

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes - 14th January, 2014

PRESENT Keith Cotgrave (in the Chair), David Ackroyd (Northwood Primary School), Craig Alderson (High Coniscliffe Church of England Primary School), Christine Boyce (St Teresa's RC Primary School), David Hall (Darlington School of Maths and Science), Dean Judson (Hurworth Secondary School), Peter King (Corporation Road Community School), Christine Large (St John's Church of England Academy), Lindsay Long (PVI), Jennifer Moorhouse (Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle), Martin Proud (St Aidan's Academy), Maura Regan (Carmel College), Sue Richardson (Education Village), Catherine Thompson (West Park Academy), Brian Watkinson (The Federation of Mowden Schools), Lynn Miller (Borough Rd Nursery school), Kerry Loftus (Rise Carr College), Sam Hirst (West Park Academy), Mike Fryer (Hummersknott)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Cyndi Hughes.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director – Children, Families and Learning, Rachel Kershaw, The Head of School and Pupil Support Services, Brett Nielsen, Finance Manager Resources Department and Elaine Sayers, Finance Officer, Resources Department.

APOLOGIES – Elizabeth Charlton (PVI), Kay Kelly (Rise Carr College), and Paul Richardson (16-19 Education).

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 19th November, 2013.

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

DS34. MATTERS ARISING – Pursuant to Minute DS27/19Nov13, it was requested that further information be given at the next meeting of the Forum regarding Voluntary/Trust Admissions Contingency 2013/14.

Submitted - Pursuant to Minute AOB(2)/19Nov13, – A copy of the Job Description (previously circulated) for a post of School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer ,

The Assistant Director – Children, Families and Learning gave an overview of the Job Description, what the role would entail and the reporting relationships of the role.

Discussion ensued; on the views from the recent Primary and Secondary Heads meetings, whether the post needed to be a full time or part time role, how the role would be funded and the Forum's input in the recruitment process.

RESOLVED – (a) That the request for further information of Voluntary/Trust Admissions Contingency be accepted and tabled at a future meeting of the Forum.

(b) That the Job Description be noted, that the post be progressed on a pilot basis and that Members register their interest in the recruitment process with the Assistant Director – Children, Families and Learning.

DS35. BUDGET UPDATE 2013/14 – The Finance Manager, Resources Group submitted a report (previously circulated) updating the Schools Forum on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget in 2013/14.

The Finance Manager reported that the projected underspend noted at the Forum held in November, had risen by £83,000, and that the projected approximate underspend at the end of March 2014 would be £1,339,000. The Finance Manager informed members, that the £83,000 increased underspend was made up from a projected underspend of £59,000 on the Individual Learning Support (ILS) budget and £28,000 on the two year old funding budget.

It was also reported that the submission made to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) in November 2013, to convert some of the unused 2 year old revenue funding into capital resources, had been approved in December 2013. £500,000 of the revenue budget had therefore been converted into capital to increase 2 year old places. It was highlighted that this capital budget was to be spent by the end of March 2015.

Discussion ensued on the repayment of the PFI reserve and the possible use of the current underspend in future years.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the repayment of the PFI reserve from the 2013/14 underspend, increasing future years AWPU levels be approved by the Forum.

DS36. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2014/15 – The Finance Manager, Resources Group submitted a report (previously circulated) to update the Schools Forum regarding the School Funding formula for 2014/15.

The Finance Manager reported that at the special October meeting of the Forum, it was agreed that the submission of a provisional funding formula to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) be based on “model 55”. This was then subsequently approved as compliant in November 2013 by the EFA. The final formula will be submitted on the same basis with the only adjustment being increases in the AWPU values.

Discussion ensued to the changes to the funding formula and savings that had arisen from a procurement exercise of support services at Rise Carr College.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted and that the savings from Rise Carr be invested within the formula.

(b) That the proposed criteria for the operation of the growth fund in 2014/15 be approved by the Forum.

DS37. EARLY YEARS EDUCATION – The PVI Representatives submitted a report (previously circulated) to request an increase of the PVI hourly rate for the delivery of funded places to £5.18 for two- year old children and £3.80 for three and four year old children.

The PVI Representative gave an overview of the report and highlighted to members; the difficulties being faced by playgroups and pre-schools in connection with underfunding and financial instability, the positive impact on the phases of education that follow pre-school from having a high quality childcare provider for preschool years and the on-going work being implemented to ensure that there were staff with appropriate high level qualifications employed within the establishments.

Discussion ensued; on the views from the recent Primary and Secondary Head's meetings, the current funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant, the changes to the Government funding and the sustainability of the childcare providers.

RESOLVED – (a) That further financial information be submitted to the Forum in order for an informed decision to be made regarding 3 & 4 year old nursery provision

(b) That the 2 year old rate be increased to £5.09 in line with the amount of funding received from the EFA.

Note, post meeting it was identified that the EFA do not actually fund at £5.09 hence the decision made in (b) above was based on inaccurate information. This decision will therefore return to the next Forum.

DS39. BUDGET SETTINGS 2014/15 – The Finance Manager, Resources Group submitted a report (previously circulated), requesting that consideration be given to the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2014/15.

The Finance Manager reported that in November when the provisional budget allocations had been agreed, there had been no budget allocations or funding template received (from the EFA), so budgets had been made on a series of estimations. It was highlighted to members that the final funding formula modelling tool was received on the 13th December; this had then allowed a funding formula for

2014/15 to be calculated. The provisional DSG for Darlington had been received on 18th December, 2013 and was outlined in the submitted report.

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 be maintained at the same value as in 2013/14 as detailed in the table at paragraph 19 in the submitted report be agreed by the Forum.

(c) That the budget allocation for DSG in 2014/15 as detailed in appendix 1 be agreed by the Forum.

DS40. FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE ADMISSION OF VULNERABLE PUPILS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS – The Head of School and Pupil Support, People Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that School Forum support the Local Area Primary Panel's (LAP Panels) to draw down funding from the High Needs element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to support the admission of vulnerable pupils as part of the Fair Access Protocol.

The Head of School and Pupil Support gave a brief overview of the Fair Access Protocol which had been developed to manage the admission and transfer of vulnerable pupils between primary schools. Members were informed that although the primary protocols were in their infancy, each locality, at the time of the Forum, had met once, with future meetings scheduled for the remainder of the academic year. Each of the localities had discussed complex cases and agreement had been reached on the admission of all of the children presented to panel.

Discussion ensued on the financial impact of complex needs, the benefits of the funding being released and how the funding relates to staff cost.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That each LAPP's be allocated up to £25,000 funding from the high needs element of the DSG, in line with the conditions of the submitted report be agreed by the Forum.

(c) That the situation be reviewed again in six and 12 months prior to a decision being made to extend the access to the funding be agreed by the Forum.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – The Forum agreed to extend its thanks to Keith Cotgrave for Chairing and supporting the Forum, and wished him well on his retirement.