

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY, 4TH DECEMBER, 2015**

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

Learning Community representatives: - J. Morrison (Swinton), T. Mahon (Saint Bernard's), S. Kent (Thrybergh), K. Sherburn (Rawmarsh), P. Di'lasio (Wales), R. Fone/A. Richies (Brinsworth), R. Burman (Winterhill), M. Young (Clifton), P. Dobbin (Wingfield), I. Holborn (Dinnington).

Other stakeholder members: - N. Borrington (Special Schools), P. Gerard (Early Years), G. Gillard (Diocese of Sheffield), A. Richards (Secondary governors), P. Bloor (PRU), R. Williams (Colleges), D. Ashmore (Teaching School), M. Badger (Unison), S. Scott (Early Years PVI).

Also in attendance: - C. Harrison (Inclusion), P. Williams (Learning Support), A. Baldwin (Finance), V. Njelic (Finance), K. Borthwick (Education and Skills – representing the DCS), H. Etheridge (Legal and Democratic).

Apologies for absence were received from: - S. Brook/F. Sprague (Teaching TUs), J. Mott (N. Borrington attending), Cllr L. Pitchley, G. Alton (R. Williams attending), S. Mallinder and L. Pepper (M. Young representing).

13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 2ND OCTOBER, 2015, AND MATTERS ARISING.

The minutes of the last meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum meeting held on 2nd October, 2015, were considered.

It was noted that the live issues were due to be considered on this meeting's agenda.

That the attendance list be amended to show that Julie Mott attended the meeting in the 'other stakeholder members' group.

Agreed: - That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October, 2015, be agreed as an accurate record.

14. COMMUNICATIONS.

Communications updates were provided in relation to three continuing topics: -

- European Pupils – support principles: -
 - Vera Njelic, Principal Finance Officer, reported that the benefit and entitlement position for Eastern European pupils was the same as for British National pupils. There had been reports about hold ups with receiving pupil premium funding.

It was thought that this could be down to hold ups from the processing of information from the Home Office or where pupils had missed the January Census;

- Information would be circulated to all schools via the RSF Digest.
- New School Principles: -
 - Vera explained how she was continuing to work with the academy chain in Wolverhampton to look at the funding principles that had been applied relating to 'diseconomies of scale'. The Rotherham Growth Fund had supplied the start-up funding;
 - Dean Fenton had been asked to draft a policy, which would be considered by the RSF before being approved.
- Schools in Financial Difficulty: -
 - Funded and received by maintained primary schools only;
 - The eligible members of the RSF had voted to de-delegate the funding for the 2015/2016 financial year at the January, 2015, RSF meeting;
 - Currently there was £83k available in the budget heading;
 - An annual decision was required on whether to continue to fund the service;
 - It was estimated that there would be a £5.14 charge per pupil from maintained primary schools to set a £75k budget for 2016/2017 financial year;
 - In the previous year, 9-10 schools had been supported.

Discussion was held on how representative the RSF was given that only maintained primary school representatives could vote on this matter. One way to get a full picture would be to ask each maintained primary school what their view is before the RSF primary maintained representatives voted in January, 2016.

It was agreed that a review of the RSF membership would be conducted and considered at the March RSF meeting.

Information about the Schools in Financial Difficulty funding would be circulated to all primary schools so that they could start to consider their views on SiFD for the 2016/2017 financial year.

Agreed: - (1) That information relating to benefit and entitlement support to Eastern European pupils be circulated to all schools for their information.

(2) That a future meeting of the RSF consider the draft new school policy relating to the Rotherham Growth Fund.

(3) That information be circulated to all primary maintained schools relating to the Schools in Financial Difficulty funding in advance of discussions to be held during budget setting for 2016/2017.

(4) That a review of the RSF membership be considered at the RSF meeting to be held on 4th March, 2016.

15. ESTABLISHING A NEW COMMISSIONING MODEL FOR ALTERNATIVE PROVISION IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT "FIVE STEPS TO COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY".

David Naisbitt, Chair of the Rotherham Schools' Forum, welcomed Chris Harrison, Policy Lead for Inclusion, to the meeting. Further to minute number 8 of the previous meeting, where feedback had been provided, this item had returned for further consideration and a decision.

Chris introduced the report that outlined the new commissioning model for Alternative Provision. The model included 'five steps' to collective responsibility.

The proposed policy was in response to rising pupil numbers with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) and rising numbers of permanently excluded pupils.

To establish collective responsibility, five steps were suggested: -

1. Create a new role and remit for the Aspire PRU;
2. Establish a menu of alternative provision in Rotherham;
3. Establish locality SEMH partnerships;
4. Develop a new commissioning model for the Aspire PRU, alternative provision and partnership working;
5. Develop Rotherham's Fair Access Protocol and Permanent Exclusion Procedures.

The first step related to step 4, which would allow partnerships to develop local agreements. Five stages were suggested for achieving school responsibility for arranging alternative provision and ensuring it was good quality and achieved positive educational outcomes.

The stages: -

1. Establish a transparent system for identifying an equitable share of the resources available;
2. Allocate a share to a partnership of schools;
3. Consider current usage of the PRU and potential future usage;
4. Partnerships to decide how their share will be used to commission appropriate places;
5. Formally agree the arrangements.

Questions and discussion followed Chris' presentation: -

- How had the figure of 90 commissioned places been arrived at? Was it an average over time or based on current PRU usage? – it was based on current usage and on what the budget level was currently set at;
- Where would the funding sit? Would this still be High Needs' Block funding? - Yes, the HN Block funding would be devolved to partnerships of schools but could only be used for young people who had been excluded or who were at risk of permanent exclusion;
- The relationship between the Fair Access Protocol and school admission appeals needed to be considered to ensure that the processes were complimentary and fair to all parties;
- What would be the process if the school/locality partnerships under-spent on their allocations? - It was thought that the funding, as devolved, would carry over to the next financial year, but clarification would be sought on this;
- The Secondary School Governor Representative asked about the role Governors and governance could play in this structure. - Chris Harrison agreed that there was an important role for governance relating to quality assurance and that he would engage with governors on this.

A vote was required in order to secure permission to devolve amounts of High Needs' Block funding to partnerships of schools (to an approximate total of £1.6m). Further information would be required in relation to a start date and how long the model would last for.

As a general principle issue, the vote was taken by all members of the RSF in their capacity of representing Learning Communities and Stakeholder groups.

Sixteen members were in favour of the proposal and three members abstained. No votes were cast against the proposal.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be received and the information be noted.

(2) That the majority vote in support of devolving amounts of High Needs' Block funding to partnerships of schools in pursuit of developing a commissioning model be noted.

(3) That Chris Harrison, Policy Lead for Inclusion, continue his efforts to develop the model and communicate with all stakeholders, including developing communications and a role for school governing bodies/governors.

16. **ROTHERHAM TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET MONITORING REPORT AS AT 31ST OCTOBER, 2015.**

Andrea Baldwin, Principal Finance Officer (Financial Services) was welcomed to the meeting to present Rotherham's Total Schools Budget Monitoring report as at 31st October, 2015.

- The confirmed Dedicated Schools' Grant allocation, the EFA Post-16 SEN funding for 2015/2016 and the DSG carry-forward from 2014/2015 was **£127.820m** (after deductions for academy recoupment);
- The current projected out-turn at 31st October was an **over-spend of £742k (0.58% over budget)**, including the agreed carry-forward allocations from 2014/2015 to the 2015/2016 financial year.

An overview was provided about each of the three Blocks and the budget headings within them.

Paula Williams, Service Lead, was also in attendance to provide more information about the spending position within the High Needs Block: -

- The SEN placements and top-up funding budget was forecast to over-spend by £1.357m. The budget was set to fund 17 placements. Currently 50 placements were being funded and there was potential for a further 4 to be funded in the future;
- Paula explained that a therapeutic centre was being explored within Rotherham to address needs locally. A educationally-focussed needs analysis would be undertaken alongside looking at what special schools offered;
- Place funding had been insufficient since the responsibility passed from the Learning Skills Agency to the Local Authority;
- There were some under-spends and these were outlined;
- The Early Years' Block was slightly over-spent relating to rising numbers of very young children with high needs.

In order to support Paula Williams in conducting an educationally-focussed review of the High Needs' Block it was felt that a focus group of Rotherham's headteachers would contribute positively to this process. Expressions of interest should be forwarded to hannah.etheridge@rotherham.gov.uk.

David Naisbitt asked for there to be a further strategy developed around spending within the High Needs' Block. It would be important to set a realistic budget for 2016/2017.

Agreed: - (1) That the £742k over-spend position forecast against the Rotherham Total Schools' Budget outturn for the 2015/2016 financial year, based on spending to 31st October 2015, be noted.

(2) That a representative focus group be convened to assist Paula Williams with reviewing High Needs' Block spending and service provision.

17. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETINGS: -

Agreed: - (1) That the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum take place on Friday 15th January, 2016, to start at 8.30 am in the Rockingham Professional Development Centre.

(2) That future meetings take place on: -

- 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.