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| **Schools’ Forum Meeting**  **14 July 2020** |

The meeting commenced at 10am and was an online remote meeting in compliance with the Council Procedure Rules Relating to the holding of Remote Meetings and the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

**Attendees:**

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| **Members**  Lynne Chambers (LC) (Primary-Academy >25% >50% FSM)  Mary Frain (MF) (VA Large)  Tracey Gibson (TG) (Secondary Schools)  Martyn Gordon (MG) PRU  Lisa Greig (LG) Acting (Academy – Special)  Stephen Hammond (SH) (Academy – Secondary)  Jo Heaton (JHe) (Diocese of Durham)  Mark Hughes (MH) 16-19 Sector  Neil Nottingham (NT) (Primary Academy >50% FSM)  Sue Sharpe (SS) (Large Deprived)  Christopher Simmons (CS) (Governor)  Mark Tilling (MT) (Secondary Schools)  David Turner (DT) (Small)  Zoe Westley (ZW) (Special Schools)  Rachel Williams (RW) (Diocese – Roman Catholic) | **Local Authority Officers**  Amanda Whitehead (AW) (Assistant Director)  Danielle Swainston (DS) (Assistant Director)  Sandra Shears (SSh) (Children’s Finance)  Jane Watt (JW) (Children’s Finance)  Jo Stubbs (JS) (Administrator) |

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| **Agenda Item** | | **Action** |
| **1** | **Apologies -**  Apologies were submitted by Amanda Baines (Primary Academy <25% FSM) and Helen O’Brien (Large <50%) |  |
| **2** | **Minutes of the Last Meeting – 5 February 2020**  Approved |  |
| **3** | **Matters Arising**  SEND free school update – DS confirmed that a provider had been found. Details were embargoed but would be provided to members in due course. Funding needed for the road into the site had been approved at Finance and Policy Committee.  SEMH – first meeting had been delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic but would be actioned in September.  AW confirmed that SS had agreed to extend her status as Chair of the Forum by a year. |  |
| **4** | **Forum Membership Update** |  |
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|  | SS advised that almost all memberships on the Forum had expired during the coronavirus lockdown. Work had taken place to confirm any new Forum Members and their substitutes for Maintained Schools. This work was now largely complete, other than identification of a small number of substitutes. Referring specifically to the Governor position currently held by CS, SS queried whether members would object to this role being alternated between maintained schools and academies with academies taking that role for the next term of office. There was no dissent. NN highlighted that the primary academy (>50% FSM) representative would now be Lee Walker. SS asked that details of future academy representatives be forwarded to her as Chair and the Council’s Finance Team. Following a query, SSh confirmed that LG would continue to be a member of the Forum as the academy special school representative. JH queried the status of the diocesan memberships and MH asked if the 16-19 year old representative membership was due for renewal. SSh agreed to confirm all of the non-school representative terms of office. |  |
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| **5** | **National Funding Formula (I) (standard item)**  JW advised that the Department for Education (DFE) had confirmed the inclusion of teacher pay and pension grants within the National Funding Formula for 2021/22. When more detail was made available this would be discussed at a future meeting. JW clarified that the funding would continue for the historic grants but that the separate grants would be amalgamated into the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). |  |
| **6** | **SEND free school update (standard item)**  DS confirmed that information on the newly appointed provider was embargoed pending discussions with the DFE Capital Team around confirmation of the appointment. It was hoped that the school would be open September 2022. Members would be informed when the appointment of provider was publically confirmed. |  |
| **7** | **SEMH (Standard item)**  This group had not met since the previous meeting due to the coronavirus pandemic. |  |
| **8** | **Early Years Sustainability Grant (R) (D)**  DS requested approval to use Early Years Block of the DSG (2020/21 funding and reserves) to create a sustainability fund to support early year’s providers adversely affected by the current coronavirus pandemic. She also asked that for April-August (inclusive) where providers had accepted children from closed providers both the open and closed provider receive grant funding for them. She highlighted the loss of fee-paying income resulting from lockdown closures and the lack of parental confidence and the resultant pressures on fixed costs, a situation which could last until 2021. A sustainability grant fund using uncommitted funds from the 5% central spend (around £15,000) was proposed along with £30,000 from the early years reserves, a total of £45,000. These proposals would be time limited and may need to be reviewed following further DfE guidance on the requirement for early year’s places. The future financial implications were detailed.  A recorded vote was taken among members eligible to vote. Both recommendations were approved unanimously.  **Decisions**  That approval be given to the use if Early Years DSG underspend of £15,000 in line with Government advice and £30,000 reserves to establish a £45,000 early years sustainability fund.  That approval be given to the use of Early Years DSG reserves to support providers taking children from closed providers during April and May 2020. |  |
| **9** | **Scheme for Financing Schools 2020/21 (R) (I)**  The HBC Scheme for Financing Schools document was appended to the report. SSh highlighted that the only significant change to the Scheme was the extended offer of the risk protection arrangement, an alternative offer to commercial insurance for academies, to local authority maintained schools from 1st April 2020. Information on other more minor changes was included within the report.  Members noted the report and agreed that the changes outlined by confirmed in the Scheme documentation and published. |  |
| **10** | **Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2019/20 – (R) (I)**  SSh updated members on the outturn position for the DSG and de-delegated budgets from 2019/20. There had been overspends in Early Years and High Needs with underspends in Growth Funding and Central Block. Reasons for these were given within the report. De-delegated services showed an underspend due to a lack of funded teacher staff trade union activity and the receipt of additional income from General Rate duties than was budgeted for.  Members noted the report. |  |
| **11** | **High Needs Block Outturn 2019/20 (R) (I)**  DS updated members on the final 2019/20 high needs services outturn. Previous projections had anticipated an overspend of between £0.532m and £0.972m with this being at the lower end of the scale (£0.521m). MG noted that the overspend was less than expected and thanked Council officers for their support. MH referred to the revised budget for the PRU (£0.132m) being too low. JW acknowledged this would need to be increased however while remodelling was ongoing this had not as yet been reflected in budgets. MT indicated that the PRU’s management committee were working to bring costs down via a new financial model. He expected to have a draft in place by the Autumn Term 2020.  Members noted the report. |  |
| **13** | **Trade Union Facility Time – Update (R) (I)**  SSh updated members on the current status of the de-delegated fund for trade union facility time. In 2019/20 this funding had been reduced from £2.45 per pupil to £1.25 per pupil for all pupils and the Forum had agreed to share the funding of non-teaching trade union facility time and contribute to the Local Authority costs on an annual basis, an annual cost of £3,075. No claims had been made on the fund in 2019/20 and so far there had been no 2020/21 claims.  MT highlighted that the reference to the Designated Education Office was restricted to early years in error. SSh apologised and agreed this was incorrect.  Members noted the report. |  |
| **14** | **Schools Meals Provision during Covid-19**  A late report had been submitted for members’ urgent attention. To ensure service continuity during and after the coronavirus outbreak all public sector contracting authorities had been advised by the Government to support their at risk suppliers to ensure business and service continuity and protect jobs. It was suggested that any relief payments for free schools meals and universal infant school meals be based on the 3 month invoices prior to March 2020. It was therefore proposed to charge schools from 1st April 2020 based on December 2019 to February 2020. There would be a 27% reduction made to reflect the savings by the Catering Service on the purchase of food.  Members noted the national guidance and charging mechanism. |  |

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| **15** | **Any other business**  ZW highlighted ongoing issues around the replacement of the hydro pool at Springwell School. Estimated costs had increased by £50k above the latest quote meaning that additional funding would need to be sought. Failure to replace the hydro pool would have considerable implications on the school. |  |
| **14** | **Date and Time of Next Forum Meeting – to be confirmed** |  |