

**DEVON EDUCATION FORUM**

17 March 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 A Hines

Rydon Primary (Education SW Trust)(Academy)

Secondary Headteachers

Mrs S Crook

Federation of Tiverton Schools

Mrs L Heath

Uffculme Academy Trust (Academy)

Mr G Hill

Ventrus Academy Trust (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

Special Headteacher

Mrs J Warne

Learn to Live Federation

Special Governor

Mrs F Butler

Marland School (**Chair**)

Alternative Provision

Mr R Gasson

WAVE Multi Academy Trust

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

Other Members in Attendance

Mr P Randall	Exeter, St Peter's CE Aided (HT substitute member, observing)
Mrs S Pickering	Honiton Millwater (HT substitute member, observing)

Apologies

Mrs B Alderson	Teachers Consultative Committee
Mr L Cottrell	Tavistock Primary (DAG) (Substitute Member)
Mr M Dobbins	Exmouth Marpool Primary (DAG)
Mr M Gurney	Teachers Consultative Committee
Ms D Roberts	Early Years PVI (substitute member)

**188**      **Minutes**

**DECISION:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 be signed as a correct record.

**189**      **Matters Arising from the Last Meeting and Report back on Issues Raised with Cabinet/from F40**

**DISCUSSION:**

No specific matters were discussed (note: Education and Inclusion Services considered by Cabinet on 10 March 2021 is at minute 192 below).

**190**      **Membership**

No membership updates were reported.

**191**      **Introduction from Chief Officer for Children's Services**

The Chair welcomed Melissa Caslake, newly appointed Chief Officer for Children's Services.

The Chief Officer for Children's Services gave an introduction to the Committee and outlined her aspirations of close working together and priorities for this role, including:-

- SEND Transformation;
- Social Care improvement;
- Investing in children and young people through Early Help, early intervention and early development; and

-Managing the significant financial challenges of the High Needs Block budget deficit.

**192      Head of Education & Learning Update**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Head of Education & Learning reported on:-

(a) Education and Inclusion Services future arrangements for the provision of Education and Inclusion Services

The Report (CS/21/04) to Cabinet on 10 March 2021 (Cabinet agenda item 14) and corresponding Cabinet minutes 647-649 had been circulated to Forum members for information, full report and minutes available at [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 10th March, 2021, 10.30 am - Democracy in Devon](#)

Cabinet minute extract below:-

“...RESOLVED

(a) that the outcomes of the consultation and engagement process that has taken place over the past 15 months be noted;

(b) that following expiry or termination of the existing service contracts with Babcock Learning and Development Partnership LLP the Education and Inclusion Services be brought into direct delivery by the Council, through the Education and Learning teams;

(c) that authorisation be given to the County Treasurer, County Solicitor, and Head of Digital Transformation & Business Support (in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member) to:

(i) determine the Council’s preferred option for the future of the LLP after the existing service contract for Learner Services has come to an end;

(ii) enter into discussions with Babcock Education Holdings Ltd to agree the future of the LLP; and

(iii) execute all legal and financial agreements necessary to effect any decisions or agreements reached with regard to the future of the LLP; (d) that in the event that the LLP is wound up or otherwise ceases to provide the traded services, that authorisation be given to the Chief Officer for Children’s Services (in consultation with the County Treasurer, County Solicitor, Head of Digital Transformation & Business Support, Head of Education & Learning, the Lead Member for Childrens Services and the Leader of the Council) to consider the future of appropriate traded services in accordance with the commitment provided at paragraph 3.17 in the Report and recognising that

the future of the services will be subject to further consultation and scrutiny, as appropriate and Cabinet in due course.”

(b) School Attendance

Data as at 27 February 2021 had been included within the agenda. Further data had been received by the Head of Education & Learning on 16 March 2021 which would be evaluated and forwarded to Forum members for information.

Data indicated that Devon school attendance continued to be above the national average across all phases and for children with Education and Health Care Plans, both during the months of school attendance restrictions and with pupils returning to school from 8 March 2021 during the ongoing pandemic.

**ACTION:**

Head of Education & Learning (latest school attendance data to Forum)

193

**Finance Update**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Forum considered the report of the Chief Officer for Children’s Services and County Treasurer (DEF/21/05).

The Forum also noted the respective minutes of the Schools Finance Group (SFG) of 3 March 2021.

Members had also received some additional information regarding the County Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22-2024/5 for the DSG and SEND High Needs Block.

The report (DEF/21/05) covered:-

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget monitoring deficit (including progress on the deficit management plan) together with monitoring position at month 10 (2020/21).

The month 10 outturn forecast showed a significant overspend of £30.1m and cumulative deficit increased to £50m, associated with the continued demand on High Needs. Members were concerned about a potentially considerable impact on future education budgets within the DSG and requiring urgent action to reduce the demand for EHCPs and Independent special school placements. Uncertainty of risk around the deficit continued whilst DfE advice was awaited on how this could be managed post 31 March 2023.

Members expressed concern that the draft DSG deficit management plan had not yet been brought to the Forum for consideration as a major stakeholder

and that they had not to date seen detailed information, discussed the role and accountability of Forum members in this process and that a special Forum meeting/briefing would be needed to consider this (in advance of the ordinary meeting scheduled for 16 June 2021). Officers explained the considerable ongoing work in preparing the draft plan for members' consideration as soon as was practicable, with the objective of stabilising the deficit and then starting to reduce it within the five year plan period.

**DECISION:**

(a) that the DSG Deficit, month 10, 2020/21 (section 1 of the Report (DEF/21/05)) be noted, with reservations as above;

(b) that the DSG monitoring position month 10, 2020/21 (section 2 of the Report (DEF/21/05)) be noted, with reservations as above; and

(c) that a special meeting of the Forum/members' briefing be held to consider the DSG Deficit Management Plan in advance of the Forum's next meeting (meeting arrangements to be confirmed).

**(Vote: Schools and Academies - no PVI representative present)**

**ACTION:**

County Treasurer (Adrian Fox) and (c) County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

**194      2020/21 Advance Notice of Planned Carry Forwards**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Forum considered the joint report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services and County Treasurer (DEF/21/06).

The Forum also noted the respective minutes of the Schools Finance Group (SFG) of 3 March 2021.

The report (DEF/21/06) covered all current known (estimated) carry forward requests (to be confirmed and finalised during closedown process).

Members noted that the SEND 100 Project current known carry forward of £70,000 (as indicated in paragraph Table 1 of the Report) was earmarked to support the projects going forward including to fund the project lead Officer.

The County Treasurer also advised Members of a number of DfE consultations (various dates March - May 2021), including High Needs funding arrangements for 2022/23, Changes to the sparsity factor for 2022/23 and centralising schools' business rates. (Details would be included in the weekly information to schools on 19 March 2021).

**DECISION:**

that surplus budget carry forwards to 2021/22 (Table 1 of report (DEF/21/06)) be agreed in principle.

**(Vote: Schools and Academies - no PVI representative present)**

**ACTION:**

County Treasurer (Adrian Fox)

**195 Standing (and other) Groups**

The Forum received the following minutes/summary as follows:-

(a) Standing Groups of the Forum

(i) Schools' Finance Group (SFG)

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2021 (considered under finance issues above - minutes 193 and 194);

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

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2021;

(b) Other Groups

SEND Transformation Steering Group

Briefing summary.

**196 Correspondence**

**DISCUSSION:**

The County Solicitor reported that to date a reply had not yet been received regarding any extension for flexibility of meetings under the The Schools Forums (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, due to expire on 31 March 2020.

**DECISION:**

County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

**197 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 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>

**NOTES:**

1. *Minutes should always be read in association with any Reports for a complete record.*
2. *If the meeting has been webcast, it will be available to view on the [webcasting site](#) for up to 12 months from the date of the meeting*

\* **DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.18 am