

Minutes of a meeting of the North Northamptonshire Schools Forum
Held at 1.00 pm on Thursday 7th July 2022 as a Remote Meeting via Zoom
via Zoom

Present:-

Members

Paul Wheeler
Laura Clarke
Peter French
Rob Hardcastle
Annabel Moore
Angela Prodger

Officers

Sariya Bi	Senior Finance Business Partner
Charlotte Franks	Head of the Virtual School for Children in Care
Neil Goddard	Assistant Director for Children's Services
Nichola Jones	Head of SEND
Raj Sohal	Democratic Services Officer
Cathryn Walker	Schools Support Team Manager

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

Apologies for non-attendance were received from James Birkett, Nikki Lamond, Siobhan Hearne, Sandra Appleby, Jo Sanchez-Thompson, Lee Hughes and Peter Cantley. Annabel Moore and Peter French were in attendance as substitutes.

56 Minutes of meeting held on 17 March and points arising/officer feedback

RESOLVED that:

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17th March were agreed as an accurate record.

57 Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum considered a report by The Schools Support Team Manager, which outlined all amendments to the scheme for financing schools.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried why payrolls systems for schools had been outsourced and expressed concern that those schools which did remain on the local authority's system had received less support and would soon be forced to become academies.
- Members queried whether all schools had migrated away from the Council's payroll system.

In response, The Schools Support Team Manager clarified that:

- This decision to migrate schools away from the Council's payroll system had been made prior to local authority officers looking at the scheme. The document had been updated accordingly.
- All schools had migrated away, with the exception of one. This sole remaining school would soon operate with a new payroll provider.

The Assistant Director for Children's Services acknowledged members' concerns and explained that certain support services had been delivered through West Northamptonshire Council. The West had since determined that the business case to do so was no longer there therefore, the local authority intended to engage in further conversations with schools to determine what support would look like going forward.

RESOLVED that:

The Forum approved the scheme for financing schools.

58 SEND Funding

The Forum considered a report by The Head of SEND, which outlined updates around SEND funding, arising from the proposals put forward in the SEND review green paper.

The Assistant Director for Children's Services assured Forum members that the local authority would continue to develop support and delivery of high needs block funding, to ensure a sustainable position. The High Needs Block Sub-Committee would meet again in Autumn to develop these ideas further.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried whether officers had considered new housing developments across North Northamptonshire, and demographical changes this would entail, in its assumption that primary place numbers would decrease.
- One member expressed concern that while it seemed that schools would have sufficient capacity for new students, issues of space to accommodate new students on sites could arise.
- Members supported the SEND review green paper's inclusion of strengthening early intervention however, acknowledged that maintained nurseries had faced reductions to high needs funding, which had hindered early intervention.

- Members requested that the local authority would continue to communicate with schools regarding how things like early help intervention funds would be established.
- Members queried what the timescales were for the authority to progress with its proposed next steps around SEND funding.

In response, The Head of SEND clarified that:

- Officers would provide detail following the meeting regarding demographics and how new housing developments would impact SEND funding needs.
- A similar proposal for updated early help funding had been drafted and would be shared with early years settings shortly. The local authority had brought in specific expertise around early years to assist with the development of funding arrangements.
- The next paper, regarding SEND funding, coming to Forum would need to clearly set out proposed timescales for future work, in line with feasibility.

The Assistant Director for Children's Services explained that additional capacity was built into place planning, since this affected Section 106 agreements. He clarified that new schools were opening across the authority to reflect additional capacity.

The government had allocated SEND capital support, as part of its response to the pressure on the high needs budget. The capital programme as a whole, which included basic need, would be over £20M.

The Vice-Chair posited that it would be key for clear timescales around the next steps of the development of SEND funding to come to the next Forum meeting.

RESOLVED that:

The Forum noted the report.

59 Government Consultations

The Forum considered a report by the Assistant Director for Children's Services, which outlined the latest consultation by the DfE, regarding the future of the National Funding Formula for mainstream schools.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- The Vice-Chair posited that the Schools Forum collaborating with the local authority to put forward a joint submission to the DfE's consultation would give a strength of opinion. Members of the Forum supported this idea.
- The following members of the Forum volunteered to join a subgroup, to work with local authority officers, to draft a joint submission: Paul Wheeler, Laura Clarke and Rob Hardcastle.

RESOLVED that:

The Forum noted the report.

60 Schools Forum Plan 2022/23

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

- The next meeting of the North Northamptonshire Schools Forum would be held on 20th October 2022.

RESOLVED that:

The Forum noted the report.

61 Urgent Business

There was none.

There being no further business the meeting closed.