

DEVON EDUCATION FORUM

16 March 2022

Present:-

Schools Members

Primary Headteachers

Mr C Butler

Otter Valley Federation (Substitute Member)

Mr J Stone

Denbury Primary

Ms R Shaw

Exeter Learning Academy Trust (Academy)

Primary Governors

Ms K Brimacombe

Whitchurch Primary

Mr A Hines

Rydon Primary (Education SW Trust)(Academy)

Mr I Rogers

Exminster Primary

Secondary Headteachers

Mr A Davis

Exmouth CC (Academy)

Ms L Heath

Uffculme 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

Mr K Bennett

Marland School

Special Governor

Mrs F Butler

Marland School **(Chair)**

Alternative Provision

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Non-Schools Members

Mr B Blythe

PETROC

Ms G Rolstone

Early Years, Private & Voluntary Independent

Observer

Councillor A Leadbetter

Cabinet Member – Children’s Services and Skills (formal observer)

Mrs S Pickering

Special Headteacher Substitute Member
Mill Water School (observing)

Apologies

Mr A Dobson	Marwood Primary
Ms K Brimacombe	Whitchurch Primary
Mr J Clements	Cranbrook, St Martin's CE Primary
Mrs S Crook	Federation of Tiverton Schools
Mr G Hill	Ventrus Multi Academy Trust (Academy)
Ms S Lockwood	Exeter Diocesan Board of Education
Ms E Stubbs	Budleigh Salterton, St Peter's CE Primary
Mr P Walker	First Federation Trust (Academy)

34 Minutes

DECISION:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 be signed as a correct record.

35 Matters Arising from the Last Meeting and Report back on Issues Raised with Cabinet/f40

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36 Membership

DISCUSSION:

Following resignations as below, the Chair thanked members for their service, noting arrangements were in place to fill the vacancies:-

Mr M Gurney, Teachers Consultative Committee (DCC appointment), wef 17 March 2022);

Mrs F Wood, Secondary maintained governor, substitute member (Phase election), with immediate effect.

ACTION:

County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley/DAG)

37 Head of Education & Learning Update/Education & Inclusion - Babcock LDP In-housing Briefing

DISCUSSION:

(a) The Forum considered the report/briefing note of the Head of Education & Learning (DEF/22/07) giving key updates to end February 2022, on work to ensure a smooth transition to transfer 204 FTE Babcock LDP staff back into Devon's Childrens' Services via a TUPE process, as previously agreed by Cabinet.

This included updates on:-

Integrated Team Structure and TUPE for over 250 staff (204FTE)
Estates
ICT (including pilot of rollouts)
Traded Services
Induction and training.

Engagement had been excellent across the County Council and Babcock with all workstreams currently on track to deliver on time. Consultation ended 15 March 2022, yet to reviewed.

(b) The Head of Education & Learning also reported on the future of the SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) 100 Projects:-

A briefing note had been circulated to Forum members indicating clear evidence of the positive impact of the SEND 100 Projects, delivered and managed through Babcock LDP and South West Specialist Schools Teaching Alliance (SW SSTA), under the direction of the Headteachers' Steering Committee and funded by schools. While the original project was due to last 12 months, ending March 31st 2022, delays due to COVID-19 had meant most of these projects would now run until the end of July. SEND 100 Steering Group representatives had sought clarification of the future position.

In response the briefing note explained that with services provided by Babcock LDP coming in-house from 1st August 2022, there would be less external agency delivery of the current SEND 100 Projects to co-ordinate and manage. Officers therefore suggested that the current arrangement with the SEND 100 Steering Group should be extended until the end of term and that from 1 August 2022, with the co-ordination and management of the SEND 100 Projects moving into Devon County Council, embedded as business-as-usual. The SEND 100 Projects would then sit with other projects under the DfE's Safety Valve Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan and would be funded through the High Needs Block on an invest to save basis, ensuring their continued delivery.

The proposed High Needs sub group reporting to this Forum (minute 41 below), would ensure that schools retained oversight of delivery of the SEND

100 Projects, along with the wider actions being taken under the DSG management plan.

Members also recognised the significant benefit the SEND Project Lead's work was having in aiding the transformation and hoped that early clarity could be given to the future of this role which was due to end April 2023.

DECISION:

(a) that the report (DEDF/22/07) be noted; and

(b) that the SEND 100 Steering Group (at their meeting on 31 March 2022) examine the detail of the above proposals and make a recommendation to DEF about the extension of the current arrangement to 1 August 2022 and the move to business-as-usual provision under the DSG Management Plan proposals thereafter.

ACTION:

Head of Education & Learning (Dawn Stabb and Jackie Ross)

38

Finance Update

DISCUSSION:

(a) The Forum noted the respective minutes of the Schools Finance Group (SFG) of 2 March 2022 in relation to report (DEF/22/04).

(b) The Forum considered the report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services and Director of Finance (DEF/22/04) on month 10 of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) monitoring position.

The report (DEF/22/04) covered:-

DSG Deficit Management Plan
Schools Block
High Needs Block
Risks.

The outturn forecast 2021/22 saw a significant overspend in the overall DSG of £39.9m, associated with the continued demand on High Needs and growing demand on Special Educational Needs (SEN placements) within the Independent Sector despite creating more places in Devon's Special Schools. The cumulative DSG deficit projected to March 2022 had increased to £88.9m. High Needs had further increased by £850,000 with Management Action reducing to £700,000. The in-year increased DSG deficit could have a considerable impact on future DSG education budgets and impact on the financial sustainability for Devon County Council. Urgent action was still

required to reduced Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and Independent placement demand.

Whilst there had been a lighter touch in month 10 monitoring due to DfE submission deadlines, month 11 was in line with the month 10 forecast.

It was further noted that savings were anticipated to start showing in the next financial year, the planned result of the interventions contained within the DfE Safety Valve Intervention programme. The proposed High Needs Funding group (see minute 41 below) would robustly challenge and support delivery of the DSG Management Plan.

Members' discussions and comments included:-

-a SFG representative emphasised SFG's strength of concern regarding the slippage in DSG management actions and SFG's continued detailed challenge. It was important that SFG should not lose any future strategic oversight;

-that the DSG adjustment account Members' information was a useful tool to monitor savings and budget growth ongoing, identifying management actions impact from underlying activity.

DECISION:

That Month 10 DSG monitoring position as set out in report (DEF/22/04), sections 1 to 4 be noted.

ACTION:

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39 Advanced Notice of Planned Carry Forwards

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services and Director of Finance (DEF/22/05) on known (estimated) carry forward requests for the end of year 2021/22, to be confirmed and finalised during the closedown process.

DECISION:

That the surplus budget carry forwards to 2022/23 be approved in principle, as set out in Table 1 of Report DEF/22/05.

(Vote: Schools, Academies and PVI members)

ACTION:

Director of Finance (Adrian Fox)

40 Health and Social Care Levy Payments

DISCUSSION:

The Alternative Provision (AP) representative (not present at this meeting) had requested the Forum to consider these payments to include AP and medical AP, as with special schools, but had indicated he was content for this to be considered at the Schools Finance Group's next meeting.

The Head of Education & Learning added that the social care element had now been agreed for both AP and special schools, but that other AP funding was currently funding differently which would be considered at SFG.

ACTION:

Head of Education & Learning (Heidi Watson-Jones) - SFG agenda

41 High Needs Funding Sub Group - Establishment and Terms of Reference

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the joint Report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services and Director of Finance (DEF/22/06) on the proposed establishment of an additional permanent standing group of the Forum, focusing solely on the High Needs Block (HNB), strategically and operationally.

Such a group was accepted as good practice nationally and within Devon, to take forward at pace the DSG management plan, with case studies of other LAs successful in presenting plans to reduce their HNB overspend have benefited from having a dedicated High Needs funding group.

It was proposed that:-

-this group would be needed on an ongoing basis to support the work required to deliver the DfE safety valve intervention programme and Devon's DSG Management Plan;

-it would report direct to DEF, sitting alongside (not under) the Schools Finance Group;

-as delegated powers were not in accordance with the Schools Forums guide/regulations, any decisions requiring DEF approval could use DEF urgency procedures where DEF's calendar of meetings did not fit timeframes. Routine progress updates would be presented to each DEF meeting;

-that group membership be kept as small as practicable but representative (e.g. no larger than the Schools Finance Group), to include Early Years and Post 16;

-initially it was anticipated the group could need to meet twice monthly, before settling into a less frequent pattern. Given this demand on group members, named substitutes or a representative small pool of members to be called upon to ensure continuity, expertise and consistency of decision making should be considered.

DECISION:

(a) that a dedicated permanent High Needs funding sub group be established, reporting direct to DEF; and

(b) that the Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix One be approved, subject to the clarification of membership (and noting all as discussed above).

ACTION:

Head of Education & Learning (Jackie Ross)

42 Standing (and other) Groups

The Forum received the following from its standing and other groups:-

School Organisation, Capital and Admissions (SOCA, Standing Group)

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2022.

43 Correspondence

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44 Dates of Future Meetings

Please check venue/arrangements (see Calendar link) as these are subject to change:

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

Meetings held at 10am:

Wednesday 22 June 2022

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Wednesday 18 January 2023

Wednesday 22 March 2023.

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 11.25 am