

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING THURSDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT:

D Judson (Swift Academies (Chair)); P King (The Federation of Mowden Schools); 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)); H Dummett (Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools); S Crowther (Lingfield Academy Trust); D Vizzard (St George's); K Reid (Polam Hall School); M Shorten (Carmel College); S Hudson (Rise Carr College); M Taylor (St Bede's RC Primary) M Fryer (Governor-Hummersknott); P Richardson (Head of Learning & Skills & 11-19)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

B Nielsen (Finance Manager); T Murphy (Head of Education & Inclusion); E Sayers (Finance Officer)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Hughes (Lead Member Children and Young People)

APOLOGIES

K A Lyle (Rydal Academy); N Gibbon (St Aidans CE Academy); Eleanor Marshall (School Forum Officer).

1. 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.

2. Minutes of Meeting 10th July 2018

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 10th July 2018 were agreed as a true record.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held on 18th October 2018 were agreed as a true record.

4. School Funding Formula 2019/20

The Finance Manager presented the previously circulated paper on the consultation and the proposed funding formula for 2019/20.

The Finance Manager outlined the results of the recently completed consultation on the formula proposals, highlighting the results in the table of “Part A – The transfer of funding between the schools and high needs block”.

The Finance manager outlined ESFA’s recently issued consultation on deficit budget positions. Simply the DSG deficit must be recovered in 3 years, though there may be the possibility of having more time to recover accumulated deficits, on agreement with ESFA. In all cases in year spend should be within budget within three years. This consultation ends on the 7th December 2018, after which point ESFA will finalise what needs to be included within the recovery plans. It was confirmed that the LA will be required to submit a recovery plan for the deficit position as at 31st March 2019 to ESFA by 30th June 2019. This plan will need to be discussed with School Forum before submission.

The Finance manager outlined the results in the table of “Part B – Changes to the characteristic of the formula calculation 2019/20”.

Forum were asked in line with the recommendations to approve a budget transfer of 0.5% from the schools block to the high needs block in 2019/20. In addition Forum were asked in line with the recommendations to consider a budget transfer of more than 0.5% to the high needs block in 2019/20.

The Head of Education and Inclusion thanked everyone for their responses regarding the funding formula and the draft strategy for SEND which identifies funding arrangements, commissioning intentions and top up arrangements.

Feedback was received from the 11-19 partnership meeting. The secondary heads were unable support a transfer of £900,000 to the high needs block, however they were willing consider a transfer above 0.5%

Feedback received from the special schools was they would support a transfer over 0.5%.

Feedback from Primary heads meeting was that primary schools were unable to support a transfer above 0.5%.

Discussions then took place regarding the movement of 0.5% of the schools block into the high needs in 2019/20, with the following key points,

- The impact of transferring money away from the schools block on mainstream schools standards at a time when budgets were under huge pressure.
- The pressures faced by all schools to balance budgets in a time of falling funding.
- Support for the work of the special schools.

School Forum agreed to a transfer of 0.5% from the schools block to the high needs block.

Discussions took place regarding the proposal to transfer more than 0.5% of the schools block to the high needs block as requested by the LA and the hence to submit a request to the Secretary of State. Key points from the discussion were as follows,

- Pressure on schools budgets, at a time of falling funding.
- Reduced funding in mainstream would impact on high needs as schools would not have the funding to work with children with additional needs.
- Out of area costs are very high for a small number of pupils, the return of some of these children would have a major impact on the budget position.
- Due to the pressures on budgets, this is limiting the funding that schools are able to invest into school improvement
- A transfer was agreed last year and a higher request has been proposed for 19/20, will transfers be required every year?
- Can the LA prioritise spending to release funding to support high needs.
- The budget gap between current spend and high needs funding allocations.
- The local and national position regarding funding transfer requests.
- That high needs funding has been a key issue at all recent children conferences, with nationally LA's having huge shortfalls in high needs budgets.
- The current LA consultation regarding the future SEN strategy.
- The summary proposals presented at the October Forum regarding reducing spend and how they would be achieved in 2019/20.
- The timing of changes within SEN provision.
- Future funding shortfalls.

It was advised that 80% of the LA's budget is spent on adult and children's social care. The LA doesn't have a choice on high spend placements due to court orders. The LA have to target support from youth workers and therapeutic social workers, as the LA had to reduce these services due to less funding in its budget.

It was also confirmed that EHCPs have doubled this year and early years intervention funding has decreased which has had a knock on effect.

It was confirmed that with a transfer below the £900,000 level that the budget would be in deficit in 2019/20. Future years budgets would also be in deficit if the

0.5% was not transferred based on the current identified plans, however further budget changes are being considered. The LA will be able to move forward with a more detailed financial plan once the consultation has finished and the outcomes are known.

Forum were reminded that any changes in policies have to follow a set procedure in order to prevent future challenge or judicial review, this takes time to complete.

Forum came to a consensus that a transfer above 0.5% would be supported. A proposal of £400,000 and £450,000 was put to the meeting, with £400,000 (0.6%) receiving backing by 7 votes to 6.

Forum agreed to the following:

Agreed to movement of 0.5% from the schools block into the high needs.

Agreed to support the LA with a submission to the Secretary of State to request a transfer of funds over 0.5%, of £400,000 including the 0.5%.

In the papers put out through the consultation, the new “funding floor” factor was not modelled as it was deemed to be too expensive under the proposed transfer of £900,000 to the high needs block. However it was requested that this option could be looked at again as this may be affordable now that a lower amount (£400,000) had been agreed to transfer to the high needs block.

It was agreed that the final formula would be reviewed for the change in proposed transfer.

5. High Needs Update

This agenda item had been covered in item 4.

6. Any other business

There was no other business.

Date/Time/Location of next meeting

15th January 2019, 2.00 pm. Committee Room 1 – Town Hall