

# DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

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## MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017

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### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

P King (The Federation of Mowden Schools (in the Chair)); M Fryer (Hummersknott); M Shorten (Carmel College); G Hart (Hurworth School); S Pelham (Polam Hall Free School); A Collishaw (Longfield Academy); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); M Butler (Education Village); S Crowther (Mount Pleasant); C Peacock (Holy Family); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); J Moorhouse (Carmel College); C Large (St John's Academy); J Thompson (Borough Rd Nursery School); E Calvert (William House Nursery (PVI)); I Maile (Flora House Nursery (PVI)); P Richardson (Post 16).

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

S Nyakatawa (Interim Head of Education); B Nielsen (Finance Manager); E Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer); L Brazier (Consultant Head of SEND); E Sayers Finance Officer; S Lewington (Clerk).

### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

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

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

E Hickerson (Rise Carr College); J Steele (Heathfield); D Judson (Hurworth School); S Johnson (Longfield School).

#### **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.

It was mentioned that that there would be one item of Any Other Business regarding the underspend within the LAPPs budgets brought from the previously held Primary Heads meeting.

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

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> January 2017 were agreed as a true record.

There was no matters arising.

### **3. Pupil Growth Fund – St George’s Primary School**

Forum referred to a previously circulated paper.

It was agreed at the previous meeting that a paper providing further detail on the application to the growth fund would be brought to Forum for consideration.

The following points/questions were raised/asked and discussed as follows:-

- Does the school have the right to access the growth fund to accommodate extra capacity?
- Will 105 places be enough when there are going to be hundreds more houses?
- The land space where the school is situated will probably not be big enough and within a few years there will be a new school needed.
- Are we going to be funding “ghost” places or will the places be full from day one?
- Could growth fund pick up the costs in the first instance but after year one, only if the increase in numbers is 10 or more per year?
- Should the funding actually come from the basic needs funding?
- Could the school not fund this expansion when it’s already sitting on a healthy reserve?
- Could this expansion possibly take pupils/funding away from other schools?

Forum agreed to the growth fund application recommendation in line with paragraph 14 (AWPU funding for 30 children plus £5,000 in the 17/18 academic year and further funding in future years in line with the growth fund formula).

It was agreed that this is a one off approval and any future school expansions requiring growth funding should be considered as part of the consultation/agreement of the School Organisational Plan.

### **4. Budget Update 2016/17**

Forum referred to a previously circulated report, the point of which was to update Forum regarding the 2016/17 budget.

The Finance Manager talked Forum through the update pointing out that the figures are more accurate than previous projections as they contain two full terms spend, however the final spend figures would still be subject to change dependent on spend during the spring term.

Forum will be presented with the final figures at their next meeting when decisions can be made regarding any underspend.

Forum referred to paragraphs 10 and 11 which provided details of the early years underspend. It was noted that there is an increased underspend in the 2 year old nursery budget. The Finance Manager explained that the funding allocation was given in advance based on previous terms pupil numbers so it is possible that if there has been a decrease in 2 year old pupils, then there will be a decrease in the funding next year which will offset this underspend.

It was noted that the projected overall budget underspend of £368,000 is large and it was asked if this could not be allocated to the funding formula. The Finance Manager responded that at the time of doing the funding formula the projected underspend was subject to change and this underspend cannot be released now, as the funding formula has already been submitted. It was also noted that in 2016/17 a large amount of the underspend has been ring fenced to the 2 year old budget.

It was mentioned that 2 year old numbers are extremely difficult to plan for.

It was recommended that Forum note the current budget position.

## **5. School Funding Formula & Budget Updates 2017/18**

Forum referred to a previously circulated report.

The report was to provide a brief update of any changes since the last meeting. It was confirmed there is not much change.

There was an error in the budget share for one school, this occurred because of an error in the data supplied by the EFA in the formula tool. It resulted in a reduction of £20,684 to the school's budget.

Apologies were made for a typo in paragraph 7 of the report, this should state 2<sup>nd</sup> February not January.

Forum were referred to Appendix 1 which provided the revised budget position.

Currently the budget is £77,309 in excess of the DSG allocation, it is expected that the budget can be brought in line during the year.

It was recommended that Forum note the content of the report.

## 6. Early Years Funding Formula 2017/18

The Forum referred to a previously circulated report and a paper detailing the questions asked in a recent consultation exercise regarding the funding of early years in Darlington.

Forum referred to paragraph 15 of the report noting the main decision to come from the consultation. This was regarding the rate of deprivation funding and its effect on the 3 & 4 year old hourly rate. The outcome of the consultation was that deprivation funding will be reduced by 50%, making the rates £50, £25 and £12.50. The other main points to note were:-

- The disabled access fund is to be paid in line with national guidance at £615.
- All supplementary funding for maintained nurseries schools will be passported in line with national guidance.
- 2 year olds will receive the full rate of £5.20.
- The Local Authority will top slice the 3 & 4 year old funding by 2.2% to contribute towards the early year's team. This is well below the 7% maximum allowed.
- £150,000 will be set aside for SEN inclusion.
- It is expected there will be no increase in funding from the Government before April 2020.
- It is expected to be at least Christmas next year before it is known what the 30 hours uptake will be in Darlington and how this will affect the budget.

A discussion was held about the reduction in deprivation and how this will hit schools hard with the highest percentage of pupils in living in deprived areas. It was pointed out that only 4 schools out of 20 had responded to the consultation. It was discussed that all of the money is to be reinvested into the hourly rate, therefore every child would attract the higher funding, not just those deemed from deprived areas. At the moment this equates to £40 per child, in September, for those children entitled to receive 30 hours, this will be £80 per child.

It was discussed that there is a chance that funds from underspend could possibly be used in later years to increase the current rates.

Settings currently feel that sustainability is being taken out of their hands and Government need to take account, especially as they have such a massive input into the care and development of 2 year olds.

Forum voted and agreed to the proposed early years formula for 2017/18.

## **7. School Forum Officer Work Update**

Forum referred to a previously circulated report, the purpose of which was to update Forum on the review of the high needs services and related activity.

Forum noted paragraph 2 which gave the current position on places taken up on the panel. It was advised that children that need to be considered for a resource base place in September should be put forward by schools for the May panel as soon as possible.

There is to be an ASD Leads event to be held by the end of term. The aim is to build the resources and capacity in Darlington to support a standard approach, encouraging autism friendly schools.

Paragraphs 9 and 10 detailed the services provided by Durham Music Service given to FSM pupils in 30 schools across Darlington. Further details are to be provided at a later meeting.

It was confirmed that 5 schools have not yet engaged in any of the Future in Mind projects. Seven schools have been confirmed as taking part of the e-safety project so far.

It was asked that Forum note the progress on the review of services and monitoring activity (paragraph 15).

## **8. Accessibility Strategy**

Forum referred to a previously circulated report

Paragraph 6 highlighted that some schools continue to produce single equality schemes despite the fact there are no statutory requirements to do so as this was replaced with the need to publish equality objectives. Accessibility plans need to be reviewed every 3 years and therefore there is a risk that schools may miss the statutory review if continuing to review under the single equality scheme timescales. Training is going to be organised for maintained schools and a traded service is going to be offered to Academies.

It was requested that Forum nominate a maintained school/setting representative to sit on the Accessibility Strategy Group. Primary Forum is going to be approached for nominations.

Forum were asked to note the contents of the report (paragraphs 23 & 24).

## 9. Any Other Business

The Chair raised under any other business the underspend within the LAPPS budgets.

There were many questions asked and points raised – the main items being as follows:-

- There are 3 LAPP budgets which were allocated £25k each for 16/17. There is £60,501 unspent in the budgets.
- Proposal to ring fence this underspend to set up a provision for vulnerable children in primary education.
- It was noted that the LAPP budget is revenue and therefore cannot be used capital spend. The LAPP budget sits within the high needs block, EFA permission may need to be sought to convert to capital funding.
- Governance issues need to be checked.
- In 17/18 there is £45k for regional lead, £76k new burdens grant & £500k SEND capital.
- To defer any decision to a future meeting once further details have been checked.
- The Finance manager mentioned that the whole of the DSG budget needed to be looked at together and it may not be possible to ring fence individual underspends, as the high needs pot is projected to be overspent in 16/17 by £300k inclusive of the LAPP underspend, the budget needs to be balanced overall. In addition the budget for 17/18 has a £77k shortfall that needs to be funded.
- High needs budgets are the LA responsibility.
- Discussions took place regarding turnaround/Marchbank and assessment places.

Forum agreed to,

- Revisit the issue after year end.
- To check on funding rules.
- Steve N to discuss with Redhall School about the provision by Easter.

### **Date/Time/Location of next meeting**

16<sup>th</sup> May 2017, 2pm, Committee Room 1, Town Hall.