 and was outlined in the submitted report. Budgets had been set based on demand/pupil numbers. There was no proposed changes to either top up payment rates or the system for payment.

Discussion ensued on the changes to the budget allocations and the place funding for high needs settings.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the top up unit rates, as detailed in paragraph 30 of the submitted report be agreed by the Forum.

(c) That the budget allocation for DSG in 2015/16 as detailed in appendix 1 be agreed by the Forum.

**DS37. EARLY YEARS EDUCATION** – Pursuant to Minute DS30/Oct/14, the School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to setting hourly rates for 2015/16 for three, and four year olds, the recycling of the deprivation payment, the distribution of 2013/14 underspend to providers and the possible introduction of the incentive payments, related to quality and/or staffing/qualifications.

The submitted report outlined that for the hourly rates 2015/16, the budget for the early years delivery was £3,376,626 and that the options presented to the Forum had been based on the numbers on roll for the 2013/14 academic year and therefore were subject to change dependant on actual take up of places in 2015/16. It was highlighted that the underspend figures were indicative and that any underspend should be used as a contingency for 2015/16 or rolled forward into 2016/17 budget setting.

Two options were submitted to the Forum regarding the basic hourly rate, the first was no change to be made to the hourly rates, this would keep the rates at £3.55 for a PVI setting and £3.45 for a school setting creating a budget underspend of £69,941, the second option was to increase the hourly rate for all providers by 7pence, which would be the maximum affordable within the budget, equating to a rate of £3.62 for a PVI setting and £3.52 for a school setting.

It was reported that the budget for the deprivation supplement was £125,000 and that this Local Authority currently paid a deprivation supplement in addition to the three and four year old hourly rate for children living in the 30 percent most deprived areas. With the introduction of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) from April 2015, additional payments will be made for eligible children therefore it could be viewed that the deprivation supplement is a duplicate payment. However the deprivation supplement is mandatory.

Discussion ensued on the four options outlined in the submitted report concerning the future use of deprivation funding, including what was fairer for each child, the

varied uptake of the Free School Meals within different communities and the issues within the current rental market and postcode deprivation.

The submitted report also outlined that the underspend for the 2013/14 budget was £153,339 and proposed two options regarding how this could be distributed. It was noted that a request had been approved by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to remove any increase agreed to the hourly rates regarding underspend from the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) calculation to ensure that future year's rates are affordable.

Discussion ensued on the advantages and disadvantages of each option and the views of the Primary Heads Forum, the Secondary Heads Forum and the PVI Forum for each decision to be made and the future possible implementation in future years of quality/incentive payment.

**RESOLVED** – That the following be agreed :-

- (a) for the Hourly Rates 2015/16, Option 2, as detailed at paragraph 10 of the submitted report, be approved;
- (b) for the Deprivation Supplement, Option 1, as detailed at paragraph 22 of the submitted report, be approved;
- (c) for Distribution of 2013/14 Underspend, Option 2, as detailed at paragraph 33 of the submitted report, be approved; and
- (d) that the concept of a Future Years Quality/Incentive Payment be retained for possible use in future years and budgets.

**DS38. DSG SERVICES – REVIEW UPDATE** – The School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the review currently being undertaken of the DSG funded Services

The submitted report outlined the work that had been undertaken to review the Low Incidence Needs Service and the Northwood Primary Language Resource Base. It was reported that the initial stage of the review had been used to gain an understanding of the services, to discuss and agree the current issues and gain views and opinions and that this had been done through a plethora of mediums as outlined in the submitted report.

Discussion ensued on the key themes that had emerged, areas of support identified as important but missing from the current service 'offer', how support would be given to schools to commission these services and the budget review for the service areas that would be undertaken shortly.

**RESOLVED** – That the progress on the review of services, the next steps and the timescales of the review all be noted by the Forum.