

Minutes of a meeting of the Schools Forum

Held at 1.00 pm on Wednesday 14th December 2022 as a Remote Meeting via Zoom

Present:-

Members

Paul Wheeler (Acting Chair)	Sandra Appleby
Victoria Bull	Laura Clarke
Rob Hardcastle	Siobhan Hearne
Marie Lally	Nikki Lamond
Annabel Moore	Angela Prodger
Jo Sanchez-Thompson	

Officers

Sariya Bi	Senior Finance Business Partner
Neil Goddard	Assistant Director – Education
Nichola Jones	Head of SEND
Salik Khan	Finance Business Partner
Yoke O'Brien	Strategic Finance Business Partner
Raj Sohal	Democratic Services Officer

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

Apologies were received from the following members: James Birkett, Lee Hughes (Annabel Moore attended as a substitute) and Robert Tite.

Two new members had also joined the Forum, as primary maintained representatives - Marie Lally (Earls Barton Primary School) and Victoria Bull (Higham Ferrers Junior School)

As the Chairman of the Forum was absent from the meeting, Paul Wheeler (Vice Chair) acted as Chair.

78 **Minutes of meeting held on 20 October 2022 and points arising/officer feedback**

RESOLVED that:

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th October were agreed as an accurate record.

79 **2022-23 DSG Budget Update**

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 2022/23.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

80 Consultation Feedback to Proposed Changes to Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum considered a report by The Finance Business Partner, which outlined the feedback received from the consultation relating to the proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried how many schools failed to submit returns to the local authority.
- One member queried whether, through the proposal, the local authority would provide support to schools who struggled to understand the process of submitting returns; rather than implement punitive measures, such as withholding funding.
- Members queried whether there had been consideration, within the proposal, of exceptional circumstances for schools, in preventing them from submitting returns on time.
- Members queried whether officers believed this process should be carried out monthly, rather than quarterly.

In response, The Finance Business Partner clarified that:

- When collecting returns from schools, the local authority had experienced issues with this process being carried out on a quarterly basis, rather than a monthly one. Nevertheless, schools largely complied.
- The local authority would provide support to schools before implementing any sanctions. Extenuating circumstances would also be taken into consideration. As long as clear communication was maintained, this would not be an issue.
- The local authority intended to make the process of completing returns as easy as possible for schools, to minimise workload.

The Chair of the Forum posited that it would be valuable for officers to include explicit wording around extenuating circumstances and support available to schools, relating to the submission of quarterly returns, in the proposal.

RESOLVED that: The Forum approves the implementation of the two clauses within the Scheme for Financing Schools to ensure robust reporting and monitoring.

81 2023-24 Mainstream Funding Formula Consultation and Proposal

The Forum considered a report by The Strategic Finance Business Partner, which outlined the issues the Forum would need to consider in making recommendations to Cabinet and Council concerning the mainstream funding formula for 2023-24.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried whether a surplus would be generated for the High Needs Block 2023/24, since a deficit was not brought forward in 2022/23 and funding was transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
- Members queried whether the proposal put forward by the local authority was comprised prior to the government's announcement of additional funding.

In response, The Strategic Finance Business Partner clarified that:

- At the time of the meeting, officers had forecasted a £1M underspend (surplus) on the High Needs Block for 2023/24.
- The local authority had not yet received guidance from the DfE regarding how it would receive additional funding. The settlement was anticipated imminently.

RESOLVED that: The Forum approves:

- Adopting the 2023-24 ACA adjusted National Funding Formula values in setting the 2023-24 mainstream funding formula for schools and academies.
- Continuing to use the current local factors for split sites unless otherwise instructed by the DfE.
- Setting the Minimum Funding Guarantee at 0.5%
- No transfer to the High Needs Block in 2023-24
- Allocating all remaining funds in the Schools Block to the Growth Fund.

82 De-Delegation - Trade Union Facilities Time - 2022-23 Update and 2023-24 Budget Proposals

The Forum considered a report by The Assistant Director for Education, as well as trade union representatives in attendance at the meeting, which outlined North Northamptonshire Council's Recognition Agreement with trade unions. This agreement covered time off for trade union duties and activities in North Northamptonshire schools where the local authority was the employer.

The report also summarised NNC schools' pooled trade union facility time arrangements.

RESOLVED that: Maintained School Forum members approve:

- Pooling their facility time arrangements in 2023/24.
- De-delegating budgets to fund a pooled facility time arrangement.
- Setting a per pupil rate of £3.56.

83 De-delegation - School Effectiveness - 2022-23 Update and 2023-24 Budget Proposals

The Forum considered a report by The Assistant Director for Education concerning School Effectiveness, which was funded from the Central Schools Services Block of the DSG.

The report covered school effectiveness funding and reviewed impact, future priorities and recommendations for 2023-24.

RESOLVED that: The Forum approves the de-delegation rate of £12 per pupil for School Effectiveness.

84 2022-23 Exclusions Update and 2023-24 Exclusions Policy Proposals

The Forum considered a report by The Assistant Director for Education, which outlined the permanent exclusion clawback policy agreed at the North Northamptonshire Schools Forum meeting held on the 16th December 2021. The policy was in line with legislation and guidance in calculating clawback.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried whether the clawback sufficiently covered the cost of providing education for children who had been excluded.
- One member queried whether the proposed formulae for exclusion clawback included incentives for schools to retain students rather than excluding them.

In response, The Assistant Director for Education clarified that:

- Every individual case and circumstances were different and cost often depended on destination following exclusion. In general, the clawback did not cover the cost.
- The rates were not set to provide strategic direction but rather intended to be representative of schools' capital and their entitled clawback for the cost of exclusions.

RESOLVED that: The Forum approves the policy, as stated in the report.

85 2023-24 High Needs Update

The Forum considered a report by The Head of SEND, which outlined the overall arrangements and 2023/24 budget requirements for pupils in unit and mainstream schools, the SEN unit top up proposal and the mainstream top up funding proposal.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried what action the local authority was taking to assist schools in identifying high needs children in early years.

In response, The Head of SEND clarified that:

- The local authority had continued to work closely with schools in the early years sector, around diagnosis and support for students with special

educational needs. A paper would be brought to the January Forum meeting, which would break down SEN funding in detail.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

86 Homes for Ukraine Funding Proposal

The Forum considered a verbal update by The Assistant Director for Education, concerning Homes for Ukraine funding. The Assistant Director clarified that the local authority had received confirmation from central government regarding this funding and that it would be utilised directly for schools.

North Northamptonshire Council would work with West Northamptonshire Council, to ensure a consistent approach in relation to the allocation of funding. This funding would also only apply to children placed in schools through the Home for Ukraine scheme.

RESOLVED that: The update be noted.

87 Schools Forum Plan

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the item and highlighted the following:

- The next meeting of the North Northamptonshire Schools Forum would be held on the 19th January 2023.

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

88 Urgent Business

There was none.

There being no further business the meeting closed.