

**DEVON EDUCATION FORUM  
(Devon's Schools Forum)**

21 March 2012

Present:-

Schools Members

Primary School Headteachers

Mr M Boxall	Exeter Montgomery Primary
Mrs H Nicholls	South Brent Primary
Mr P Walker	Sidmouth St Nicholas CE Primary
Mrs L Wells	Lydford Primary
Mrs J Baker	Barnstaple Orchard Vale Primary ( <i>Academy member</i> )

Primary School Governors

Mrs P Barnard	Sandford Primary
Mrs A Blewett	Kings Nympton Primary
Mr R Butler	Axminster Primary
Mr M Dobbins	Exmouth Marpool Primary

Secondary School Headteachers

Mr D Chapman	Okehampton CC
Mr D Fitzsimmons	Holsworthy CC
Mr A Lovett	Tiverton High School
Mr V Game	Teign School ( <i>Academy member</i> )

Secondary School Governors

Mr I Courtney	The Dartmoor Federation <b>Chairman</b>
Mrs C Williams	Newton Abbot Coombeshead CC
Dr C Woodhouse	The Axe Valley CC
Commander M Bamborough	Gt Torrington School ( <i>Academy member</i> )

Special School Headteacher

Mr M Dean	Bidwell Brook School
Mrs J Warne	Ellen Tinkham School

Special School Governor

Mrs Faith Butler	Marland School
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Nursery School

Mrs S Baker	Westexe (Nurseries)
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Non-Schools Members

Mr M Gurney	Teachers Consultative Committee
Mr P Mantell	Exeter Diocesan Board of Education (CE)
Mr J Peart	14-19

Observers

Mr A Dobson	Marwood Primary (substitute member)
Councillor J Hart	Leader of the Council and Policy & Corporate

Apologies

Ms D Booth	Officer with responsibility for Vulnerable Children
Mr M Canham	Barnstaple The Park School
Councillor A Davis	Cabinet Member - Children's Services
Ms E Lincoln	Private Voluntary and Independent Early Years
Councillor V Newcombe	Chairman - People's Scrutiny Committee
Mr D Sharratt	Braunton CC
Mrs Y Short	Newton and Teign Federation

**584 Minutes**

**DECISION:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2012 be signed as a correct record.

**585 Membership**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Chairman reported on the resignation of Mrs Mandy Ewings DAG secondary substitute member from the Forum and Councillor Mrs Channon as Cabinet member Schools & Learning. The Chairman expressed gratitude to Councillor Channon's service and commitment to the sector.

**586 Matters Arising from the Last Meeting and Report back on Issues Raised with Cabinet**

**DISCUSSION:**

**(a) SOPF (Asbestos Management)(DEF minute 582(ii))**

Since the last meeting, legal advice was being sought to further clarify responsibilities of Devon County Council and academies.

**(b) Schools Capital Programme 2012/13 & Thereafter (Cabinet minute \*459)**

See minute 588 below.

**(c) Cabinet Member Representation on the Devon Education Forum**

Noted that the Leader of the Council would continue with responsibility for Schools & Learning until these functions were handed over shortly to other cabinet members complementing the Heads of Service structure.

**587 Head of Planning, Transportation & Environment's Update Strategic Planning Update, School Organisation and Place Planning**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Forum received a presentation by the Head of Planning, Transportation & Environment. This identified the progress that had been made so far and the plans for the future. For the future, recent discussions had identified the need to develop an Education Infrastructure Plan to provide a clear, transparent and flexible strategy for education infrastructure (to respond to the Local Development Framework agenda, rising birth rates, changes in education provision and changes in funding). The first element of this was a listening and fact finding consultation process with key stakeholders.

**588 Schools Capital Programme (Infrastructure Basic Needs and Capital Maintenance) 2012/13 & thereafter**

**DISCUSSION:**

The report of the Head of Planning, Transportation & Environment and Head of Capital Development & Waste Management PTE/12/17 to Cabinet on 14 March 2012 had been made available to members at:

[http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision\\_making/cma/cma\\_report.htm?cma\\_doc=report\\_pte1217.html](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/cma/cma_report.htm?cma_doc=report_pte1217.html)

Cabinet had approved the report with contingencies, along with guidelines for allocations recommended by this Forum.

DAPH reported they had expressed concern at the maintenance backlog and had requested details on how this was being dealt with, together with criteria and formula agreed.

**589 Head of Education & Learning's Update**  
**NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training), Employability, Skills and Apprenticeships**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Forum considered the report of the Head of Education & Learning (DEF/12/02) on NEETs in Devon and the current position; employability issues and raising the participation age; skills and apprenticeship issues. There had been little change in the NEETs numbers and the most disengaged needed to be targeted from an early age to attempt to reduce NEETs further. In addition some 17-18 year olds entering learning were on completion, becoming the 19-24 year old unemployed. Newton Abbot Skills Centre was due to open in September and there was concern that S Devon College had very recently announced that it was to offer courses only a short distance away with a potential for an overlap in some courses eg construction - this would be followed up to try to avoid duplication within the area.

Table 3.2 also indicated a significant number of 16-19 teenage mothers and teenage parents. The primary sector wished to support teenage parents. This was also a target for Children's Centres but no longer an NHS target.

Devon was involved in a government pilot in supporting troubled families and a separate report could be made to a future meeting. Future post 16 funding allowed for growth in apprenticeships and the Federation of Small Businesses could also be approached to see if they were interested in becoming involved.

**DECISION:**

(a) that the Forum notes the NEET statistics for Devon as of February 2012, the issues around employability particularly in line with the raising of the participation age (RPA) for 17 and 18 year olds and issues around skills training and apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds;

(b) that a report on Devon's pilot supporting troubled families be made to a future meeting of this Forum.

**ACTION:**

Head of Education & Learning (Philippa Court), Forward Plan.

**590 Finance Update**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Forum considered the joint report of the Head of Education & Learning and County Treasurer (DEF/12/03) on:-

Early Years Entitlement funding – "stretched offer" up to the maximum free entitlement of 570 hours pa;  
Standard budget returns

Central Expenditure Limit (CEL) 2012/13  
Stepping Stones/Thrive project update  
Reorganisation funding  
Month 10 budget monitoring position

The Forum also considered minutes of the Schools Finance Group (SFG) of 7 March 2012 relating to the above.

Given the key benefits of all schools using the standard budget return, the School Finance Group considered that schools should be formally required to complete the standard budget return. Compliance with this was more important than raising charges but if this were to be done they would need to fairly reflect officer time required to convert a non standard return into a standard return.

School budgets had not yet been finalised and so the CEL 2012/13 was an estimate. The draft figures showed central budgets reducing by slightly more than the schools budget mainly caused by academy conversion. There was no intention for central funds to be increased, but that it was a technical anomaly particularly influenced by changes in post 16 funding over which the LA had no control.

In relation to Stepping Stones/Thrive, SFG had requested a report to its May meeting clarifying the current funding and disinvestment position. SFG had requested this prior to members agreeing further investment plans for Thrive.

Major school reorganisation funding was recommended to increase up to a limit of £30k. £5k also continued to be available to schools for some more minor reorganisations eg federations.

Month 10 budget monitoring position forecasted a surplus of £3.2m including £1.1m brought forward from 2010/11. The distribution of £1.3m had yet to be made. The position did not include a potential £1.5m underspend in Local Learning Communities arising because spending plans were based on academic rather than financial years.

In response to a question on capping limits the County Treasurer confirmed that from its consideration at SFG there was not a presumption to cap at this stage and a report would be made to a future meeting of SFG to review the policy. The capping panel was now reviewing current final bids. So far no school had been capped and there was not an expectation that any would be.

DAPH expressed concern that schools and Local Learning Communities had not yet been given guideline budget figures for the coming financial year, which had been requested at the last Forum meeting to go out at the earliest opportunity. This was causing particular concern over budget planning for headteachers. The County Treasurer reported that individual school budget details was nearing completion but had to be fit for purpose before they were sent.

**DECISION:**

- (a) that a consultation to gauge impact of the change to offer all year round provision on Early Years settings operating on a term time only basis (as set out in section 2 of report DEF/12/03) be approved;
- (b) that schools be formally required to complete the standard budget return (as set out in section 3 of the report);
- (c) that should a technical breach of the Central Expenditure Limit occur, the breach (as set out in section 4 of the report) be approved;
- (d) that the update of the disinvestment position of the Stepping Stones strategy be noted;

(e) that an increase in the standard allocation to any school undergoing a significant reorganisation to £30k (as set out in section 6 of the report), together with the specific allocations for St Martins (section 6.2 of the report) be approved;

(f) that Month 10 budget monitoring position be noted (as set out in section 7 of the report).

**ACTION:**

County Treasurer (John Holme, Caroline Armstrong/Karen Powlesland)

**591 The Role of Governors in the Development of Local Learning Communities (LLCs)**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Forum considered the report of the Devon Association of Governors (DAG) (DEF/12/04) on the considerable variation in governor involvement in LLCs across Devon and as stakeholders, how governors could be involved. The Forum for Learning & Achievement, the Head's Liaison Group and DAG Executive had endorsed the proposed model for scrutiny, monitoring accountability for LLC expenditure contained in the report.

First steps included DAG meeting with LLCs to discuss how DAG could support governor involvement to benefit LLCs and targeting LLCs where there was limited or no governor involvement. DAG intended to bring further proposals to the next meeting (via FLA) and to report back on progress towards the end of 2012.

**DECISION:**

That the DAG model for monitoring LLC expenditure against the action plans and for ensuring accountability be endorsed.

**ACTION:**

DAG, Forward Plan

**592 The Future of the Devon Education Forum**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Forum received the joint report of the Head of Education & Learning and County Solicitor (DEF/12/05) to form the basis of the review to be undertaken by the task group on the future organisation and role of the Forum and its standing groups. The task group was to be convened at the earliest convenient date during the summer term.

**DECISION:**

That report DEF/12/05 be considered by the task group established to consider the future organisation and role of the Forum and its standing groups.

**ACTION:**

Head of Education & Learning (Sue Clarke)/County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

**593 Standing Groups etc**

(a) The Forum received the following minutes of its standing groups:-

(i) **School Finance Group (SFG)**

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2012.

All matters SFG wished to bring to the attention of the Forum had been considered under the Finance Update (minute 590 above). The CE representative referred to St Martin's school (minute A6) which was at an important stage of reorganisation and wished to see the organisational and standards aspects considered as well as finance, to ensure its success. The Head of Education & Learning reported that the school's needs were being looked at holistically.

**(ii) School Organisation and Policy Forum (SOPF)**

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2012.

**DECISION:**

That subscriptions to the Devon Maintenance Programme 2012/13 remain at current levels (minute A2).

**(iii) Forum for Learning and Achievement (FLA)**

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2012.

**DECISION:**

(A) that FLA oversee the deployment of £50k Education Fund when it becomes available after the first year of trading by the Learning & Development Partnership (minute A2);

(B) that the role of the Local Admissions Forum/SOPF be considered by the DEF structure task and finish group.

**ACTION:**

(A) FLA (to revert with plans for deployment to DEF involving SFG/County Treasurer as appropriate);

(B) Head of Education & Learning (Sue Clarke)/County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

**(b) Representations and progress from various standing and task & finish groups**

nil

**(c) Other Groups**

**(i) 14-19 Strategic Leadership Group**

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2012 would be sent to members when available.

**ACTION:**

County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

**(ii) Local Admissions Forum**

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2012 would be sent to members when available.

**ACTION:**

County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

**594 Caroline Armstrong, Senior Finance Manager**

**DECISION:**

That the Forum's appreciation of Caroline Armstrong's long, dedicated and respected service be placed on record, along with every good wish for the future.

**595 Dates of Future Meetings**

Meetings to commence at 10am at County Hall, Exeter (unless otherwise indicated)

**Tu 10 July 2012** (replaces W 27 June 2012 – clash with Devon Music Mix)

W 26 September 2012

W 21 Nov 2012 all day - seminar for Forum members only and Forum meeting

W 23 Jan 2013

W 20 March 2013.

The meeting started at 10am and finished at 12 noon.

The Schools Forum web is [www.devon.gov.uk/schoolsforum](http://www.devon.gov.uk/schoolsforum)