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| **Schools’ Forum Meeting**  **2 February 2021** |

**Attendees:**

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| **Members**  Carole Bradley (CB) (Primary - Large <50%)  Lynne Chambers (LC) (Academy Primary - Primary >25% <50% FSM)  Emma Espley (EE) (Secondary)  Martyn Gordon (MG) (Horizon School )  Lisa Grieg (LG) (Academy – Special)  Mandy Hall (MH) (Academy - Primary <25% FSM)  Stephen Hammond (SH) (Academy – Secondary)  John Hardy (JH) (VA Small)  Jo Heaton (JHe) (Diocese of Durham)  Mark Hughes (MHu) (16-19 Sector)  Andrew Jordan (AJ) (Academy – Secondary - >50% FSM)  Caroline Reed (CR) (Primary - Large Deprived)  Linda Richardson (LR) (PVI)  Chris Simmons (CS) (Academy Governors)  Penny Thompson (PT) (Early Years)  Mark Tilling (MT) (Secondary)  David Turner (DT) (Primary – Small)  Zoe Westley (ZW) (Special)  Rachel Williams (RW) (Diocese – RC)  Jo Wilson (JW) (VA Large) | **Local Authority Officers**  Amanda Whitehead (AW) (Assistant Director Education)  Danielle Swainston (DS)  (Assistant Director Joint Commissioning)  Jacqui Braithwaite (JB) (Integrated Services for Learning Manager)  Penny Thompson (PT) (Early Years)Sandra Shears (SSh) (Children’s Finance)  Jane Watt (JWa) (Children’s Finance)  Jo Stubbs (JS) (Administrator) |

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| **Agenda Item** | | **Action** |
| **1** | **Apologies -**  Apologies were submitted by the following:  Sue Sharpe (Primary – Large Deprived) : Caroline Reed substituting  Lee Walker (Academy – Primary >50% FSM  In the absence of the Chair and there being no nominated Vice-Chair it was agreed that Mark Tilling would Chair the meeting |  |
| **2** | **Minutes of the Last Meeting – 9 December 2021**  Minutes approved  **Outstanding Actions Log**  JH affirmed that there would be no further action from the High Needs Task and Finish Group item until the re-establishment of the Children’s Strategic Partnership.  A report regarding the outstanding monies in the SEMH capital pot was on this agenda.  Officers were still waiting for detail on the salary disclosure requirements from the Department for Education before being in a position to provide a standardised form of words. Schools had been updated at the end of 2020 to that effect.  A report giving more detailed information on pupil projections was on this agenda. |  |
| **3** | **Schools Capital Sub Group Membership and Terms of Reference Review**  A report on the Schools Capital Sub Group Membership and its Terms of Reference had been brought before members at the meeting on 9th December 2020. At that time it had been agreed that consideration of both would be deferred to allow the chair to bring this to the attention of head teachers at their January meeting. Apologies were accepted from the Chair that this had not happened and the Chair would ensure that both items be deferred to a further meeting. JHe queried whether membership of the Group was solely for head teachers or could Estates Managers and the like take on these roles. SSh confirmed that members should be those people who could provide the best input which could include Estates Managers provided the Forum were in agreement with this. JHe requested further information on the standard items considered by the Schools Capital Sub Group. SSh advised that an agenda for a previous Group meeting would be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.  **Decision**  That this item be deferred until the next meeting. | **SSh** |
| **4** | **Dedicated Schools Grant – Early Years Block 2021/2**  Members had previously approved the central spend element of the Early Years funding for 2021/22. Consultation had subsequently taken place on the Early Years National Funding Formula for 2021/22 and funding of Providers. This formula set the hourly funding rates that each local authority was paid to deliver the universal and additional entitlements for 3 and 4 year olds, along with entitlements for 2 year olds. In November the Government had announced a £44 million increase nationally for early years while hourly rate funding increases for Hartlepool of between 6p and 8p had been announced in December. The 6p funding increase for 3-4 year olds was subject to a 95% pass-through rate regulation while the 8p increase for 2 year olds was not meaning that this increase did not have to be passed on to providers. In 2020/21 it had been agreed that an 8p increase to 2 year old provision would not be passed on to providers and these monies would be used to help offset financial pressures against 2 year old provision. Members were now asked which of the following options they wished to recommend to Children’s and Joint Commissioning Committee:   1. Continue to retain the 2020/21 increase and retain the 2021/22 increase 2. Continue to retain the 2020/21 increase but pass on the 2021/22 increase to providers 3. Pass on both increases to providers   Responses to the consultation had been limited and did not show a preference in terms of the 2021/22 increase. However it was noted that operational problems associated with covid-19 may have been the reason for such a limited response.  LR outlined the difficulties in funding for the PVI sector. Members expressed their support for Option 2, noting that private nurseries had received no increase in funding since 2017, despite costs continuing to increase. PT advised members that reserves had previously been used to manage the deficit and option 1 would keep the use of reserves lowered until 2023. JWa advised that option 2 was likely to result in an hourly rate cut before April 2023 as reserves would be insufficient. CS suggested that further attempts be made to consult on this matter however others felt that the private sector would always have a preference for option 2.  **Decision**   1. That the contents of the report and consultation responses be noted 2. That the proposed 3 and 4 year hourly rate formula as shown in the report be recommended to the Children’s and Joint Commissioning Committee for implementation from April 2021 3. That an increase of the hourly rate for 2 year old provision to £5.28 in 2021/22 be recommended to the Children’s and Joint Commissioning Committee with the 8p funding increase for 2021/22 being applied 4. That the hourly rate for 2 year old provision for implementation from April 2023 (or earlier) be reviewed under completion of the work by the Early Years Task and Finish Group |  |
| **5** | **Schools Block Budget Update 2021/22**  Members were given updated information on the 2021/22 Schools Block funding issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) during December 2020. In October Forum members had voted to apply the maximum possible MFG without an associated cap. The updated Hartlepool schools block allocation showed a 2.9% increase in funding for 2021/22 based on October 2020 census numbers. The Hartlepool DSG allocation was then calculated based on primary and secondary units of funding per school, whereas Individual School Budgets were calculated using the detailed data provided in the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) It was also noted that funding for National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) was lagged for a year. SSh explained that shortfalls would be funded from DSG reserves and replenished once this lagged funding was received. Details of block transfers were also given as were individual schools block funding figures.  **Decision**  That the updated schools block funding for 2021/22 based on the October 2020 census be noted. |  |
| **6** | **High Needs Block 2020/21 Estimated Outturn**  Members were informed that as of the end of December the mid-case High Needs Block estimated outturn for 2020/21 had improved from an overspend of £0.37million to an underspend of £0.024 million. This improved position reflects a 16% increase in funding within the high needs block allocation and showed underspends in out of authority top-ups, SEMH Free School and top-up funding and support. Should this mid-case projection materialise, the reserves deficit relating to the High Needs Block would be repaid and a positive reserve balance achieved.  **Decision**  That the report be noted. |  |
| **7** | **High Needs Block Budget Update 2021/22**  Details of the updated High Needs Block allocation for 2021/22 were given. At the previous meeting members had voted unanimously to recommend application of inflation at the rate of 2.75% for each of the previous 3 financial years – a total of 8.5% to be applied in 2021/22. This was estimated at £0.135 million and was fully affordable within the High Needs Block funding available. Schools Forum had also voted to recommend the application of protection for special schools at 103% - an additional 3% above the minimum funding guarantee requirement. The 3% addition was also backdated for the previous 2 years – an overall of 9.3% to be applied for 2021/22. The cost of this was also considered fully affordable within the High Needs Block funding available. Both proposals were restricted to 2021/22 to allow for completion of a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for High Needs spending and greater consideration of risk for the demand and complexity of SEND provision over a 3 year planning period.  Members queried when the MTFS spending update would be presented to the Forum. DS explained that a special Forum meeting was being planned for March when the first step would to be for Forum to consider and agree the scope of the review. ZW questioned the reference to reserves made in the planned high needs block budget requirement table within the report since the previous report had indicated there would be no deficit. JWa advised that the detail within the table was as had been approved by the Children’s and Joint Commissioning Committee before the estimated outturn position was updated.  **Decision**  That the report be noted. |  |
| **8** | **Growth Funding Update**  In May 2019 the Forum agreed local criteria and methodology for accessing and disbursing the growth fund. Hartlepool received growth funding through the DSG for the first time in 2019/20. The allocation for 2021/22 was confirmed in December 2020. A table in the report showed a balance of £0.243 million at 31 March 2021 prior to receipt of the 2021/22 allocation. This remaining balance could be taken to DSG reserves at year-end to meet future growth commitments. JHe queried whether these reserves were ring fenced or could be utilised for other things. JWa confirmed that they would remain in a separate growth fund reserve and there were rules around what it could be used for.  **Decision**  That the report be noted |  |
| **9** | **Closure Process 2020/21** |  |
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|  | Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 local authorities in England and Wales must publish their statutory accounts by 31st July each year. Accounts need to be produced by 31st May giving external auditors 2 months to audit them. In order to achieve this school accounts will need to be closed during the first week of April, requiring preliminary visits to maintained schools by Council finance officers. For 2019/20 preliminary close visits were adapted to operate remotely and it was likely that a similar approach would be taken for 2020/21. To ensure statutory deadlines were met arrangements would need to in place to ensure systems were made available to local authority finance staff and a member of school staff would need to complete a number of activities on school systems, guided by local authority staff remotely. This would take place between Tuesday 6th and Friday 9th April, with a time booked in advance, and expected to take around an hour to complete.  This information relating to Easter 2021 dates had already been raised with Forum in their meeting of 5 February 2020 to ensure appropriate notice for staff cover arrangements.  Members highlighted that the proposed dates were during the School Easter holidays and would mean finding a member of staff willing to come in during their leave time. SSh acknowledged this but advised that statutory deadlines were immovable and schools would be unable to place orders for the new financial year on their systems until this work had been completed, which could impact schools returning from the Easter holidays. Officers would contact all schools affected to ensure an appropriate date and time could be identified which would work best for all involved.  **Decision**  That the report be noted and head teachers be made aware that adequate staff cover will be required in each school to support the closure of accounts over Easter 2021. |  |
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| **10** | **Trade Union Facility Time (Termly Update)** |  |
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|  | Members were updated on the current status of the de-delegated fund for trade union facility time. There was currently no call on facility across Hartlepool Schools therefore there had been no claims made on the fund so far for the 2020/21 financial year. A break in payments for 2020/21 had been confirmed due to reserves not having been spent in 2019/20. This break would end from 2021/22. Reserves of £16k were expected to be in place, these would be used to fund the Designated Education Officer as agreed by the Forum in November 2020.  **Decision**  That the report be noted |  |
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| **11** | **Inclusion Team Proposals 2021/22** |  |
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|  | The Assistant Director for Education presented a detailed report giving proposals for the formulation of an Inclusion Team to sit within an overall Inclusion Strategy. This was to enable ongoing pressures on the High Needs Block system to be addressed particularly within mainstream education. The plan is for the Inclusion Team to provide support at a classroom and management level, increasing the number of pupils whose needs could be met through mainstream schooling thereby reducing specialist provision requirements. This team would be managed within the local authority but would not form part of any existing teams. An initial 2 year team was proposed. It would be funded over 2 years using a combination of monies from SEMH, High Needs Block and Education Reserves. Details of proposed roles within the Inclusion Team were also included. Members had been asked to consult with their schools and sectors on the options presented and the funding proposals contained within the report.  Members were broadly supportive of the proposed need for investment in Inclusionbut expressed concern at the lack of detail on the Inclusion Strategy. The Assistant Director for Education explained that funding for the Team would be the first piece in the overall development. Once this was secured officers could look at possible models for a strategy. However members felt that more information on the strategy was needed before they felt in a position to support the funding proposals. Without a strategy they felt it would be difficult to ensure that the correct people were being recruited. They also felt that they had been given insufficient opportunity to consult on these proposals. The Assistant Director for Education advised that the funding proposals were quite generalised and further detail would be provided later. This was a way to ensure that the funding would be available before undertaking more detailed work.  JH asked whether other potential approaches, for example a commissioning model, had been considered so that Members could understand why the solution being proposed was an in-house team.  Members also queried how covid might impact on the proposed 2 year funding arrangement. The Assistant Director for Education confirmed that issues around the pandemic would be factored in but it was hoped that the process could be started around September. The Assistant Director for Joint Commissioning added that this would be a complicated process which would take some time to bring together. ZW felt that the strategy would need to work for all schools in Hartlepool and the Inclusion Strategy would need to be in place before anyone could be recruited to posts. CR referred to a previous team that had looked after these issues for a number of years and queried why that team had been disbanded. It was felt that this may have been a funding issue at that time.  JW commented that she found the proposal to be encouraging as this represented a positive step forward in an area recognised as a challenge for new head teachers.  The Chair asked if members felt enabled to vote of the proposals within the report at this time. A majority indicated they would not be confident to vote at this time. It was suggested that a working party be established to enable further consideration of the strategy before any definite recommendations were made on future funding. The Chair suggested that a recommendation on funding be made in principle to enable this process to move forward.  Most members were happy with this course of action although some felt that there needed to be a more definite commitment and considered that those they represented would be happy to support these proposals. The Assistant Director for Joint Commissioning felt it would be acceptable to ask  Members of the Children’s Services Committee to give their support in principle, whilst not specifying an amount of money or an agreed method of delivery. This would at least enable the process to be kick-started. Officers could then bring more significant strategy proposals to a Forum meeting in June. The Assistant Director for Joint Commissioning proposed that an independent feasibility study on the options available for delivery of an Inclusions Strategy, funded by the local authority, would be a helpful step forward.  **Decision**   1. That the report be noted 2. That a recommendation be made to Children’s Services Committee that 2-year funding for delivery of an Inclusion Strategy be approved in principle’ 3. That an independent feasibility study to consider methods of delivery be commissioned. |  |
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| **12** | **Pupil Projections** |  |
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|  | The Assistant Director for Education had provided data in respect of expected birth rates and projections for the next 5-10 years. Members requested that this information be at the core of any future decision making.  **Decision**  That the report be noted. |  |
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| **13** | **Any other business** |  |
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|  | JW noted that amendments to the SLA information on water meters in schools had not been updated on the website. They also queried when training would be available on the reading of water meters for school staff. SSh confirmed that the SLA information would be uploaded in due course. Members were advised to contact the Council’s Energy Officer to request training.  JHe asked that in future Forum papers be despatched to members sooner than they had been on this occasion. She also highlighted issues with general accessibility to some of the papers, particularly relating to the financial information. The Chair asked SSh to action this request.  The Assistant Director for Joint Commissioning requested that members approve funding from the SEMH pot to allow urgent building modifications at High Tunstall in order to accommodate a number of year 6 children. She apologised for the lateness of this request but felt the urgency was justified as there was currently no provision for these children with effect from September 2021. Members approved the funding request.  The Chair reminded members of the need to identify a Vice-Chair particularly in light of the current Chair’s term being up this year. He urged members to give this serious consideration before the next Forum meeting. |  |
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| **14** | **Date and time of next Forum meeting** |  |
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|  | To be confirmed |  |
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|  | The meeting concluded at 4:10 pm. |  |

**SCHOOLS CAPITAL SUB-GROUP**

**THURSDAY 21st january 2021**

**A G E N D A**

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Apologies for absence and email update from previous meeting
3. SEMH Update DS
   1. Free School
   2. Funding
4. 2020/21 Schools’ Capital Works Programme - Progress Update JR
5. 2021/22 Proposed Schools’ Capital Works Programme JR
6. Finance Update CA

1. Fire Safety / door replacements DM/KB

1. Spending Review Outcome JR
2. DfE CDC2 Programme (Condition Data Collection) DM
3. Good Estate Management – DfE Guidance DM
4. Group Membership JR
5. Any other business
6. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 24th June 2021 at 10am, High Tunstall College of Science (subject to Covid restrictions)

Outstanding Schools’ Forum Actions Log

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| **Meeting** | **Description** | **Owner** |
| **21/06/19** | High Needs Task and Finish Group – document and implement a whole system approach to an inclusive ethos across the full school estate – to lead initially via the Head Teacher Group and then through the Children’s Strategy Partnership | John Hardy |
| **05/02/20** | MT – highlighted that a substantial amount of money was still left in the SEMH capital pot. He felt that Forum need to consider how to use the money. Report to be brought to future Forum meeting. | Danielle Swainston |
| **24/09/20** | Provide standard form of words for new salary disclosure (Financial Transparency for Schools) | Jane Watt |