

<p>Schools' Forum Meeting 18 November 2021</p>
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Attendees:**Members**

Carole Bradley (CB) (Primary - Large <50%)
 Emma Espley (EE) (Secondary)
 Mary Frain (MF) (Diocese – RC)
 Martyn Gordon (MG) (Horizon School)
 Lisa Grieg (LG) (Academy – Special)
 John Hardy (JH) (Primary – VA Small)
 Jo Heaton (JHe) (Diocese – C of E)
 Phil Pritchard (PP) (Primary Academy >50% FSM)
 Sue Sharpe (SS) (Primary - Large Deprived)
 Chris Simmons (CS) (Academy Governors)
 Penny Thompson (PT) (Early Years)
 Mark Tilling (MT) (Secondary)
 David Turner (DT) (Primary – Small)
 Zoe Westley (ZW) (Special)

Local Authority Officers

Jacqui Braithwaite (JB)
 (Integrated Services for Learning Manager)

Jane Kashouris (JK) (Teaching and Learning Consultant Numeracy)

Sandra Shears (SSh) (Head of Finance – Corporate and Schools)

Jo Stubbs (JS) (Administrator)

Danielle Swainston (DS)
 (Assistant Director Joint Commissioning)

Jane Watt (JWa) (Children's Finance)

Amanda Whitehead (AW)
 (Assistant Director Education)

Jane Young (JY) (Assistant Director Children and Families)

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1 Apologies -</p> <p>Apologies were submitted by the following:</p> <p>Lynne Chambers (Primary Academy >25%<50% FSM) Tracey Gibson (Secondary) – Emma Espley substituting Mandy Hall (Primary Academy >25% FSM) Linda Richardson (PVI) Lee Walker (Primary Academy > 50% FSM)</p>	

	Rachel Williams (Diocese – RC) – Mary Frain substituting Jo Wilson (VA Large)	
2	<p>Minutes of the Last Meeting – 19th October 2021</p> <p>Minutes approved.</p> <p>JHe noted that her comments around sustainability during the Autism Education Training Trust item had not been reflected, specifically her suggesting that anyone who benefited from the initial training could then train providers in other schools.</p> <p>Outstanding Actions Log</p> <p>Excess Balances Panel – Discussions had taken place. To be an agenda item on the December Forum meeting in order that the original wording and reasoning be reconsidered.</p> <p>Log of Schools Forum Recommendations and Committee Decisions</p> <p>To be updated following a decision by Children’s Services Committee on 16th November to approve the disapplication request for the former education services grant rate per pupil.</p>	
3	<p>Schools Capital Sub-Group Meeting Minutes 24-June-2021</p> <p>CB requested an overview of the Data Collection Tranches referred to and which schools would be included within them. MT suggested that this be a standing item on all future Forum agendas.</p> <p>CB gave brief feedback on future contracting work for schools, specifically around the impact the schedule of work was having on the wellbeing of head teachers. Reference had been made to the “appalling workmanship” and the requirement for heads to spend large amounts of time in school. She suggested that consideration be given to whether existing contractors were capable of fulfilling these contracts and providing value for money. MT would feedback these comments. He advised that construction works at Throston Primary were behind schedule leading to other work being delayed. Officers from the Council’s architecture team should have been in touch. SSh indicated that Kieran Bostock (HBC Assistant Director for Place Management) had requested that he be contacted direct if his officers were not responding to such requests.</p> <p>SSh noted that a number of representatives were missing from the membership of the Capital Sub-Group, specifically 2 primary representatives and a representative for either academies or Church of England schools. DT volunteered to take one of the primary places while existing member JH could be identified as either Academy or Church of England. MT asked that members request volunteers, noting that they could be Schools Heads, Estate Managers or Business Managers.</p>	

4	Designated Education Officer Proposal 2022/23	
	<p>DS updated members on the funding of the Designated Education Officer role for 2022/23. The Forum had previously agreed to fund Hartlepool's contribution to the role using Trade Union reserves for 2021/22 but these reserves had now been utilised so this was no longer an option. Details were given of the purpose of the role and an activity summary. Hartlepool's contribution to the DEO role (40%) in 2022/23 would be £21,500 with Stockton Borough Council contributing the remaining 60% (£32,252). After seeking a contribution from Early Years and Post-16 providers Hartlepool schools would be asked to contribute £18,879. This contribution could be split between schools using either an equal share of £524 per school or an estimated charge per pupil of £1.41 (to be updated based on confirmed October 2021 pupil numbers).</p> <p>MT queried whether the DEO was primarily an education or social care role and how valuable it was to schools. DS felt it was a specialist education role which social workers would be unable to cover in such a successful way. CB noted that social workers would fulfil the requirements of the role in any case. JY acknowledged this was the case but enquiries made by social workers would not have the same reach as those carried out by a Designated Education Officer. This role ensured education were fully involved in decision making and could exercise responsibility within that remit. Having 1 person providing co-ordination improved quality.</p> <p>DT suggested that HBC officers attend a future heads meeting to explain the positive aspects of the role to those heads that may not have used the service previously. JY was asked to attend.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That a total contribution of £21,500 be approved to fund the Designated Education Officer role for 2022/23 (£18,879 from Hartlepool Schools and £2,621 from other education establishments)</p> <p>That the Hartlepool Schools contribution be split using a charge per pupil (estimated at £1.41 per pupil) – approved unanimously.</p>	
5	Early Years Block National Funding Formula Review	
	<p>Members would be asked to make recommendations on the 2022/23 hourly rate for Early Years providers in February 2022. Government funding was based on an hourly rate payable to providers. The rates were different for 2 year-old and 3-4-year old provision. Since 2016/17 there had been a funding shortfall on 2-year-old provision which had been offset by underspending on 3-4-year-old provision. In 2019/20 overspends in Early Years and been funded using Dedicated Schools Grant reserves. In Summer 2019 a Task and Finish Group had been established to propose options to tackle the 2-year-old provider funding deficit. In addition the</p>	

	<p>Government had announced additional funding for early years entitlements from 2022-2025 to allow an increase in hourly rates. Forecasts for Early Years spending in 2021/22 showed an underspend of £0.033million, primarily relating to 3-4-year old provision. This was thought to be due the funding being based on 3 school census points rather than the customary January only. This change in formula would only be for 1 year.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group had carried out analysis of this change in funding which showed significant financial benefits. Representatives of the Group met with representatives from the DfE and reported these findings. Other local authorities had reported similar findings while others had found the changes would lead to a reduction in funding for 3-4 year old provision. It was proposed therefore that any proposed rate reductions to be made by the Task and Finish Group be delayed until April 2023 at the earliest to allow for lobbying the Government to make the 1-year funding changes permanent for Hartlepool.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p> <p>That Government be lobbied to move permanently to funding on the basis of 3 census points as opposed to the 2 January census points.</p> <p>That the revised timeline for the Task and Finish Group proposals be agreed.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Indicative Schools Block Budget Update 2022/23</p>	
	<p>JW advised members that the draft Authority Proforma Tool (APT) had been released in September. This was used to model and set individual school budgets. A local Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) could be set from 0.5% to 2% and based on the October 2020 census a local MFG of 2% was affordable without the implementation of a cap. However October 2021 census numbers indicated that a cap of 2.75% would be needed for the 2% MFG. This cap would increase slightly should the MFG decrease.</p> <p>DT highlighted a number of schools listed on the report appendix who received a minimum per pupil uplift and yet received significant overall increases in budget. JW agreed that this seemed counter intuitive, although it would be linked to which elements of the formula are included in the MPPF calculation. JW suggested a worked example for one of these schools could be provided to help understanding.</p> <p>SS expressed concerns at the impact reduced pupil numbers, and the resultant reductions in funding, would have on smaller schools.</p> <p>JHe suggested that training be provided for Heads on this item. MT acknowledged this and queried the urgency of the MFG decision. SSh</p>	

	<p>advised that a decision would need to be made at the December meeting. MT suggested that this item be deferred until then. SSh and JW asked to attend the next heads meeting on 1st December.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That the report be noted</p> <p>That a decision on the MFG amount and attached cap be deferred to the next Forum meeting on 9th December.</p>	
7	Inclusion and High Needs Block Review	
	<p>In Spring 2021 following a request by Schools Forum NDTi had carried out an independent review of inclusion. The results had been presented to Heads in September and the recommendations were detailed within the report. In order that the recommendations be implemented it was proposed that NDTI continue their support of the authority at a cost of £20K for 20 days work. This funding would be taken from the High Needs Block reserves.</p> <p>Schools Forum had also requested a review of the High Needs Block. This had been paused following an update to Forum in September 2021 to allow for the work on the inclusion review to be completed. It was felt that both reviews should run concurrently. NDTi had identified Peter Gray, former Assistant Director at Nottinghamshire as an appropriate person to complete the High Needs Block review. It was proposed therefore that Mr Gray be commissioned to undertake this review at a cost of £13K for 20 days work. This funding would also be taken from the High Needs Block Reserves.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That the further commissioning of NDTi at a cost of £20K from the High Needs Block reserve to implement the recommendations of the inclusion review be approved.</p> <p>That the commissioning of Peter Gray at an approximate cost of £13K from the High Needs Block reserve to undertake a review of SEND funding in order to promote inclusion.</p> <p>DS urged all head teachers to engage with Mr Gray as much as possible.</p>	
8	High Needs Block Projected Outturn	
	<p>DS advised members that the projected outturn for the High Needs Block was showing a mid-case estimated overspend of £0.292 million. Reasons for this projected overspend included increases in independent school fees</p>	

	<p>and pressures on post 16 top up funding. This would require funding from the reserves at varying amounts depending on whether the mid or worst case scenarios came to pass. The best case scenario would not require additional funding.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That the report be noted</p>	
9	Capacity within both SEND and EP teams to deliver statutory functions	
	<p>AW advised members of an increase in the caseloads within the SEND and Educational Psychology teams and what could be done to ensure that statutory duties were met in relation to SEN children. Since 2014/15 the number of statutory assessments carried out per year had more than doubled and requests for statutory assessments were expected to increase 3-fold this academic year. There had also been an increase in tribunals and annual reviews of EHCPs. In order to accommodate these additional demands on the service it was recommended that 2 additional Educational Psychologists, 2.6 (FTE) SEND officers and 1 Admin Assistant were required. It was also advised that these requirements be included as part of the ongoing High Needs Block review.</p> <p>MT queried this report noting that officers had previously indicated there was enough capacity in both teams. JB confirmed this had been the case last year as the covid pandemic meant travel time was not a factor. They had also used locum services when absolutely necessary but this was not felt to be sustainable. Statutory timescales were an issue. JHe referred to Hartlepool selling their services to Stockton and suggested that Mr Gray consider this as a priority. It was also hoped that the inclusion reviews which had previously been referred to would increase parental faith in the system and reduce the need for statutory assessments and tribunals.</p> <p>MT queried whether there was sufficient time to complete the High Needs Block review without having a negative impact on these statutory functions. DS indicated that Mr Gray was ready to start his review imminently and a formal indicative timeline could be brought to the next meeting.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That the rise in capacity in relation to statutory functions be noted.</p> <p>That the contents of the report be approved for inclusion within the High Needs Block review to seek solutions for required additional resources.</p>	
10.	The Horizon School and Alternative Provision 2021/22 Estimated Outturn	

	<p>Members were given details around the funding arrangements for the Horizon School and alternative provision services. The Horizon School budget for 2021/22 was set at £0.680m with financial responsibility for Alternative Provision transferred to the Horizon Head during 2020/21. Numbers of Horizon and Alternative Provision pupils as of 2nd November 2021 were detailed.</p> <p>An underspend of £0.065m was projected for the Horizon School in 2021/22 – dependent upon their being no teacher’s pay award from September 2021. This was due to higher than anticipated grant funding, including the Covid-19 mass testing grant. An overspend of £0.018m was projected for Alternative Provision, leading to an overall net underspend of £47K.</p> <p>MT declared an interest as Chair of the Finance Committee.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That the contents of the report be noted.</p>	
11	Any Other Business	
	<p>JH referred to concerns around rising energy prices. JW advised that there had been no indication that any additional funding for schools would be forthcoming but any updates would be passed on to schools in conjunction with the Energy Management Team. MT suggested that a letter be sent to the Government lobbying on this issue.</p>	
12.	Date and Time of next Forum meeting	
	Thursday 9 th December at 10.00am	
	The meeting concluded at 11.45am.	

OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LOG

Meeting	Description	Owner
18/11/21	To send letter to the DfE raising concerns around rising energy prices. Letter to be signed by the Chair of the Schools Forum and (potentially) Chair of the Council and/or Chair of Children's Services Committee	Jane Watt

Financial Year 2021/22: Children's Services Committee – Log of Schools' Forum
Recommendations and Committee Decisions

Last Updated: 05/07/2021

Committee Date	Report	Recommendation and Decision Details
23 Jun 2021	PROPOSAL TO INCREASE CAPACITY FOR SEND EDUCATION PROVISION	<p>Unanimously supported and referred this report to Finance and Policy Committee (meeting Wed 7 July 2021) to support a sustainable solution for the provision of additional capacity for children with SEND and to seek approval from Council to Prudentially Borrow £1.550m saving the HNB annually between £0.343m and £0.783m. Decision to be ratified by Council.</p> <p>Noted the loan repayment cost will be met from the HNB and will not impact on the General Fund Budget of the Council.</p> <p>Subsequently approved at Finance and Policy Committee on 7th July 2021 and Council at 8th July 2021.</p>
16 November 2021	EDUCATION SERVICES GRANT 2022/23	<p>Agreed to submit the disapplication request to the Secretary of State to set the Education Services General Duties rate at £60 per pupil/place for 2022/23.</p> <p>Council submitted disapplication request by the deadline of 19 November 2021.</p>