

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM  
FRIDAY, 4TH MARCH, 2016**

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

**Learning Community representatives:** - T. Mahon (Saint Bernard's), I. Holburn (Dinnington), D. Ball (Aston), C. Booth (Wales), K. Sherburn (Rawmarsh), L. Pepper (Clifton), P. Dobbin (Wingfield).

**Other stakeholders:** - P. Bloor (PRUs), J. Mott (Special Schools), S. Brook (Teaching Trade Unions), A. Richards (Secondary Governors), P. Gerard (Nursery), D. Ashmore (Teaching School), A. Hardy (Colleges), S. Scott (Early Years PVI), G. Gillard (Sheffield Diocese).

**Also in attendance:** - C. Harison (CYPS), D. Fenton (CYPS), V. Njegic (Financial Services), K. Borthwick (CYPS), Councillor L. Pitchley (Rotherham MBC), H. Etheridge (Democratic Services).

**Apologies for absence had been received from:** - J. Morrison (Swinton; no substitute available), S. Mallinder (Primary Governors), P. Di'lasio (C. Booth representing).

**24. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH JANUARY, 2016, AND MATTERS ARISING.**

The minutes of the Rotherham Schools' Forum held on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2016, were considered.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

**25. COMMUNICATIONS: -**

David Naisbitt, Chair of the Rotherham Schools' Forum, reported on the actions of the RSF Finance Sub-Committee in examining 2014/2015 outturn underspend/excess balances from maintained schools across Rotherham. In addition to the amount and percentage underspend or excess balance, the reasons that the schools had provided for their financial situation, and their intended uses for any excess balances, were considered. Whilst Schools' Forums were expected to scrutinise underspend and excess school balances, and had the power to clawback funds if necessary, the Department for Education did not expect the power to be used.

Steve Scott, Early Years' PVI Representative, raised a question relating to the sector he represented and the Local Authority's contribution to hourly rates. At its current level, there were serious sustainability issues to all providers within the sector. The minimum wage had increased by £1 per hour, pension reform had come into effect and business costs were

increasing. The hourly rate had remained static at 18p per hour. The requirement to provide thirty hours of free childcare brought serious concerns for the Sector; providing 15 hours on the current rate was challenging. Steve referred to the funding of school-based PVI provision where double funding occurred. There were national Government discussions taking place about the Early Years' PVI sector; there was also a responsibility for local-level decision making.

Karen Borthwick, Assistant Director for Education and Skills, heard and acknowledged the issues that Steve had raised. Currently Rotherham were the fourth lowest funded local authority in the Yorkshire and Humber region. The Local Authority was required to produce a Childcare Sufficiency Strategy and ensure that there was sufficient child care. Rotherham had many good Early Years' PVI providers and losing them would benefit no-one. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services had agreed that Rotherham's hourly rate would rise to 27p per hour with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2016. This would bring it in-line with the Yorkshire and Humber average, although still below the national average. There were significant growth needs for PVI child care provision if the Local Authority and partners were to continue to offer a choice of childcare. Often the growth needs were in the Borough's most challenging areas.

It was anticipated that the increased hourly rate would be met through careful budget monitoring before any in-year adjustments/viring was required.

Karen noted the contractual issues that Steve had raised and agreed that they disproportionately impacted on the PVI sector. She committed to reporting back on the issues after further consideration.

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

(2) That the Children and Young People's Services Directorate report back on their work around Early Year PVI provision and terms and conditions.

## **26. SEMH AND SEND / HIGH NEEDS' BLOCK UPDATE: -**

Chris Harrison, Inclusion Policy Lead, was welcomed to the meeting. Chris had prepared an update in relation to his work on SEMH and the developing locality models, and also on recent SEND / High Needs' Block work in the absence of Paula Williams.

### **SEMH update: -**

Chris provided an update to the Rotherham Schools' Forum on the developments in the South, Wickersley Multi-Academy Trust and Central SEMH partnerships. This included the initial thinking about how many PRU and Partnership Places each of the Partnerships would commission,

and the funding requirements to achieve this. It was envisaged that the Partnerships would become operational from 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2016, meaning that a 7/12<sup>th</sup> contribution would be required from the 2016/2017 High Needs' Block. During 2017/2018, and future years, the funding requirement would be 100%.

Based on the early structure and spend of the three Partnerships, discussions were held on the implications for Rotherham's Aspire PRU and its ability to provide approximately 50-55 places from September, 2016. Assessment of all existing placements within the PRU had taken place to check whether it was still the right setting for individual pupils currently there.

Questions were raised on the following areas: -

- David Naisbitt asked whether the PRU could operate safely and effectively on the proposed number of places from September, 2016? – Paul Bloor, PRU Representative, noted that the reduced admission number would require a significant number of pupils to be reintegrated into mainstream school or college, whilst leaving the PRU operating at capacity and unable to accept new cases without further reductions of the pupils currently attending. The PRU did not know which buildings were available for September, 2016. A reduction in pupil numbers accessing the PRU would lead to a reduced staffing establishment, and appropriate HR processes would have to happen. How would the staffing establishment be managed if schools' requirements increased/decreased over the school year/s?;
- What was the physical capacity of the PRU?;
- Comparison of the cost of a place at the PRU and the places available via the marketplace?;
- How to ensure that the places commissioned via the marketplace were delivered to the same memorandum of understanding as those provided by Rotherham providers;
- Balancing the school-led and commissioned system with the statutory duties of the Local Authority towards permanently excluded children.

#### **SEND – High Needs' Working Group: -**

Information was shared on the initial meeting of this group, including the clearer presentation of the spending within the High Needs' Block and the placements/special school places that it funded. Funding had been re-allocated to different settings to create places for vulnerable groups. Transparency was increasing to enable stakeholders to understand what was being funded from the High Needs' Block. Rotherham's High Needs' Block was the fourth lowest funded Block in the nation. This then impacted on the allocations to the special schools.

David Naisbitt thanked the working group for their initial efforts and urged

them to continue this work.

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

(2) That further updates be provided to the Rotherham Schools' Forum's next meeting.

**27. EASTWOOD VILLAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL - 'START UP' DISECONOMIES FUNDING ALLOCATION IN FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION.**

Consideration was given to the report presented by Dean Fenton, Service Lead for School Organisation, Planning, Admissions and Appeals, that outlined a proposed allocation to Eastwood Village Primary School. The Rotherham Schools' Forum had initially considered the issue at the previous meeting when the 2016/2017 Pupil Growth contribution from the Schools' Block had been agreed (Minute number 20, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2016).

The report outlined the Department for Education's definition of 'diseconomies' funding: -

Diseconomies relate to the need to incur some fixed management and premises costs as new schools build up their numbers. This funding must be made available to new academies on the same basis as maintained schools, including those funded on estimates – this can be paid to new schools that have opened and have not yet reached their full number of year groups.

The Local Authority had estimated that the School would admit 100 pupils during their first academic year (2015/2016). In the first year they were structured as a one-form entry from Foundation Stage Two to Year Four. This meant that the School potentially had 150 places that could be filled if sufficient applications were received. The Local Authority was responsible for any diseconomies funding during a school's first year of operation.

The Rotherham Schools' Forum were informed of the scrutiny that had been undertaken on the start-up costs provided by the new School's management. Looking at the lines of expenditure, Officers had suggested a total contribution of £315,500. The scrutiny had been from a finance/administrative basis by Local Authority Officers and from an educational perspective from the members of the RSF Finance Sub-Committee.

The Rotherham Schools' Forum agreed that £315,500 funding from the Pupil Growth Element of the Schools' Block should be made to Eastwood Village Primary School for their diseconomies funding during their first year of operation.

Based on the scrutiny work, a formula was suggested for future school

start-ups. The formula recognised that different areas of the Borough had different demographic needs. It had sliding levels of contributions relating to factors such as deprivation, pupil mobility and transience to be applied depending on the area of the Borough the new school was in.

Discussion followed on how the formula would be applied to the intended new school builds in Rotherham: -

- Role of Section 106 contributions in domestic developments and how purchase 'trigger points' needed to be met before any payment/s were released to the Local Authority;
- The Local Authority had scheduled a detailed lead-in process for the development of the new primary school at Waverley, beginning in the Summer, 2016.

The formula was accepted by the Rotherham Schools' Forum. David Naisbitt thanked the Officers for their work with Eastwood Village Primary School and in creating the formula for future school developments.

Resolved: - (1) That a contribution of £315,500 be made to Eastwood Village Primary School from the Pupil Growth element of the Schools' Block for Eastwood Village's 2015/2016 diseconomies funding requirements.

(2) That the formula model used to establish Eastwood Village's diseconomies funding needs be adopted as the model that will be used for future new build schools.

## **28. TOTAL SCHOOLS' BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 31ST JANUARY, 2016.**

Karen Borthwick, Assistant Director for Education and Skills, presented the report that provided a financial forecast to the end of March, 2016, based on income and expenditure to the end of January, 2016.

Out of the 2015/2016 budget allocation of £127,644,000, a total spend of £127,932,000 was forecast representing an overspend of £288k (+0.23%).

The report outlined the out-turn expected for each Block: -

- Schools' Block - £16k under-spend on the copy right licences for schools;
- High Needs Block - £995k over-spend due to recurring deficit grant position from previous years: -
  - This had led to an allocation that could not wholly fund the cost of education placements in independent and non-maintained special schools;
  - There was additional pressure due to the transfer of £321k

costs from the Social Care Placement to the High Needs Block to cover the educational element of seven in-year placements.

- Early Years' Block - £691k under-spend due to a lower anticipated number of pupils in Private, Voluntary and Independent placements accessing fifteen-hours of free education placements for disadvantaged two-year olds, and three and four year olds: -
  - The DfE will claw-back the grant in 2016/2017 to reflect the number of pupils accessing the provision as at the January, 2016 census;
  - A further adjustment would be required to reflect the transfer of some two-year-old funding to nine schools that had previously been provided by the Early Years PVI sector.

Discussion followed and the following issues were raised: -

- The impact of the claw-back on the Early Years' Block;
- The financial impact of the decision to increase Early Year PVI hourly contributions. Where would the additional funding requirement come from?.

David Naisbitt thanked the Officers involved for their work on presenting the Budget Monitoring information and for the clear way in which it was presented.

Resolved: - That the forecast 2015/2016 out-turn position based on income and expenditure to 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2016, be noted.

**29. ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM - CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP - INITIAL THOUGHTS FOR CONSIDERATION.**

Hannah Etheridge, Senior Democratic Services Officer, presented the early research and options for consideration on the constitution and membership of the Rotherham Schools' Forum. The strengths/weaknesses/practicalities of the current geographical learning community model were compared to those of a potential model whereby representatives would represent school phase and 'type' (maintained/academy) based on Rotherham's proportions of students in each category. The proposed model would need to be annually reviewed to ensure it remained representative of Rotherham.

Discussion following and members of the RSF raised the following issues:

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- Special Schools did not currently sit within the 'school members' section of the RSF's membership and this had implications for voting;
- Communication back to Learning Communities and the whole school population to increase awareness was important;

- Developing structures / organisations within Rotherham, including the SEMH Partnerships and Multi-academy Trusts;
- Consultation was expected soon in relation to a national funding formula, which could have implications for Schools' Forums powers;
- Timeline for publication of the minutes.

It was recognised that the education landscape in Rotherham was changing rapidly and that the issue of a potential restructure should be placed on a watching brief over the coming months to allow issues like the developing SEMH Partnership models and anticipated consultation/s to be known.

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

(2) That the issue of the Rotherham Schools' Forum's constitution and membership be placed on a watching brief to allow other contextual matters to be considered prior to any changes being confirmed.

**30. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -**

Resolved: - (1) That the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum take place on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2016, to start at 8.30 am in the Rockingham Professional Development Centre.

(2) That future meetings take place on: -

- Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2016, to start at 8.30 am.