

Minutes of a meeting of the North Northamptonshire Schools Forum

Held at 1.00 pm on Thursday 2nd November 2023 as a remote meeting, via Zoom

Present:-

Members

James Birkett (Chair)
Victoria Bull
Laura Clarke
Annabel Moore
Angela Prodger

Paul Wheeler (Vice Chair)
Peter Cantley
Marie Lally
Kathryn Murphy
James Sherlock

Officers

Sariya Bi
Charlotte Franks
Neil Goddard
Salik Khan
Sarah McAnulty
Kelly Mills

Senior Finance Business Partner
Head of SEND and Vulnerable Groups
Assistant Director for Education
Finance Business Partner
Underwriting Manager – WNC
Early Years Business Compliance and
Funding Support Service Manager
Strategic Finance Business Partner
Democratic Services Manager

Also in attendance – Councillor Scott Edwards

111 **Apologies for non-attendance, Forum membership changes and declarations of interest**

Apologies were received from the following members: Sandra Appleby, Rob Hardcastle and Nikki Lamond.

112 **Minutes of meeting held on 13th June 2023 and points arising/officer feedback**

RESOLVED that: The minutes of the meeting held on the 13th June be agreed as an accurate record.

113 **Scheme for Financing Schools 2023/24 & 2024/25**

The Forum considered a report by the Finance Business Partner, which outlined the Scheme for Financing Schools for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

RESOLVED that: The Forum approves the changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools 2023/24 and 2024/25.

114 **Schools Monitoring 2023-24 QTR 1**

The Forum considered a report by the Finance Business Partner, which outlined the budget position based on the first quarter, representing April 2023 to June 2023, and the anticipated year end balances forecast.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

115 Deficit Budget Policy 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Finance Business Partner, which outlined North Northamptonshire Schools' Deficit Budget Policy 2024/25.

RESOLVED that: Maintained schools' members agree to continue to adopt the Deficit Budget Policy 2024/25.

116 Schools Balances Control Policy 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Finance Business Partner, which outlined North Northamptonshire's policy on the control of surplus balances in schools and schools' final balance positions for 2022/23.

RESOLVED that: Maintained schools' members:

a) Approve the policy.

b) Agree to implement the policy for the 2023/24 financial year and apply it to balances held at 31st March 2024.

117 DSG Update 2023/24

The Forum considered a report by the Senior Finance Business Partner, which outlined the financial position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) against the budget for 2023/24.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members expressed concern regarding budgetary pressures against the High Needs block of the DSG, since the need for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had not reduced.

In response, the Senior Finance Business Partner clarified that:

- At the time of the meeting, 3,770 EHCPs had been created in North Northampton, which was an increase of 440 from the previous year (on average, 70/80 applications were received per month). This was a nationwide issue, seen also by other local authorities. North Northamptonshire Council would develop a long-term management plan to bring the budget within available resources.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

118 Provisional National Funding Formula 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Senior Finance Business Partner, which outlined details of the National Funding Formula (NFF) 2024/25 Policy and North Northamptonshire Council's local formulae for school budgets and high needs.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

119 Mainstream Schools Funding Formula Consultation 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Senior Finance Business Partner, which outlined the 2024/25 Mainstream Schools Funding Formula consultation proposals.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried what additional financial support existed to support growth (such as new schools).
- Regarding the proposed 0.5% transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the DSG, one member queried whether it would be financially viable to not enact this transfer.

In response, the Senior Finance Business Partner clarified that:

- Additional financial support to support growth in the form of schools moving sites would go to North Northamptonshire Council's Executive Committee for approval however, no growth was intended for the next financial year.
- The financial figures provided in the report considered the 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. Nevertheless, the local authority would consult all schools regarding the proposed transfer and would not be empowered to enact any transfer of funding within the DSG without the Schools Forum's approval.

RESOLVED that: The Forum approves the proposed 2024/25 North Northamptonshire Mainstream Schools Funding Formula to go to consultation.

120 Proposed CSSB 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Senior Finance Business Partner, which presented the local authority's proposals for central expenditure on education functions for 2024/25.

RESOLVED that: The Forum:

- a) Notes the ongoing reduction of 20% to historical commitments of the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) year on year.
- b) Considers further de-delegation for education functions from maintained primary, secondary and special school budgets to meet the shortfall in CSSB funding.
- c) Approves the use of the historical commitment budget.
- d) Approves the use of the available ongoing responsibilities budgets.
- e) Approves the use of contribution to the combined services budget.

121 De-Delegation - Trade Union Facilities Time 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Assistant Director for Education, which outlined the de-delegation of North Northamptonshire schools' pooled facility time arrangements for the 2023/24 financial year.

RESOLVED that: Maintained schools' members approve the proposed facilities time arrangements to go out to consultation.

122 De-Delegation - School Effectiveness 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Assistant Director for Education, which outlined 'school effectiveness' for maintained schools, which was funded from the CSSB of the DSG.

RESOLVED that: The forum approves the consultation proposals and questions.

123 De-Delegation - Schools Insurance Service 2024/25

The Forum considered a report the Underwriting Manager from West Northamptonshire Council, which outlined the de-delegation of the schools insurance service for 2024/25.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- One member queried how the de-delegation of the schools insurance service would affect special schools.

In response, the Strategic Finance Business Partner clarified that:

- Special schools and nursery schools would not be affected as de-delegation would only operate for mainstream primary and secondary schools.

RESOLVED that: The Forum notes the available purchasing options for insurance.

124 Growth Fund and Falling Pupil Roll Fund 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Assistant Director for Education, which outlined the 2024/25 Growth Fund and Falling Pupil Roll Fund.

RESOLVED that: The Forum confirms the establishment of a Falling Pupil Roll Fund subject to the funding allocations set by the DfE and the agreed criteria established via the consultation process.

125 Permanent Exclusions Policy 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Assistant Director for Education, which outlined the local authority's Permanent Exclusions Clawback Policy for 2024/25.

RESOLVED that: The Forum approves the consultation on the policy as set out in the report.

126 Early Years Update 2023/24

The Forum considered a report by the Early Years Business Compliance and Funding Support Service Manager, which provided an update regarding Early Years funding, new proposals and transformative reforms.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

127 Notional SEND

The Forum considered a report by the Assistant Director for Education, which outlined the notional SEN allocation (for the reasonable costs that may be incurred by schools in supporting pupils with special educational needs).

RESOLVED that: The Forum approves the proposal regarding notional SEND to go to consultation for potential future implementation.

128 High Needs Update 2023/24 & Proposed High Needs Place Changes for 2024/25

The Forum considered a report by the Head of SEND and Vulnerable Groups, which provided an update regarding High Needs funding.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

129 Urgent Business

There was none.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at Time Not Specified