

**DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM**

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**MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY, 15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2019**

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**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); M Charlton (Whinfield Primary); J Moorhouse (RC Diocese Hexham & Newcastle); S Crowther (Lingfield Academy Trust); D Vizzard (St George's); J Mogridge (Polam Hall School); M Shorten (Carmel College); K A Lyle (Rydal Academy); N Gibbon (St Aidans CE Academy)

**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); K Hull (Lingfield Education); Jo Moxon (Interim Manager Education)

**APOLOGIES**

S Hudson (Rise Carr College); E Marshall (School Forum Officer); M Fryer (Governor-Hummersknott); P Richardson (Head of 16-19); E Calvert (William House Nursery).

**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 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018 were agreed as a true record.

It was noted that the minute regarding the Local Authority spend (the bottom of page three) had not captured the comments correctly and should be worded as follows.

“It was advised that 80% of the LA’s budget is spent on adult and children’s social care, where there are demand pressures for services. A large percentage of the children’s social care spend is upon placements for children in the looked after system. In some circumstances placements are made following court orders which can be very high cost”.

### **3. Budget Update 2018/19**

The Finance Manager outlined the current budget position. The main points were as follows:

- Early years – the projected underspend of £147,000 is based on census data from the autumn term. This is therefore subject to change based on actual numbers from the spring census. In addition the actual early years DSG allocation will be adjusted following the January census (which will be notified in June/July), it is expected that the allocation will decrease and hence the underspend will be lower.
- Additional resources – On 17<sup>th</sup> December the Government announced additional funds would be allocated nationally to the high needs block to help with high needs demand. Darlington has been allocated £233,839 for 2018/19.
- Overall the budget is currently projected to be overspent by £2,495,758. Once the early years underspend is removed the overall budget position is approximately £327,000 better than previously reported. This reduction is mainly as a result of the additional high needs allocation from the Government. The overall budget pressure remains very high, with the pressure all from high needs.

### **4. High Needs Update (Verbal)**

The Head of Education gave an update to Forum members on the progress that has been made with regard to the review of the high needs/SEN.

The consultation has now closed. There were nine public meetings attended by health, schools, social care, professional, Council Members and the public. In addition there was also a Survey Monkey. From the public meetings there were approximately 100 responses and 50 from young people (group work) from schools.

Strong support was received for the key objectives, supporting the proposed model of:

- Money following the child
- Funding arrangements (though some concerns on levels)
- Commissioning support for learning difficulties
- Working with a local area strategy.

A report will be presented to Cabinet in March outlining the results of the consultation, the proposed strategy and future options for high needs.

It was noted that the education colleagues would like to have sight/input into the report before the report is taken to Cabinet.

Discussion took place regarding future joint commissioning and how this could make better use of funds across the town. The LA has begun to explore opportunities with Health regarding speech and language Resource Base models.

## **5. School Funding Formula 2019/20 and Growth Fund**

The Finance Manager presented the previously circulated paper. There are three areas to consider,

- The additional funding allocated by the Government for high needs and the impact on Forum's decision in November to transfer 0.6% (£400,000) of the schools block to the high needs block.
- The characteristics of the formula for 2019/20.
- The growth fund for 2019/20.

Forum had agreed in November to a £400,000 (0.6%) transfer of funding to the high needs block and hence a submission had been made to the Secretary of State. Following the Government announcement of additional funding, the Local Authority had been advised that they should reconsider previous decisions along with their Schools Forum. Due to time limitations, the Local Authority had communicated to all schools through email and held an open invite session to discuss the impact of the additional funding.

It was notified that the feedback from the primary heads meeting was that the additional funding released was not of a scale to make a significant change to the high needs pressures and hence the primary heads agreed to keep to the decision made at the November Forum.

There had not been a secondary heads meeting, however a large percentage of secondary schools were represented at the Forum to give a view of secondary schools.

Discussion took place within the Forum regarding the additional funding and the impact this would have on high needs budgets. The position of individual school budgets was raised and the pressures schools are facing. Following the discussion the majority of Forum members took the view that the additional Government

funding whilst welcome did not change the position regarding high needs in Darlington.

Forum agreed to retain the decision they made in November to request a transfer of £400,000 (0.6%) from the schools block to the high needs block.

A discussion then took place regarding the options for the school funding formula. Two options had been put forward in the move towards the national funding formula.

Option 1: Uses the maximum positive MFG value of 0.5% and limited capping. This option also increases the current free school meals, IDACI band F, EAL and prior attainment unit values in each phase.

Option 2: Includes the funding floor and a positive MTG of 0.3% and limited capping.

A vote took place and Option 2 was agreed by the Forum.

The Finance Manager outlined the proposals for the Growth fund for 2019/20 which are to operate on the same basis as in 2018/19. The proposal was agreed, with a growth fund budget of £200,265 created for 2019/20.

## **6. Early Years Funding Formula 2019/20**

The Finance Manager outlined that from the ESFA operational guidance most of the requirements are the same in 2019/20 as in 2018/19. There are two changes, the requirement of a universal rate and clarification on the use of the quality supplement. Darlington already use the universal rate and do not have a quality supplement hence these changes do not impact on the previously agreed formula.

It was noted that the funding that will be received through the early years block in 2019/20 is at the same unit rates as in the current year, hence there is no additional funding. As a result it is proposed that the early years formula in Darlington remain the same in 2019/20 as in 2018/19 with the same unit rates. This will mean that the Council passes through 98% of the 3 & 4 year old funding which is in excess of the 95% minimum pass through rate required.

Supplementary funding for maintained nurseries will continue to be paid to the two nursery schools. Based on the indicative allocation this will be £105,500 for each nursery.

It was proposed that the central allocation of £113,754 will remain in 2019/20 towards the early year's team. It was also confirmed that staffing structures were being looked at, with a new Head of Service to be recruited in April 2019.

Forum agreed to the proposed central allocation of £113,754 and the early years formula and rates for 2019/20.

## **7. Budget Setting 2019/20**

The Finance Manager highlighted the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2019/20.

The proposed use of the central schools block was highlighted to Forum, with a small surplus (£2,968) which was proposed to be moved to the high needs block to assist with budget pressures.

In line with the rules concerning the use of historic commitments, no new areas of expenditure can be made, therefore the proposed use of this allocation is the same as in 2018/19. The budget allocated however, is approximately £50,000 less than the allocation. As the ESFA has noted that the historic commitments will decrease from 2020/21 this saving is expected to be available for one year only. It is proposed that this surplus budget will be moved to the high needs budget to contribute towards high needs pressures.

The high needs block shows that the block is estimated to increase by £253,000 from 2018/19 of which £234,000 is the additional funding announced by the Government in December. The remaining £19,000 is a change in formula due to changes within the numbers of children attracting funding.

The high needs budget presented in the papers is approximately in balance with the resources available, however this is dependent on the transfer of £400,00 from the schools block which as yet is not confirmed. The budget is also subject to change through the year in line with demand, the proposed savings being achieved and any new proposals resulting from the new SEND strategy. In addition the estimated £3million accumulated deficit brought forward from 2018/19 will need to be recovered, therefore the high needs budget remains under massive pressures.

School Forum will be presented with further information regarding high needs budget at all meetings throughout the year as well as being presented with any submissions required to ESFA regarding deficit recovery.

Forum noted the budget allocations for 2019/2020, and the position regarding high needs budgets.

Forum agreed the allocation of the central schools block.

## **8. Any other business.**

There was no other business.

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

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2019, 2.00 pm. Committee Room 1 – Town Hall**