

Schools' Forum Meeting

9 December 2016

Attendees:

Members

Alan Chapman (AC) (Academies)
 Amanda Baines (ABa) (VA Primary Schools
 Large & Mid FSM<50%)
 Andy Brown (ABr) (Academies)
 Helen O'Brien (HO) (Large Primary Schools
 FSM<50%)
 Jane Dolphin (JDo) (standing in for John Hardy)
 Jane Loomes (JL) (standing in for Julie Thomas)
 Jo Heaton (JHe) (Diocese of Durham)
 Julie Deville (JDe) (Academies)
 Leanne Yates (LY) (Large Schools FSM > 50%)
 Mark Tilling (MT) (Secondary Schools)
 Penny Thompson (PT) (Early Years)
 Stephen Hammond (SH) (Academies)
 Sue Sharpe (SS) (Small Primary Schools <280)
 Tracey Gibson (TG) (Secondary Schools)
 Zoe Westley (ZW) (Special Schools)

Local Authority Officers

Christine Lowson (CL) (Administrator)
 Louise Allen (LA) (Head of Service SEND)
 Mark Patton (MP) (Assistant Director
 Education)
 Sandra Shears (SSh) (Children's Finance)

Adviser to the Local Authority

Anne Heywood (AH) (SEND Consultant)

Apologies:

Chris Hargreaves (CH) (Trade Unions)
 Debbie Caygill (DC) (16 – 19 Education)
 Fr Graeme Buttery (GB) (Primary Governor)
 John Hardy (JHa) (VA Small Primary Schools)
 Julie Thomas (JT) (Academies)
 Kieran Sharp (KS) (Student Support Unit)
 Lee Walker (standing in for Lynne Pawley)
 Lynne Pawley (LP) (Large Primary Schools)

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1 Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising</p> <p><u>Membership of Forum</u> Members were asked if Jane Dolphin could now be the substitute for John Hardy – this was agreed.</p> <p>Leanne Yates has now become Acting Headteacher for Lynnfield Primary School and therefore will now be the representative for Large Schools FSM > 50% with Zoe Connor being her substitute – this was agreed.</p>	

	<p>It was confirmed that the balance of representatives between academies and schools is correct.</p> <p>Following a query around the school governor representative it was confirmed that regulations state one governor representative should sit on Forum but it is not determined as to whether this should be from academies or mainstream schools. MP is to raise this issue with the Chair of Governors Group.</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record with the following matters arising.</p> <p>The meeting to discuss excess balances has been deferred to January.</p> <p>School improvement details are to be brought to the January meeting.</p>	<p>MP</p> <p>MT</p> <p>MP</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>SEND Review Update</p> <p>MT apologised on behalf of Schools' Forum with regard to an e-mail sent out in advance of this meeting.</p> <p>LA spoke to the report issued with the meeting papers and explained the background. She went on to say that the aim of the update is to obtain an equitable and transparent means of funding allocated to schools.</p> <p>It was noted that timescales are very tight and a full report will be presented to Forum in March 2017. With regard to the support sessions it was noted that a number of schools are still on their Christmas break on the 5 & 6 of January.</p> <p>A query was raised around is the financial modelling purely an exercise or will it have a financial impact on schools? LA explained that indicative figures will be given to schools with any financial impact being graduated starting in September 2017. Any queries and concerns can be e-mailed direct to Sarah Mincher.</p> <p>Forum members raised concerns around the tight timescales impacting on the quality of the documentation that schools will be judged against and members felt that it would be better to finalise all documentation before any financial modelling is undertaken. It was noted that the timescales are tight as the information is required for school budget packs issued in February around the phasing of the changes to school finance.</p> <p>ZW explained how the documentation has been produced and confirmed that the review group consists of special schools and those with additionally financed resourced provision. A query was raised around how can this Group be representational if there is no school without additionally resourced provision included?</p>	

	<p>With regard to financial impact it was confirmed that minimum funding will be the same for special schools as maintained schools and academies.</p> <p>AH explained that this work around SEN is a joint Tees Valley exercise and therefore what is happening in Hartlepool is happening in other authorities as a joint approach.</p> <p>LA explained that the timeline had been set to enable the finance work to take place with the bandings being considered over a number of years. ZW explained that from a special school point of view there are concerns around only having two bands therefore there is still a considerable amount of work still to be done.</p> <p>Forum members felt that this process was being pushed forward from a finance tick box exercise rather than moving forward based on pupil needs. The banding review was welcomed however if it is not right for pupils then there is no point to the review.</p> <p>LY explained that training is required for SENCOs and there are concerns around the timeline speed. It was noted that SENCO training has been agreed on a half termly basis.</p> <p>LA explained that there will be a range of amounts for children implemented for each banding to allow for flexibility in the funding and that the difference in banding across provisions will become more equitable. She went on to say that the review was an opportunity for schools to discuss their pupil needs and to have input moving forward.</p> <p>A query was raised around can the time line be changed? MP explained that there is a need to address the pressure on the High Needs Block as well as looking at the needs of our children. It was felt that the pressure on the High Needs Block has been there for a long term but schools require training before they put pen to paper.</p> <p>It was noted that if the timeline stays as is then it needs to be recognised that any information given by schools is for modelling only and that schools cannot be held accountable for this information.</p> <p>The SEND Review Group was asked to note this point and the concerns of Forum around the accuracy of the documentation. This was noted by LA and AH who will consider the discussion.</p>	<p>LA/AH</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>School Finance Update</p> <p>SSh apologised for the lateness of the report issued but explained that Finance only received information from the DfE late on 1 December. She explained that the figures in the report are indicative as the final baseline details are not due until 20 December.</p>	

It was noted that the Authority has not recommended any increase on the amount of funding for admissions and Schools' Forum.

Admissions - £132k – some discussion took place around charging for appeals. It was noted that VA schools have funding for appeals already included in their base budget. A vote was then taken to continue with this funding;

For: 12 votes

Abstentions: 1 vote

Servicing of Schools' Forum - £35k – a vote was taken to continue with this funding;

For: 12 votes

Abstentions: 1 vote

Contribution to combined budgets - £431k – it was noted that the Space to Learn element of this funding had already been agreed.

JD objected to being included in centrally retained services as why would academies want to continue with items such as schools meals and the ONE system licence.

Advice was taken as to if each element of the combined budgets could be voted on separately. The advice from the Legal Team was that the information from the DfE around voting on funding was not clear. It was decided to vote on each element of the combined budget.

One System Licence - £77k – it was noted that the One System helps to keep the cost of SLAs down and without it the cost of SLAs would rise. A vote was then taken;

For: 8 votes

Against: 3 votes

Abstentions: 2 votes

School Meals Service - £154k – a vote was taken:

For: 6 votes

Against: 5 votes

Abstentions: 2 votes

Looked After Children - £102k – it was noted that this funding is in addition to the £900 pupil premium funding. A query was raised around if this is not a statutory duty why are schools paying for it. It was noted that statutory responsibilities have not changed since the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group in 2014. CL to resend the Task & Finish report.

It was explained that this cost does not include the virtual Headteacher. A vote was then taken;

For: 5 votes

Against: 2 votes

Abstentions: 6 votes

CL

Termination of Employee Costs (Brierton) - £35k – it was noted that this was the actual cost invoiced by Middlesbrough Council. A vote was then taken;

For: 13 votes

Capital Expenditure - £627k – it was noted that this funding is the Development Funding which can be applied for by all schools and academies. It was further noted that this would have to be a SLA going forward. The SLA is to be a three year buy back and only schools that buyback will be allowed to apply for funding.

It was explained that for school budgets the funding would be allocated based on pupil numbers. ABr queried the moral fairness of basing the funding on pupil numbers. It was commented that there would be no fair and moral way of allocating funding until fair funding is introduced.

Forum members were tasked with consulting the schools they represent on the three options and bring their decisions back to the January meeting for decision;

- Allocate the capital funding back to DSG, proportionally split between the schools and the High Needs Block.
- Allocate all of the funding to the High Needs Block.
- Allocate the capital funding through the formula, agree to a SLA and commit to a minimum three years of contributions to support schemes as recommended via the Capital Sub-group.

It was noted that the decision made this year will apply to future years as if the funding is removed from Centrally Retained Funding it cannot be put back in.

ZW asked if this was an opportunity to address the priority to use capital for ASD and SEMH.

A comment was made around allocating funding as a SLA will not work and therefore it is a non-starter. A number of members agreed with this comment.

Copyright Licences – SSh explained that this funding does not require a vote as the EFA charge the Authority for this cost.

AC left the meeting.

Services previously funded by the retained rate of the Education Services Grant (ESG) – SSh explained this funding in further detail and explained that there is no indication of any changes.

The Authority has to request the funding back from schools in order to fulfil its statutory duties. If Forum were to vote against this funding the Authority would need to go to the Secretary of State regarding this decision. A vote was taken and **all members agreed** to this funding being continued.

Agenda

	<p>Services previously funded by the general rate of the Education Services Grant (ESG) – SSh explained this funding in further detail. She went on to explain that the EFA have not made it clear if any additional funding will be added to the schools block nor have they clarified the statutory duties listed in column 2 of Appendix 1 therefore this funding will require further discussion in January. This section of the report was noted by Forum members.</p> <p>School Improvement Statutory previously funded from ESG – SSh explained that the Authority is not proposing to increase de-delegated funded for the 2017/18 year or the 2018/19 year but the 2018/19 year will be brought back to Forum nearer that time. Forum members noted this section of the report.</p> <p>Growth Fund/Falling Rolls Fund – SSh explained that the Authority is not considering creating this fund for the 2017/18 year. The options are to be brought back to Forum if requested. Forum noted this section of the report.</p> <p>ZW spoke about High Need Block funding and the £550k funding transferred from the High Needs Block to the schools block. It was agreed that this funding would be reviewed on an annual basis and requested that Forum give some serious consideration to this funding.</p>	Agenda
4	<p>Deprivation Factor Decision Review</p> <p>MT explained that the decision by Children’s Services Committee to set the deprivation factor at 15% had been a shock and therefore the Committee is to reconsider this decision in January.</p> <p>MT explained that due to the criticism from Committee around Forum not being able to come to a decision, a full and frank discussion is required. Committee had commented that if Headteachers from across the town could not agree and make a decision why should Children’s Services Committee be able to make it.</p> <p>ABr stated that 13.5% was the compromise as a number of schools would prefer a much lower figure for deprivation. He went on to say that as Committee have already made the decision should Forum be discussing it further because the Chair of Forum does not agree with the decision.</p> <p>MT and number of others explained that this is not about MT being Chair of the Forum and disagreeing with the decision but it is about the views of the Forum not being taken into account when the decision was made.</p> <p>SS explained that the deprivation discussion is a very difficult item to Chair and perhaps it is time that Forum came at this decision from a different angle with a procedure being identified for Forum to follow over a number of years as there are only three options;</p>	

- Reduce deprivation over a number of years
- Retain the status quo
- Increase the deprivation figure.

It was noted that Forum members as a group of professionals who lead education across the town had been criticised for sending the decision to Children's Services Committee for the second year.

A comment was made that a gradual reduction in deprivation was not put on the table and discussed however it was pointed out that AJ had made this suggestion last year but it was not taken forward.

ABr objected to a separately convened 'closed door' meeting taking place that had not included some Forum members. It was explained that this was not a Forum meeting.

It was noted that the issue is 'do Forum members think it right and proper to consider what has happened and to go back to Children's Services Committee with a further proposal and decision as professionals and leaders of education'.

It was confirmed that the next Forum meeting is to be held on 12th January with the next Committee meeting being held on 17th January therefore would there be time to submit a report. MP explained that he would manage this aspect.

It was noted that there are two issues to take to Committee;

- Feedback to Committee that there was a clear recommendation from Forum that a decision be made between 8.8% and 13.5% and this was not taken into account
- A new recommended decision.

ABr stated that Forum needs to make a democratic decision to prevent all Headteachers attending the January Committee meeting.

HO stated that members would need the opportunity to discuss this further with the schools they represent.

It was felt that not enough background had been given to Children's Services Committee therefore if the principle is to gradually reduce the deprivation factor then Committee need to be informed of this.

MP suggested that representatives speak to their schools and agree on another figure or a narrowed range of figures and then give MP permission to provide Committee with a report detailing the principle of gradually reducing the deprivation figure. A number of members suggested 12% may be the way forward.

The above suggestion was agreed by all members with the exception of one who abstained.

5	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>ZW raised an issue around following the death of a child what happens to the top-up funding. A protocol needs to be put in place around the length of time top-up funding can continue for.</p>	Ssh/JS
6	<p>Agenda Items for Next Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years National Funding Formula (information) • Top-up Funding (discussion) • Decisions on Schools Funding (decision) • High Needs Block Funding Given to Schools Block (discussion) • School Improvement Details (information) • Deprivation Factor 2017/18 (decision) 	
7	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>12 January 2017, 10.30am to 12.30pm, Conference Hall CETL</p>	

DRAFT