

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING THURSDAY, 18TH OCTOBER 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT:

P King (The Federation of Mowden Schools (chair)); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); M Butler (Education Village); C Large (St John's CE Academy); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); D Leane ((for J Moorhouse)(RC Diocese Hexham & Newcastle)); N Gibbon (St Aidans CE Academy); K A Lyle (Rydal Academy); D Vizzard (St George's); K Reid (Polam Hall School); M Shorten (Carmel College); S Hudson (Rise Carr College); E Calvert (William House Nursery); M Taylor (St Bede's RC Primary) M Fryer (Governor-Hummersknott)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

B Nielsen (Finance Manager); T Murphy (Head of Education & Inclusion); E Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer); E Sayers (Finance Officer)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Hughes (Lead Member Children and Young People)

APOLOGIES

D Judson (Swift Academies); Paul Richardson (Head of Learning & Skills & 11-19)

Welcome, Introduction &

Register/Declaration of business interests

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and a round of introductions took place.

There were no declarations of interest.

1. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

It was noted that Councillor Hughes who was present at the last meeting had been missed off the list of attendees.

It was noted that comments made by Councillor Hughes regarding the democratic processes required in policy changes had not been recorded within the minutes. It was agreed that the minutes would therefore be updated.

The remainder of the minutes (previously circulated) for the Schools Forum meeting held 7th July 2018 were agreed as a true record.

It was pointed out that the date had changed for the lobby day (last paragraph in previous minutes) was now Friday, 16th November at 1.30pm at Durham County Cricket Club, Chester Le Street.

2. Budget Update 2018/19

Forum referred to a previously circulated report.

The Finance Manager highlighted paragraphs 7, 8 and 9.

ESFA have reduced Darlington's 2017/18 early years block by £128,130 (the clawback), this has therefore been taken from the early years carry forward budget.

In line with the 2017/18 early years adjustment ESFA have updated the 2018/19 early years allocation. Darlington's allocation has decreased by £271,891 which has required adjustments to the early years budgets previously presented.

At the start of the financial year, ESFA noted that the high needs block allocations provided were provisional and that an adjustment would be made in year for "import/export" of places between local authorities. This adjustment has now been made and Darlington's high needs block has decreased by £65,819 as a result.

The figures shown in Appendix 1 show the current projected year end position, however it was highlighted that projections are based on one term and do not include census information from the autumn or spring terms and are therefore subject to change.

It was asked how other local authorities compare with our high needs pressures? Although the detail was not available at the meeting it was noted that most other authorities in the North East also have a high needs deficit.

Forum noted the current budget position and the high needs deficit.

3. High Needs Update

Forum were provided with a paper titled “High Needs Block” to update members regarding the plans for the high needs deficit recovery plan. Following a Cabinet decision on 9th October 2018 the Authority will be consulting on a draft SEND strategy and funding arrangements. The consultation will end on the 28th November 2018 and the draft strategy identifies 6 key objectives for supporting Darlington’s children and young people with SEND.

- Early identification of need ensuring that the right children and young people are in the right placement with the right support.
- Building capacity in mainstream settings to enable children and young people to be educated in appropriate settings locally.
- Ensuring that children and young people are educated in their local community and have an effective preparation for adulthood and access to work and leisure opportunities.
- Increasing achievement and improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Focus on effective collaboration, co-production and communication.
- Achieving ‘Best Value’ (human, physical and financial resources) from all our services.

The proposals around “top up” funding are to replace the current banding system linked to the SEND needs ranges which outline a pupil need approach. The draft strategy outlines gaps in local provision and the consultation will seek views on the type of need as illustrated in the paper provided at the meeting.

The figures quoted in the paper are indicative pending the outcome of the public consultation, cabinet decision and the current funding formula consultation. The consultation will seek views via a website, public events/letters to parents and a “survey monkey” for the public to give their views along with continued working with SENCO’s in schools. Cabinet will make a decision on the final proposal based on all feedback and is expected to be applied from the 2019/20 academic year.

The Forum discussed the points within the paper, the following points/comments were noted.

Forum members were reminded of the political process that we need a meaningful and fair policy to be agreed by Cabinet. With public comments to be reflected in the consultation as we do not want to be in a situation where we have to have a judicial review as this would lead to delay.

It was pointed out that the Darlington deficit position is also the case nationally, with a number of local authorities reporting high needs budget deficits.

It was agreed that changes to funding could have a negative impact on children and the education they receive. It was noted that is due to a lack of funding in the system at a government level.

The plan was well received, however the plan does not cover the recovery of all the historic deficits. It was asked how this was to be recovered and if a clear plan covering five years could be provided. It was noted that the current plan was at summary level at this stage and only covered the in-year budget pressure in 2019/20. Further work is continuing upon the plan, with the firming up of proposals, following the end of the consultation/decision making process.

It was noted that at present that it is not known over what time period previous years deficits are to be recovered. DfE are nationally requiring local authorities with deficit budgets to provide plans of how these will be addressed from 2019/20. DfE are to consult and provide clarification in the autumn on how this process will be taken forward.

Schools are concerned that top up funding will not be enough to support some children and their parents expectations. This will effect schools in that parents will challenge the school on the level of support, possibly leading to the children being taken out of mainstream schools.

The new banding ranges are to be linked to the child's needs and funded appropriately for that need.

It is important to share with parents what the funding arrangements are. In order that parents are aware of the funding in the system, to provide support to their children.

Forum noted the report.

4. School Funding Formula 2019/20

Forum referred to previously circulated reports. The Finance Manager highlighted the key points for the year 2019/20 and that there will be no great change from the current year in the parameters of the funding formula for 2019/20. It was also highlighted that the DfE have also confirmed that the calculation of budget shares will remain with the Local Authority for 2020/2021.

The Finance Manager made note to the proposed changes to the funding formula papers for 2019/20 that had been circulated to all schools on 27th September. A short brief was given regarding the options and proposed option in the circulated papers.

It was noted that a further open meeting has been arranged on 22nd October for schools to ask questions and discuss the options with local authority representatives.

Papers for the additional meeting to be sent out to all schools so those that cannot attend have sight.

5. School Forum Officer Work Update (Verbal)

The School's Forum officer gave an update of the national and local developments relating to supporting the social, emotional and mental health needs of children and young people within a school environment. This noted the current work ongoing with schools and the benefits to schools from the current and potential future initiatives.

The DfE sponsored a pilot programme in 2015 to strengthen joint working arrangements between schools and specialist Children & Young Peoples Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Darlington were invited to take part in joint workshops during the second national pilot, commencing in Spring Term 2018, and due to the success of these workshops, Darlington have been asked to participate in a second round of workshops. Following this a national evaluation of this programme is now taking place and the CCG and Darlington Borough Council are seeking school volunteers to be part of this evaluation. Papers regarding this have been sent out to Head Teachers.

The Department of Health and DfE consulted on a joint Green Paper which strengthens schools role in the transformation of the CYP mental health arena but highlights the need for the correct infrastructure to enable this to happen. This includes the role of 'Mental Health leads' in schools. These leads were invited to the workshops as described above. In addition the CCG and the Local Authority with schools support over the summer period, submitted a bid to become a 'Trailblazer area' to support the delivery of the Green Paper objective to upskilling schools and building capacity in local areas through the development of 'Mental Health Support Teams'. These teams would be led by the CAMHS provider, Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust. The outcome of the bid will be known later in the autumn term.

A paper summarising all these developments would be presented to the Primary Forum and 11-19 Forums.

The School Forum officer also alerted Forum to the position in relation to resource base places for 2019/20. It was agreed that SENCO's should be alerted to the current position.

6. Any Other business

There was no other business.

Date/Time/Location of next meeting

27th November, 10.00 am. Committee Room 2 – Town Hall