ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY, 26TH JUNE, 2015

Present:- D. Naisbitt (in the Chair).

Learning Community Representatives: - D. Naisbitt (Oakwood), P. Di'Iasio (Wales), T. Mahon (Saint Bernard's), A. Kitchen (Swinton), L. Pepper (Clifton), D. Ball (Aston), D. Sutton (Maltby), R. Fone (Brinsworth), P. Blackwell (Dinnington).

Other stakeholders: - A. Richards (Secondary Governors), S. Scott (Early Years PVI), J. Mott (Special Schools), S. Mallinder (Primary Governors), P. Bloor (PRUs), F. Sprague (Teaching Trade Unions), D. Ashmore (Teaching Schools), R. Williams (Rotherham College), M. Badger (Support Staff Trade Unions), P. Gerard (Early Years), Councillor L. Pitchley.

Also in attendance: - K. Borthwick (Skills and Learning), V. Njegic (Finance), C. Harrison (Inclusion), H. Etheridge (Legal and Democratic).

119.   **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

No Declarations of Interest were made.

120.   **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 24TH APRIL, 2015.**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th April, 2015, were considered.

It was noted that the Brinsworth Learning Community representative vacancy had been filled. Vacancies remaining were for Thrybergh Learning Community and the Diocese of Hallam. A correction was provided for the Dinnington Learning Community representative's name.

The role of Vice-Chairperson for the 2015/2016 year had not been filled. The Chairperson spoke about the importance of this role for increasing the capacity of the group, and for succession planning. Efforts would continue to fill the vacancy.

In relation to item 117 (Update on External Commissioners) a standing update was requested on the External Commissioners' work, in particular the impact/s on the Rotherham Schools' Forum. The public Commissioners' meeting that was held on 24th June was discussed.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th April, 2015, be agreed as an accurate record.

121.   **VOTE OF THANKS TO THE OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON, MR. P. BLACKWELL.**

David Naisbitt, Chairperson of the Rotherham Schools' Forum wished to

place on record his thanks to the retiring Chairperson, Paul Blackwell. Paul had served the Rotherham Schools' Forum well during a challenging time both for Rotherham, the Local Authority and Schools. All wished Paul well in his future retirement.

122.   **ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM TERMS OF REFERENCE DOCUMENTS.**

David Naisbitt referred to the Education Funding Agency's recently updated 'Schools forum – Operational and good practice guide' and the 'Schools forum powers and responsibilities 2015-2016' (both March, 2015). He asked members of the Rotherham Schools' Forum to refer to the documents to understand the remit of the group. The information within the Operational guide would be studied to ensure that the membership of the Rotherham Schools' Forum was accurate and continued to be so, bearing in mind academy conversions etc.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

123.   **HIGH NEEDS' BLOCK / SEMH UPDATE.**

Chris Harrison, Policy Lead for Inclusion, was welcomed to the meeting to provide an update on his work on Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH). Following the previous meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum individuals had come forward, and from the wider school community, to work in an SEMH Focus Group. This followed the presentation at the meeting that covered: -

- The % spend on the High Needs' Block in Rotherham and compared to a national benchmark;
- What it was spent on: - specialist people, specialist places and top-up funding;
- The matrix of young people's details showing that £3.6million was spent each year on young people with SEMH;
- The growing roll of Rotherham's PRU, alongside static funding.

Chris presented the plan on a page that the Focus Group had devised to show where Rotherham currently was, what it needed to do, and features of a new arrangement, along with an overarching vison and principles.

Within the current assessment of Rotherham were: -

- Lack of clarity;
- High levels of exclusions;
- Limited number of alternative providers.

Within the features of a new arrangement were: -

- Clusters of learning communities to take collective responsibility for children and young people with SEMH needs;

- Resources devolved to clusters of learning communities;
- A system of cost recovery in place to ensure equity of access to Alternative Provision provided by the Local Authority;
- Engagement of partners;
- 'Respite Moves' distinct from Managed Moves.

Chris described how the model was currently being presented to all phases of Rotherham's headteachers. It would be presented to school governors in September.

Chris showed a proposed staffing model to support the SEMH structures. It was proposed that staff with excellent practice would be seconded from schools and employed centrally to support SEMH across the Borough. They would be based within schools as their local intelligence was important. Links to the Fair Access Protocol were also important and the Head of Service was involved in discussions.

Discussion followed and members of the Rotherham Schools' Forum made the following comments: -

- Some Learning Communities did not work as strongly as others. Smaller schools would be particularly vulnerable in this model. – Learning communities would not be limited to geographical areas. Cross phase groupings would provide support;
- A 0-19 approach was required as children with SEMH often had needs outside of the standard school ages/transitions;
- It was important to engage with parents and students when developing the proposal and to consult with them. They had experience of the system from top to bottom;
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) should be involved;
- Was there an optimal size for a cluster? - Chris described different clusters that he had seen working. Their size would be dependent on need and local features;
- Had CAMHs been involved in the production of the proposals? - Not yet, CAMHs representatives would be invited to a joint commissioning meeting;
- There was a DfE pilot to link into.

Chris described the financial considerations relating to moving money from the Local Authority into the SEMH clusters of learning communities. A threat to the proposed model was increasing numbers of exclusions. It was important that the model be protected from increasing exclusions or the system would be stuck creating ever greater numbers of placements.

An agreed formula for the learning communities would need to take into account local deprivation levels. Schools would be assigned a number of alternative placements. They would be able to place above their quota only if they swapped an existing placement or purchased another

placement. The cost would be above the AWPU level. This was intended to moderate the use of the PRU system. One member of the RSF spoke about the importance of not basing the new formula on existing placements and usage of alternative provision, as this would skew it towards current high users of alternative provision.

These issues were seen as threats to the proposed model. It was important that they were checked to ensure that the new model was given every chance to succeed. The proposed system would rely on schools taking responsibility for their own young people. The Rotherham Schools' Forum would have to be prepared to challenge any instances of unreasonable behaviour or off-loading of problems into the PRU system.

One member of the RSF saw a threat to the proposed model in that there was a finite amount of resources available from vacant posts within the staffing structure. The intention was that the funding from these posts would be used to fund new posts within the new clusters of learning communities. The number of these was not yet known, which would be problematic when the resources were finite.

David Naisbitt thanked Chris for his work and presentation.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the next steps for Chris and the Rotherham Schools' Forum be: -

- The details of the proposal be circulated to RSF members to take to their Learning Communities in September, along with a list of questions that need to be explored;
- That the October meeting of the RSF consider the overall numbers of schools that were interested in participating;
- That the October meeting of the RSF consider the clustering process and the initial Cost Recovery Mechanism;
- That the new Director of Early Help, David McWilliams, be involved.

124.   PROGRESS REPORT ON THE BUY BACK OF LA SERVICES.

Karen Borthwick, Director for Education and Skills, reported on the responses received in relation to the letter sent by Ian Thomas, Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services Directorate, on 16th April, 2015. This letter asked headteachers their intentions on buying-back services relating to care, safeguarding support and trade union facilities time. The rate of response had not been high. Learning Community Representatives agreed to approach the schools within their area who had not responded. Whilst it was an individual school decision whether or not to buy-back the services offered, all in attendance felt that it was important for non-responders to be reminded of the letter. It was also felt that the majority of schools would wish to buy-back these Services.

Vera Njegic, Principal Finance Officer, provided an update on the SLAs that were due to come into effect on 1ˢᵗ July, 2015. As academy schools were funded on an academic year, their funding arrangements for the relevant c.£231k for the period 1ˢᵗ April – 31ˢᵗ August, 2015, needed to be confirmed. The Principal Finance Officer had written to the Education Funding Agency asking for confirmation of what the re-coupment would be. This had been received and would shortly be forwarded on to individual academies.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

125. UPDATE ON DELEGATION OF CENTRAL FUNDS TO ACADEMIES

This information was covered at the previous item.

126. UPDATE ON TOTAL SCHOOL BUDGET 2015-2016.

Vera Njegic, Principal Finance Officer, reported that there was no update to provide since the information discussed at the previous meeting. The carry-forwards from the 2014/2015 budget had not yet been audited. This was anticipated to have happened by the October meeting, when an update would be provided, along with the first budget monitoring report on the 2015/2016 budget.

The Teaching School Representative also requested information on schools balances ending 2014/2015. Again, from an unaudited position, there were 12 schools with an excess outturn balance, and 9 schools with a deficit outturn balance.

Resolved: - (1) That this information be noted.

(2) That an audited update on 2014/2015 carry-forwards into the 2015/2016 budget be presented to the October meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum, along with the first budget monitoring report for the 2015/2016 year.

127. PROPOSED DATES FOR 2015-2016: -

Resolved: - That the 2015/2016 Rotherham Schools' Forum meetings take place on: -

- 2ⁿᵈ October, 2015;
- 4ᵗʰ December, 2015 (moved from 27ᵗʰ November, 2015, RPDC was not available);
- 15ᵗʰ January, 2016;
- 4ᵗʰ March, 2016;
- 22ⁿᵈ April, 2016;
- 17ᵗʰ June, 2016.

All meetings to start at 8.30 a.m. at Rockingham Professional Development Centre. Every effort would be made for the meetings to end by 10.30 a.m. prompt.