

DEVON EDUCATION FORUM

18 November 2020

Present:-

Schools Members

Primary Headteachers

Mr A Dobson	Marwood Primary
Mr J Stone	Denbury Primary
Ms R Shaw	Exeter Learning Academy Trust
Mr P Walker	First Federation Trust (Academy)

Primary Governors

Mrs A Blewett	Kings Nympton Primary
Mr L Cottrell	Tavistock Primary (Substitute Member)
Mr M Dobbins	Exmouth Marpool Primary
Mr A Hines	Rydon Primary (Education SW Trust)(Academy)

Secondary Headteachers

Mrs S Crook	Federation of Tiverton Schools
Mrs L Heath	Uffculme Academy Trust
Mr G Hill	Pilton CC (Academy)
Ms M Marder	The Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust (Academy)

Secondary Governors

Ms J Elson	Exmouth CC (Academy)
Mrs J Larcombe	Uffculme Academy Trust (Academy)
Mr A Walmsley	The Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust (Academy)

Nursery School

Mrs S Baker	Westexe
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Special Headteacher

Mrs J Warne	Learn to Live Federation
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Special Governor

Mrs F Butler	Marland School (Chair)
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Non-Schools Members

Mr R Gurney	Teachers Consultative Committee
Ms S Lockwood	Exeter Diocesan Board of Education
Mr B Blythe	PETROC

Observer

Councillor J McInnes	Cabinet Member – Children’s Services and Skills
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Apologies

Mrs F Wood	Federation of Tiverton Schools (DAG)
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164 **Election of Chair**

DECISION: that Mrs F Butler (Special Schools governor) be elected Chair of the Forum (two year appointment, until the Autumn term meeting, 2022).

165 **Election of Vice-Chair**

DECISION: that Mr A Walmsley (Secondary academy governor) be elected Vice-Chair of the Forum (two year appointment, until the Autumn term meeting, 2022).

166 **Minutes**

DECISION: that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2020 be signed as a correct record, subject to the following change to the attendance list:-

Ms R Shaw Exeter Learning Academy Trust (instead of South Dartmoor).

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

DISCUSSION:

In respect of minute 157, Maintained Nursery Schools - Buying into de-delegated services, it was noted that this would be reviewed by the Schools Finance Group at its next meeting.

ACTION:

County Treasurer (Adrian Fox)/Head of Education & Learning (Heidi Watson Jones)

168 **Membership**

DISCUSSION:

The Chairman welcomed new members following Schools and Academies Autumn Term 2020 elections:-

Ms R Shaw - Primary Academy Headteacher (previously substitute member)
Mr G Hill - Secondary Academy Headteacher
Mrs J Warne - Special School Headteacher (previously served on Forum)
Ms S Lockwood - Interim Diocesan Director, representing Faith Schools.

notes: (a) Mr R Haring had subsequently stood down from the Forum due to his appointment as a Trustee of Devon SLS; (b) DAG membership changes to be confirmed.

169 **Head of Education & Learning Update**

DISCUSSION:

The Head of Education & Learning presented details regarding the review of Education and Inclusion Services, following consultation with schools. Public consultation was in progress.

The review was considering bringing in-house the Education Psychology, Early Years and Children Missing Education services. School responses indicated a majority had no preference, with slightly more support for in-house than continuing to commission out.

When the public consultation had closed, a final business case would be submitted to Cabinet. Prior to this it would be shared with Council's Children's Scrutiny Committee and the Schools Finance Group.

170 **SEND 100 Project**

DISCUSSION:

The Head of Education & Learning provided further information on the costings reported in the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities, SEND 100 Project Report.* A study requested by the Forum in January 2020, to identify national good practice; regional and national data to support change; wider transformation work in settings and outreach support to build confidence around the needs of children and young people.

The Head of Education & Learning's document providing further information on the preliminary costed options laid out in the report SEND 100 Report findings together with a report for information "Establishing a Sustainable Outreach Service from Special Schools" by the SW Specialist Schools Teaching Alliance (SW SSTA) November 2019 had been circulated to Forum Members for discussion. A summary of the options was as follows:-

-Option 2(a)

Devon's proposal for a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support Service, to support schools to deliver provision for children with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other support needs, to enable them to be re-integrated into mainstream classes, supporting children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) to remain in mainstream education;

-Option 2(b)

Babcock LDP's proposal: SEN Support Outreach Service, reducing the need to escalate to a statutory plan;

-Option 2(g)

Babcock LDP to provide a series of 6 online training modules (one per half term) to support a graduated response focused in developing confidence in supporting a range of special educational needs in a mainstream setting. A focus on increased teacher training on SEND in their continuing professional development; developing a common standard for SEN co-ordinators (SENCOs) in Devon to ensure they were well trained and understood the level of need for which they should be providing support without an EHCP;

-Option 2(h)

Provide extended SEND telephone support and advice to SENCOs and teachers, with easy access when required.

-Option 3

Outreach support from special schools - the South West Specialist Teaching School Alliance (partnership of special schools working to improve the educational experiences for all learners) supported by other Devon special schools would provide a comprehensive outreach service, tailored to meet individual school SEND needs.

Discussion included:-

-that a detailed report from Officers (e.g. impact of investment on longer term anticipated savings) on options arising from the Forum's commissioned SEND 100 Project Report would need to be presented to the Forum prior to decision;

-that subject to a more detailed report, there was general support for options 2(h) and 3;

-that a competitive tendering process could be appropriate for some of the options; and

-that a cultural change was needed with smart and early intervention to offer excellent provision within mainstream settings to build confidence with maintained school families.

In response to questions the Special School Headteacher representative (leading as a teaching school and within SW SSTA) also explained the greater opportunities and potential for both special and maintained schools and pupils of developing and rolling out increased outreach work, subject to support in backfilling and releasing practitioners.

DECISION:

that a costed report on the potential savings from each option (where appropriate) arising from the SEND 100 Project Report be presented to the Forum's next meeting.

ACTION:

Head of Education & Learning (Dawn Stabb)

*SEND 100 Project Report available at:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/supportforschools/finance/consultations>

171

Finance Update

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services and County Treasurer (DEF/20/08) regarding the Budget Monitoring Month 6 (2020/21), Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The Forum also noted the respective minutes of the Schools Finance Group (SFG) of 4 November 2020.

The report detailed:-

- a net overspend of £27.8m;
- the approved deficit reserve DSG High Needs Block (HNB) had increased to £47.74m (offset by £175,000 additional income to be applied to the deficit at outturn);
- there was an in-year HNB overspend of £5.1m (offset by savings in Alternative Provision of £382,000 and Nursery Plus £133,000);
- there had been an adverse variance of £915,000 since month 5 due to reviewed costings on the new academy year data; and
- the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of students had identified potential additional costs of £307,000, not included in the forecast.

The report also highlighted the risks and uncertainties around:-

- the pandemic impact on the HNB;
- Early Years census;
- budget assumptions for Independent placements; and
- continued demand on funding and need to produce the management plan to bring the HNB to a balanced budget in the coming years and to bring down the deficit reserve.

Members noted that a recent Statutory Instrument placed the HNB deficit outside of Local Authority balance sheets until April 2023.

However, Members were concerned about the uncertainty of how this large deficit would be dealt with longer term and that there would only be the option to reduce school budgets to offset this, unless this national issue was financed by Government.

Officers advised that this was being raised with Devon MPs, the Cabinet Member for Schools & Skills/Chair of f40 continued to raise with Ministers and Officers were working with colleagues nationally. Raising awareness would

benefit from a whole partnership approach including schools and Associations.

DECISION:

(a) that the DSG Deficit as at month 6 as set out in section 1 be noted, subject to Members' reservations expressed above; and

(b) that month 6 DSG monitoring position as set out in section 2 be noted.

172 2021-22 Schools Funding Arrangements - Devon Consultation Responses

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the report of Chief Officer for Children's Services and County Treasurer (DEF/20/09), regarding Schools Funding, including the Local Authority's consultation with schools on Devon's proposals for the 2021-22 schools revenue funding formula.

A total of 114 schools attended online consultation events and only 99 schools (27% of all schools) responding.

In considering section 2 of the Report regarding movement between the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) blocks, Members were mindful of their wish to consider the implementation of some, but not necessarily all, of the SEND 100 Project recommendations (for SEND outreach to schools to improve outcomes and reduce dependency on Special Educational Needs (SEN) placements, as discussed at minute 170 above.

The report indicated a lack of support by schools in the consultation to fund the entire project through transferring 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block (HNB), i.e. the unallocated funding (indicative figure £1.4m) and/or for the balance of £740,00 to come from an Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) contribution or by capping and scaling the large increases some schools had seen, although some schools had partly agreed.

The funding was a one-off, one year commitment, but the results of its success would be considered for any future funding. Any project funding was not to plug the gap in HNB funding, but to facilitate better use of funds and ultimately provide the best outcomes for children.

The report provided an alternative to the movement of blocks by the use of surplus growth fund to support SEND 100 Project funding, highlighting that this was a Forum decision as part of the year end process.

The County Treasurer advised that any decision in relation to section 2 taken in principle was not binding and the SEND 100 Project funding options could be reviewed later.

Discussions also included:-

-that the proposed transfer of £1.4m from DSG to HNB was indicative and that any surplus DSG could be considered and would be brought to the January meetings after the Department for Education had advised of the settlement in December;

-that to date £30,000 out of the £100,000 allocated to the SEND 100 Project consultancy work had been spent, so the remaining money could be used on delivery SEND outreach;

-the Forum was considering the funding vote, whilst considering the consultation it was not a vote on the consultation itself;

-that it was envisaged that Devon's special schools would be able to support a big increase in outreach work providing funding was available.

DECISION:

(a) that Cabinet be recommended:-

that the proposals for the 2021-22 schools revenue funding formula as set out in paragraph 1.27 of Report DEF/20/09 be approved i.e:-

(i) that the Minimum Funding Guarantee be set at plus 2% reducing to plus 0.5% depending on affordability;

(ii) that Phase Association funding be top sliced prior to individual school budget allocation;

(iii) that a one-year adjustment be made to the Basic Entitlement (AWPU) for all pupils if funding permits (noting that the final funding rates may change, subject to affordability and confirmation of October 2020 pupil data and Schools Block DSG settlement in late December 2020); and

(Vote: Schools, Academies and PVI members)

(b) that Cabinet be recommended:-

that the proposals for movement between blocks as set out in paragraph 2.40 of Report DEF/20/09 be approved i.e:-

(i) that the unallocated funding of the National Funding Formula should not be transferred for 2021-22 to the HNB to undertake actions identified by the SEND 100 Report;

(ii) that consideration be given by the Forum to not transfer the additional funding through one of the options proposed in the consultation (as set out in paragraph 2.14 of Report DEF/20/09); and

(iii) that the allocation of growth funding underspend to HNB as part of the 2020-21 year end process be agreed in principle;

(Vote: Schools, Academies and PVI members)

(c) that the de-delegation proposals for maintained primary and maintained secondary schools as set out in paragraph 3.4 of Report DEF/20/09 be approved (noting Appendix C consultation responses) i.e:-

- (i) Contingencies (including schools in financial difficulties and deficits of closing schools);
- (ii) Behaviour support services;
- (iii) Support to under-performing ethnic groups and bilingual learners;
- (iv) Maternity; and
- (v) Trade Unions and Public duties; and
- (vi) Licences and subscriptions (not covered by a national licence which DfE charge the Local Authority);

(Vote: Maintained primary representatives)

(Note: Maintained secondary representative approval sought and determined by urgency procedures after the meeting due to no representation at this stage of the meeting)

(d) that the centrally held funding allocations as set out in paragraph 4.22 of Report DEF/20/09 be approved, as endorsed by the Schools Finance Group i.e:-

- (i) that the centrally held funding be retained at the same level per pupil as 2020-21 for the Schools Admissions Service;
- (ii) that contribution of £60,000 for the Emotional, Psychological and Social Wellbeing Service be continued for 2021-22; and
- (iii) that £223,000 be top sliced from the Schools Block to fund the Phase Associations (Devon SLS and DAG) for 2021-22.

(Vote: Schools, Academies and PVI members)

(e) that the local authority's disapplication request (for a one-off uplift in the Basic Entitlement (AWPU) included in 2020-21 School Budget Shares to be excluded from the final baselines) that had been applied for, but was awaiting approval be noted.

ACTION:

County Treasurer (Adrian Fox); (a), (b) County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

173

Additional Support for Covid-19 Costs Funding for Schools

DISCUSSION:

The Forum received correspondence sent by Councillor McInnes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Children's Services & Schools, Chair of f40 to Government, 20 October 2020 (responses awaited) and noted the severe financial pressure on as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

174 **Standing (and other) Groups**

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

(a) Schools' Finance Group (SFG)

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July, 9 September and 4 November 2020, (considered under finance minutes 171 and 172 above)

(b) School Organisation, Capital and Admissions (SOCA)

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020.

175 **Dates of Future Meetings**

Meetings usually held at County Hall, Exeter, at 10am (unless otherwise specified). However please check venue during the current situation:-

Wednesday 20 January 2021
Wednesday 17 March 2021
Wednesday 16 June 2021
Wednesday 17 November 2021
Wednesday 19 January 2022
Wednesday 16 March 2022

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.50 pm

The Devon Education Forum web is:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/devon-education-forum>