

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

7th October, 2014

PRESENT - Peter King (Corporation Road Community School) (in the Chair), Christine Boyce (St Teresa's RC Primary School), Elizabeth Charlton (PVI), Mike Fryer (Hummersknott Academy), Richard Gartland (Education Village) David Hall (Darlington School of Maths and Science), 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), Maura Regan (Carmel College), Sue Richardson (Education Village), Catherine Thompson (West Park Academy), Brian Watkinson (The Federation of Mowden Schools), and Shirley Welsh (Whinfield Primary School),

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE - Councillor Cyndi Hughes and Heather McCoy (Education Funding Agency).

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE - Jenni Cooke (Service Director – Children, Families and Learning), Brett Nielsen (Finance Manager Neighbourhood and Resources Group), Elaine Sayers (Finance Officer), Eleanor Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer), Paul Richardson (16-19 Education) and Chris Archer (Early Years Manager/Lead Officer)

APOLOGIES - Rachel Kershaw (The Head of School and Pupil Support Services), and Craig Alderson (High Coniscliffe Church of England Primary School).

DS21. MEMBERSHIP – It was highlighted to the Forum that Paul Wray (West Park Academy) had resigned from his position on this Forum and that a primary academy vacancy would now be advertised to the relevant schools.

DS22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

DS23. MINUTES - Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Forum held on 10th June, 2014.

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

DS24. MATTERS ARISING – (1) Durham Music Service – Pursuant to Minutes DS4/Apr/14 and DS14/Jun/14, it was reported that all schools had been contacted in relation to the situation regarding the Music Service, (Durham Music Service) following the discussion that had taken place at the previous meeting of this Forum.

(2) Low Incidence Needs – The Finance Manager, Neighbourhood and Resources Group gave an update on the recent funding request to the Local Authority from the Low Incidence Needs service for additional staff. The Forum was informed of the capacity issues of the vision and hearing team and the exercise undertaken to

address this and seek additional staff time. It was reported that the Head of School and Pupil Support Services had met with the Head Teacher and had agreed a short term funding solution of £25,000 allocation from the High Needs budget, and that in future years, this would be included within the Forum's budget decisions.

RESOLVED – (a) That the short term funding allocation given to the Low Incidence Needs Service be agreed by this Forum.

DS25. BUDGET UPDATE 2014/15 – The Finance Manager, Neighbourhood and Resources Group submitted a report (previously circulated) updating the Schools Forum on the 2014/15 Dedicated School Grant (DSG) position.

The Finance Manager gave an update on the current year's budget as outlined in the submitted report, and highlighted to Members that the Education Funding Agency (EFA) had updated the allocation of the DSG for Darlington to £26,271,000 for 2014/15 which was a decrease of £77,994 on the previous allocation. The decrease was a result of an update of the early years block following the adjustment of pupil numbers taken from the January 2014 census. It was reported that the reduction in allocation for the early year's census had been taken from the three and four year old nursery budget carry forward (from the 2013/14 DSG), the budget now stood at £28,252,317.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

DS26. SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) FUNDING – The Head of 16-19 (Learning and Skills) submitted a report (previously circulated) updating the Schools Forum on the SEN funding reform and the work undertaken on the methodology to determine the allocation of high needs funding above the £6,000 threshold.

It was reported that the Department for Education (DFE) had changed the schools funding formula in 2014, applying a £6,000 threshold for delegation of SEN funding through the Schools Block of the DSG impacting on Darlington Schools, with a reduction in the delegated limits and the need for a movement of funding from the schools formula driven 'Notional SEN' allocation to the High Needs Block. The DFE's intention being that the high needs funding will be re-allocated on a needs led basis where individual pupils require additional support above the £6,000 threshold.

Discussion ensued on the interim measure taken to move money out of the high needs pot to cover and establish the change of funding that would be created, and that this would continue for 2015/16 whilst a model and costing map were created and implemented.

Discussion also ensued on the further work that would be undertaken to create a benchmark group to looking at how other Local Authorities were implementing the changes to the funding, the uncertainty of the impact on Darlington Schools and the future funding of behaviour and nurture units.

RESOLVED – That the Forum note the content of the report and that the delay in implementing any changes to the high needs funding model in 2015/16 be agreed.

DS27. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2015/16 – The Finance Manager, Neighbourhood Services and Resources Group submitted a report (previously circulated) updating the Schools Forum on the setting of schools budget shares for 2015/16.

The Finance Manager advised Members that the funding formula for 2015/16 had been drafted and circulated to schools in early September for comments. It was reported that the 2015/16 formula was almost identical to the 2014/15 formula, using the same methodology and that the slight changes made by the EFA were outlined in the submitted report.

Discussion ensued on using the same formula model and the October pupil census.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the continued use of the previously agreed 2014/15 formula factors in the 2015/16 formula be agreed by this Forum.

(c) That the final paper be brought to this Forum at the January 2015 meeting.

DS28. SCHOOL FORUM MONITORING AND SUPPORT OFFICER ROLE OBJECTIVES AND KEY ACTIVITIES – The School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer submitted a report (previously circulated) to update the Schools Forum on the role of the post.

An overview of the process of commissioning, and its importance in ensuring that the providers are meeting the right outcomes at the right cost was given. The use of commissioning would enhance decision making regarding the DSG.

It was reported that the core objective of the role was to review services including those in the 'Local Offer' which sit within schools and that are directly managed within schools to identify; what provision exists; whether it is of high quality and meets the local current needs; if and how the provision can be improved and if not, why not and what would need to be done, clarifying for schools what services they actually deliver and ensuring the placements are relevant.

Discussion ensued on the service review form, which was appended to the submitted report; the current ongoing work with the Northwood Primary School, Speech and Language base, the future commissioning of any new services and possible work that could be undertaken as suggested by the Forum.

RESOLVED – (a) That the suggested approach to review and commission services be agreed by this Forum.

(b) That the Visual and Hearing Service be looked at as a priority be agreed by this Forum.

(c) That the service review form, as attached to the submitted report be agreed by this Forum.

(d) That the timescales for the work to be undertaken be noted.

DS29. DISCUSSION PAPER – HIGH NEEDS BUDGET – The School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of the current position of the High Needs Budget and the current financial report attached to the submitted report.

She gave an overview of the submitted report and highlighted to Members that with the DSG being split into the three blocks, Schools, Early Years and High Needs the money had been able to move freely with no impact on the other budgets however in the current year the High Needs budget had been allocated more funding than the original EFA allocation block, creating a deficit of £919,157. It was reported that this was currently subsidised from the schools block with no adverse impact on the schools.

The point was made that with the expenditure against the high needs increasing (for example, more places have been commissioned at special units and increased individual assigned top ups in main stream schools), that any additional funding allocated by the EFA to Darlington in 2015/16 supporting the overspend, is not guaranteed for future years.

Discussion ensued on the financial report attached to the submitted report and the close monitoring and reviews of the services to schools.

RESOLVED – That the high needs budget position be noted and that the high needs budget and progress updates be added to all future agendas.

DS30. DISCUSSION PAPER – FREE FUNDED EDUCATION (FFE) – 2, 3 & 4

YEAR OLDS – Pursuant to Minute DS15/June/14, the School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer submitted a report (previously circulated) to request an increase of the PVI hourly rate for the delivery of funded places for two, three and four year old children.

The submitted report outlined the School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer's research into the funding issues previously raised, from looking at funding on both a National and Local scale it was confirmed that there was a current shortfall in the funding. It was highlighted to Members that the objective for the increase of funding continued to be to sustain the highest quality to ensure that children were 'school ready' and to ensure retention and attraction of higher qualified staff.

Discussion ensued on the options for the Forum as outlined at paragraphs 33 and 34 of the submitted report and the future consequences of each option.

RESOLVED – (a) That the two year old funding rate for 2015/16 be £4.98 per hour (the same as in 2014/15, that being a 13 pence per hour top up above the funding received).

(b) The Forum agreed Option B (para 33) of the paper previously distributed, that future budget setting should increase three and four year old hourly rates by no more than the budget available and that Forum will give consideration of paras 36 & 37 respecting the recycling of the deprivation payment. Options should be brought to the next School Forum to consider for budget setting for 2015/16 and beyond.

It was raised that the current underspend on the three and four year old budget (pursuant to item 3, para 16), should be distributed as a one-off payment to all settings.

(c) That thanks be given to Eleanor Marshall, Chris Archer, Lindsay Long and Brett Nielsen for their input into the report.

DS31. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – PUPIL GROWTH FUND – The Head teacher of the Federation of Mowden Schools gave a verbal report to the Forum on the Pupil Growth Fund to request a change to the timescales for the funding to be released.

Members were advised that the school could face financial difficulty due to the extended in take capacity at Key Stage 2, the sibling link made at Reception but not all parents wanting to take up the place at the Junior School and the formula previously agreed by this Forum to release funds before the census if over 15 more children are taken at the school but the school falling just short of that number.

Discussion ensued on the agreed funding formula for the year, the issues facing the school with not receiving funding until the next census and the possible impacts on secondary education.

RESOLVED – It was agreed that the Finance Manager would look into the use of the growth fund further.