

DEVON EDUCATION FORUM

20 January 2021

Present:-

Schools Members

Primary Headteachers

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

Primary Governors

Ms K Brimacombe	Whitchurch Primary
Mr M Dobbins	Exmouth Marpool Primary
Mr A Hines	Rydon Primary (Education SW Trust)(Academy)

Secondary Headteachers

Mrs S Crook	Federation of Tiverton Schools
Mr A Davis	Exmouth 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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Alternative Provision

Mr R Gasson	WAVE Multi Academy Trust
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Non-Schools Members

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

Mr J Stokes	West Exmoor Federation (DAG)
Mr L Cottrell	Tavistock Primary (DAG)

176 **Minutes**

DECISION:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020 be signed as a correct record.

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

DISCUSSION:

The Cabinet Member - Children, Schools & Skills reported that as Chair of the national fairer funding f40 group advised that he would arrange Forum members to receive a copy of correspondence being sent to MPs at the end of this week.

ACTION: County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

178 **Membership**

DISCUSSION:

The Chairman welcomed new members and the following membership changes were noted:-

Ms S Baretto – Diocesan Schools Commissioner, Plymouth (faith substitute member);

Ms K Brimacombe – Whitchurch Primary (maintained governor); and

Mr J Stokes – West Exmoor Federation (maintained governor).

Mrs A Blewett, maintained primary governor had now stood down following governor elections, after 10 years of service to the Forum. Mrs Blewett continued to support the Forum's governor elections.

DECISION:

That Mrs Blewett be formally thanked for her contribution and long service to the Forum.

ACTION: County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

179 **Head of Education & Learning Update**

DISCUSSION:

The Head of Education & Learning reported on SEND transformation project very recent meetings that had taken place last week and this week (SEND 100 Project Options also considered at minute 183 below).

The aim was to improve the lived experience of children and young people with an integrated service working together to provide children and young people the right support at right time. Phase 1 of the transformation programme completed last summer, was a consultation the needs of users.

SEND was a multi-agency approach, with local area responsibility not just with DCC, but also schools, health, social care and all partners. The project board was multi partnership and included parents and carers.

There were currently three task and finish workstreams:-

-vision and strategy - online consultation with schools and parent groups, which had been positively received. This was due to signed off and ratified in January and published in the first week of February 2021;

-consultation on the provision of more rapid and shorter SEND updates; and

-redesigning and bringing together community based services closer to parents and schools in a partnership approach, with a 4th design now much closer to children and family needs and with professionals linking closer to schools and parents.

Forum members advised it would be helpful to receive a regular written update either as a short summary or any appropriate minutes to be included as a standard item on the Forum's agenda.

DECISION:

That a written summary or minutes be included as appropriate as a standard DEF agenda item.

ACTION:

Head of Education & Learning (Dawn Stabb) and County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

180

Finance Update

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the joint report of the County Treasurer and acting Chief Officer for Children's Services (DEF/21/01).

The Forum also noted the respective minutes of the Schools Finance Group (SFG) of 6 January 2021.

The report (DEF/21/01) covered budget monitoring, month 8 (2020/21) Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit and monitoring position:-

-the month 8 outturn forecast saw a significant overspend of £30.4m, due to continued High Needs demand (and growing demand on SEN independent sector placements despite creating more places in Devon's special schools).

-the DSG deficit had increased by £2.6m since month 6 to £30.4m, with a cumulative deficit of £50.36m.

-this could have a considerable impact on the future DSG budget as well as impacting on the financial stability fo Devon County Council. Urgent action was still required to reduce demands of EHCPs and independent placements.

-the Covid-19 pandemic impact on student mental health identified potential additional £297,000 costs in this financial year (not included in the forecast).

In response to Members' questions, including the achievability of the DSG deficit management plan, County Treasurer advised:-

-the draft DSG deficit management plan was due for completion by end January 2021 with proposed actions to address the significant deficit and achieve a balanced budget over a 5 year period. The plan would be brought to the next Forum meeting for consideration as a stakeholder;

-the government position and expectations of LAs nationally regarding HNB deficits was still uncertain post April 2023, with Devon holding ongoing discussions with other comparative LAs;

-the government SEND review was due in Spring 2021, any potential revised timeline was not yet known;

-the SEND 100 project to be considered further by the Forum would include best national practice to bring about transformation within an integrated service and address the demands on the HNB.

DECISION:

(a) that the DSG Deficit as at month 8 as set out in section 1 of the Report (DEF/21/01) be noted;

(b) that month 8 DSG monitoring position as set out in section 2 of the Report (DEF/21/01) be noted.

ACTION: -

181 **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2021/2022 - Budget Planning**

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the joint report of the County Treasurer and acting Chief Officer for Children's Services (DEF/21/01) including:-

-the DSG Deficit further increase of £27.9m due to continued demand for SEN placements, with concern at the ability to balance the budget over time and management action being taken;

-the total DSG settlement £582.155m (2021/22) compared to £533.938m (2020/21 adjusted baseline);

-the position on the various budget blocks.

Members' discussion included:-

-Whether within the 2021/22 budget management actions of £2.2m and the consideration of a further £5.96m were achievable? (see also minute 180 relating to the DSG deficit management plan); and

-clarification requested regarding the removal of ten Alternative Provision medical places (paragraph 6.5 of Report (DEF/21/01))

DECISION:

(a) that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Deficit as set out in section 1 of Report (DEF/21/01) be noted;

(b) that the DSG 2021/22 announcement on 17 December 2020 as set out in section 2 of Report (DEF/21/01) be noted;

(c) that the Schools Block, Central School Services Block, High Needs Block and Early Years Block as set out in section 3 to 9 of Report (DEF/21/01) be noted; and

(d) that clarification regarding the removal of ten Alternative Provision medical places (paragraph 6.5 of Report (DEF/21/01)) be provided to the Alternative Provision representative.

ACTION: (d) Head of Education & Learning (Simon Niles)

182 **Maintained Nursery Schools - De-delegation (DEF minute 157, 17 June 2020)**

(Maintained Nursery School representative, Mrs Baker declared an interest in this matter).

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the joint report of the County Treasurer and acting Chief Officer for Children's Services (DEF/21/03), following the Forum's decision on 17 June 2020 (minute 157) i.e.:-

“that Maintained Nursery Schools be permitted to buy into de-delegated services as set out by the DfE for 2020/21, but that the Schools Finance Group review a longer term solution within the next 12 months.”

Ethnic Minority Achievement was not included in this arrangement as these services were not provided at early years age, with funding rates reduced accordingly.

DECISION:

That for 2021/22 Maintained Nursery Schools continue to buy into de-delegation services at the Primary School rates (i.e. contingency, trade unions, maternity and copyrights services only).

(Vote: Maintained primary representatives)

(Vote: Maintained secondary representatives)

ACTION:

County Treasurer (Adrian Fox).

183 SEND 100 Project (DEF minute 170, 18 November 2020)

(Special School Heateacher representative, Mrs Warne declared an interest in this matter as the Head of SW Specialist Schools Teaching Alliance (SW SSTA)).

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the report of the Schools Finance Group (DEF/21/04) following the Forum’s request at the last meeting for further costings and potential savings analysis on various model options for future SEN provision, with all stakeholders working together to achieve the savings to bring a balanced DSG budget in coming years.

Members comments included:-

-SFG had requested further detail on monitoring the project, as well as costings for years 2 and 3;

-Members viewed this as a 2-3 year project to implement any recommended cultural and institutional change across Devon settings and that the remaining £60-70k within the initial allocation of funds could also be used to help fund this past the first year;

-that this project could be led by a designated project manager, calling in the expertise of a small multi- agency team to oversee all aspects including commissioning, monitoring effectiveness of options, invest to save evidence to support the ongoing project and reporting to SFG (and this Forum). A designated lead responsible for moving this forward could make quicker

progress than adding on the work to any existing role or only sitting within the Forum and;

-the Alternative Provision representative advised that he had had experience of various alternatives and best practice in other local authority areas and offered his support in developing the project in Devon. He considered a small multi-agency group rather than one individual was likely to be more effective, together with AP representation on SFG;

-in response Forum members generally supported in principle, a designated person to lead the project with multi agency, integrated working to bring about transformation. AP representation at a senior level should be included on SFG on a permanent basis due to this project and other significant ongoing HNB and SEN issues.

DECISION:

(a) that the initial year of the projects and multiples thereof from the underspend from the Growth Fund at the end of 2020/21 be approved; and

(b) that all stakeholders work with LA colleagues to enable continued progress in future years, where the projects have been successful;

(c) that in principle, a designated person to lead the project with multi-agency integrated working, be supported; and

(d) that 1 Alternative Provision seat be included on the Schools Finance Group.

(Vote: Schools, Academies and PVI representatives (excepting (d))).

ACTION:

Head of Education & Learning (Dawn Stabb; and Heidi Watson-Jones (for SFG representation))

184 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 6 January 2021 (considered under Finance Update minute 180 above)

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

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020.

185 **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 17 March 2021 (virtual meeting)

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>

186 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

DECISION: that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of a third party and of the County Council (as the authority holding that information) and by virtue of the fact that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

187 **Education & Inclusion Contract Update**

(An item taken in the absence of the press and public – see minute 186 above)

DISCUSSION:

The Head of Education & Learning updated the Forum on the position with the Learner Services to Schools re-commissioning.

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.10 pm

The Schools Forum web is

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