

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY, 24TH NOVEMBER, 2017**

Present:- Mr. D. Naisbitt (Oakwood High School - in the Chair) and Learning Community representative Mrs. D. Ball (Aston Learning Community).

Other stakeholders:- Mrs. L. Camaish (Pupil Referral Units), Mr. P. Gerrard (Maintained Nursery Schools), Mr. S. Scott (Day Nurseries – Private, Voluntary, Independent), Mr. M. Stowe (UNISON) and Mr. P. Sylvester (Special Schools).

Also in attendance:- Mr. M. Chambers (RMBC Finance), Mr. D. Fenton (RMBC Admissions and School Organisation), Mrs. V. Njestic (RMBC Finance) and Mrs. P. Williams (RMBC Head of Inclusion).

Apologies for absence were received from:- Mrs. S. Brook (NASUWT), Mr. W. Carratt (Nexus Multi Academy Trust), Mr. P. Di'lasio (Wales High School), Mrs. P. Dobbin (Redscope, Wingfield and Winterhill Schools), Mrs. L. Pepper (Clifton Learning Community), Ms. L. Reid (RNN Group), and Mr. A. Richards (Secondary Governors)

52. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE 2017/18 SCHOOL YEAR

Nominations were sought for the position of Chair for the 2017/18 academic year.

Agreed:- That Mr. D. Naisbitt (Head Teacher, Oakwood High School), be appointed Chair of the Rotherham Schools' Forum for the 2017/2018 academic year.

(Mr. D. Naisbitt in the Chair)

53. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE 2017/18 SCHOOL YEAR

Nominations were sought for the position of Vice-Chair for the 2017/18 academic year.

Agreed:- That Mrs. D. Ball (Head Teacher, Treeton C.E. Primary School) and Mr. P. Sylvester (Head Teacher, Newman School) be appointed Vice-Chairs of the Rotherham Schools' Forum for the 2017/2018 academic year.

54. LEARNING COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATIVES

Details were submitted of the current membership of the Rotherham Schools' Forum for the 2017/2018 academic year.

Proposed stakeholder replacements included:-

Paul Sylvester	Special Schools
Lianne Camaish	Pupil Referral Units

Clarification was sought on the shared voted arrangement for PVI Early Years and whether or not this was historical or indeed inherited. It was, therefore, proposed that the representations be separated and representatives named accordingly.

Whilst it was noted that some changes had been made, it was requested that any known replacements be forwarded onto Democratic Services immediately for revision.

Agreed:- That the membership be recirculated and kept under continual review to ensure the named representatives accurately reflect the balance of sectors in the borough.

55. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16TH JUNE, 2017

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of Rotherham Schools' Forum held on 16th June, 2017 be approved as a correct record.

56. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

With regards to Minute No. 45 (Primary School – Waverley Community) it was noted that the selected sponsor for the new primary school was Aston Community Education Trust. A progress report would be submitted in due course.

Reference was also made to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), Sufficiency and Increase in Educational Provision - Consultation that would close on the 1st December, 2017. Work had commenced on the proposed increase of 125 new places within the borough.

It was suggested that information be shared accordingly on any potential increased educational provision in the future as part of sufficiency planning.

Agreed:- That the information be received and noted.

57. CONTINGENCY FOR PUPIL GROWTH FUNDING ALLOCATIONS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Dean Fenton (School Planning, Admissions and Appeals) detailing how pupil numbers were increasing within the borough area, with a 15% increase in primary pupils and a 1% increase in secondary pupils since 2010. The current primary phased impact had been planned for by the introduction of 1,732 permanent eventual through-school places created between November, 2011 and September, 2020. In response to this increase, a programme of secondary school expansions had also commenced to accommodate the expected future demand for places.

The report as submitted outlined the transitional funding (7/12 funding for maintained schools and 12/12 funding for academies) required to support the additional staffing requirements for expanding schools in the borough area until school census funding generated the income for the additional pupils.

Contained within the report (and using the previously agreed formula for funding allocations) were the recommended allocations from the Pupil Growth element within the Schools Block to fund the expansion of certain primary and secondary schools and academies in the 2018/2019 academic year totalling £530,490.

It was noted that a request for a review of allocation levels for 2019/20 had been received in relation to aligning the previously agreed funding formula for expanding schools to current salary levels as opposed to the levels set three years ago when the formula was agreed. It was agreed that Vera Njegic and Dean Fenton would align the salary levels in the formula to current salary levels in the funding formula and report back to a Finance Sub-Committee on the variation to inform consideration of the request at a future meeting for future years' allocations.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the 2018/19 allocations to schools, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved and funded from the Pupil Growth element within the Schools Block.

(3) That Officers report to a Finance Sub-Committee on the implications of the uplift in the salary link element of the formula.

(4) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum confirming requests for transitional funding for the 2019/2020 academic year and also the pre-start up allocation funding for the new Primary School to be constructed in the Waverley community.

58. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FUNDING FOR SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AND APPEALS

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Dean Fenton (School Planning, Admissions and Appeals), proposing a revised model of funding for the School Planning, School Admissions and School Admission Appeals services provided by the Local Authority. The report detailed the current method of funding these services from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The proposal was to replace the existing method of funding (Option 1 described in the report) with a single funding arrangement from the DSG of £450,000 per year (Option 2) to fund School Planning, Admissions and Appeals Services for all schools and academies, reducing the administration and staff cover costs by removing the need for traded

financial transactions and passing on a saving to schools. The estimated savings to schools were in the range from £27,700 to £47,600 per year.

The Forum discussed the financial information as part of the Central Services Block and the logistics of allocation and transfer of funds accordingly for individual schools. The costs were currently met through a funding allocation from DSG linked to the SLA's.

The Forum were in support of the proposals and were minded to approve, but due to the limited number of learning community representatives being present it was suggested that further information be circulated to all schools outlining the various options and proposed changes. Any objection to the proposals should be forwarded to the Finance Sub-Committee Chairman for consideration before ratification of any decision.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That Option 2, as described in the report now submitted, be supported to replace the current Service Level Agreement/Service Level Entitlement trading model with the funding of the School Planning, School Admissions and School Admission Appeals services from the Dedicated Schools Grant at a cost of £450,000 per year, generating a saving to schools, as outlined in the report, and minimising the number of financial transactions.

(3) That a briefing note be circulated to all schools outlining the proposals and subject to there being no objections presented to the Finance Sub-Committee, Option 2 be approved.

59. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE: SCHOOLS REVENUE FUNDING 2018-19

Consideration was given to the report presented by Vera Njegic, Principal Finance Officer, which detailed how the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) had now released guidance for Local Authorities and Schools on revenue funding for 2018-19. The full National Funding Formula (NFF) for 2018-19 and 2019-20 had been confirmed along with indicative DSG allocations with final updates in December 2017.

The Forum were advised that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be allocated in four blocks based on national funding formula for April, 2018. These were the Schools, High Needs, Early Years and Central School Services. Funding in the Schools Block would be based on a national formula, but Local Authorities (LA's) could continue to fund schools on local formula for 2018-19 and 2019-20. Based on indicative modelling Rotherham's DSG for Schools Block would increase by 1.3% and High Needs Block by 2.8% in 2018-19. Funding for Central Services would increase by 2.5%. Indicative allocations were detailed as part of the appendices and it was noted that de-delegation of funding to LA's for central provision of services was still permitted with agreement of the Schools' Forum.

As a result of changes to the formula announced through ministerial statement it was noted that:-

- There was an additional £1.3 billion for Schools and High Needs across 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- In 2018-19 all LA's were to receive an increase compared to DSG levels in 2017-18.
- The NFF set notional allocations for each school, aggregated up to calculate the Schools Block.
- Schools Block allocation – 0.5% increase per pupil - pupil-led.
- Minimum per pupil thresholds in 2018-19 of £3,300 per Primary and £4,600 per secondary (£3,500 and £4,800 in 2019-that the 2018-19.
- MFG would continue – flexibility to set between 0% and minus 1.5% so LA's have the flexibility to offer higher levels of protection locally than previously.
- Pupil numbers – include integrated resource numbers on roll.
- Schools Block ring-fenced from 2018-19, but could transfer up to 0.5% with Forum agreement. This would equate to £925k. An objection to a transfer or should the LA wish to transfer more than 0.5% an application to the Secretary of State was required by 30th November, 2017.
- Confirmation that the High Needs funding would be based on a national funding formula, rather than being based on a historic roll forward method used in previous years.

Discussion ensued on the modelling progress towards full adoption of the national formula and the options available to the Local Authority, which would need further discussion and a further report for consideration prior to consultation with schools and providers.

It was, therefore, suggested that in order to fully understand the complicated changes and progress the funding formula, that a further report be submitted to a Finance Sub-Committee or a High Needs Sub-Committee with a recommendation then being made to the full Schools' Forum for approval of the preferred option.

Agreed:- That a further report on the Schools Revenue Funding 2018-19 and changes to the National Funding Formula be presented to a meeting of a Finance Sub-Committee or High Needs Sub-Committee with a view to a further report being submitted to the Schools' Forum in due course for approval.

60. SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA REVIEW 2018-19

Consideration was given to the report presented by Vera Njelic, Principal Finance Officer, which provided an update on the national funding formula (NFF) and the implications for schools. The Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) had issued details of the national formula for calculating Schools Block DSG.

The indicative 2018-19 Schools Block DSG was based on the accumulation of individual school allocations under the NFF, LA's have the flexibility to allocate funding on a local formula for 2018-19 and 2019-20. The NFF was largely unchanged from the proposals outlined earlier in the year. The main changes were:-

- A minimum basic per pupil amount for primary of £2,747, KS3 of £3,863 and KS4 of 4,386.
- An additional factor to provide a minimum pupil led funding amount (all pupil led factors) £3,300 for primary and £4,600 for secondary in 2018-19.
- Increase in the funding floor so that DSG funding to LA's provides for an increase of at least 0.5% per pupil in 2018-19 and at least 1% in 2019-20.

The details of the NFF factors and values together with Rotherham's formula were referred to and were set out in detail as part of the report and which showed:-

- A significantly higher basic per pupil funding in the local formula especially at KS3 and KS4.
- Higher factor values for deprivation under the NFF.
- Slight reduction in the lump sum value in the NFF.

Based on October 2016 census data the 2018-19 indicative Schools Block DSG allocation was £184.822m, an increase of £2.339 over 2017/18 (1.3%).

Local Authorities have the flexibility to allocate funding to schools either on the basis of the NFF or retain a local formula.

The LA had undertaken formula modelling to compare allocations to schools under the current formula, the NFF and a combination of both after taking into account:-

- The proportion of funding allocated by the local formula is significantly different from that allocated by the NFF. (83% basic entitlement led & 6.5% additional needs led compared to 73% & 18%).
- The local distribution of funding between primary and secondary is 1:1.42, the national average ratio is 1:1.29 which has been kept by the ESFA in the NFF.

The Forum noted the changes, but suggested that simplistic figures for schools be adapted for consideration by a meeting of a Finance Sub-Committee prior to circulation to schools.

Agreed:- That a review take place and a report submitted to a meeting of a Finance Sub-Committee to consider the options for the formula for 2018-19.

61. HIGH NEEDS FINANCE UPDATE AND BUDGET SUSTAINABILITY OPTIONS

Consideration was given to the report presented by Mark Chambers, Assistant Director, Children and Young People's Services which summarised the financial position in 2017/18 of the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The recent growth in volume through increased demand for special educational places and the impact on cost was outlined and compared against previous years.

Options to bring the High Needs Budget to a sustainable level were to be explored further in light of the changes to the High Needs Fair Funding Formula, National Schools Funding Formula and the Council's SEND Sufficiency Strategy.

The Forum noted that Rotherham faced considerable pressure in continuing to meet the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND, due to there being an increase in the numbers of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or its predecessor, the Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and as a result of the in-borough special school provision currently being over-subscribed.

Further information was provided on additional funding requirements for children with more complex needs and the growing demand on the High Needs Budget, which combined with the in-year deficit, was predicted to increase. The High Needs Budget allocation had increased year on year but, partly due to Rotherham's low funding baseline compared to neighbouring boroughs and nationally, the budget uplifts have not been sufficient to match the acceleration in demand and the increase in the cost of provision.

Details of the forecast cumulative deficit were provided, which when added to the previous years added to the in-year forecast was £9.997m.

The Forum took account of the number of EHCPs (or SEN) in Rotherham which was currently at 1,776 as of 10th November, 2017. A deficit on the high needs budget had been evident for the last three years in spite of increases to the annual allocation. Over the same period, the number of children and young people with EHCPs or SEN Statements had dramatically increased. The high needs budget had increased, through annual uplifts and transfers of funding from the Schools Block, however this had not been sufficient to keep up with demand for specialist and bespoke education places.

The immediate aim needed to be for a re-basing of the high needs budget and the implementation of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, which had been approved for consultation by the Cabinet in September 2017 to reduce the average cost per plan to a level that was sustainable over the long term and to increase the number of places in special schools.

The Forum acknowledged the difficulties and considered the various options set out in the report and referred to a number of discussions that had taken place previously regarding proposals to reduce and clear the deficit, not previously supported by schools. Whether or not to approach the DfE for further funding was an option for consideration, but there was a clear need for additional clarity.

On this basis it was suggested that the Forum note the expenditure and growth of the Education and Health Care Plans, but look again to a joint meeting of a Finance Sub-Committee and a High Needs Sub-Committee where any options to assist with reducing the deficit, whilst taking into account actions already in hand, could then be formulated into a report for consideration in due course.

Agreed:- (1) That the in-year High Needs forecast of expenditure as per October 2017 be noted.

(2) That the growth in demand for Education and Health Care Plans in Rotherham be noted.

(3) That options be consider to provide future budget sustainability and a further report be submitted to a joint meeting of High Needs and Finance Sub-Committee scheduled for 29th November, 2017.

62. THE VALUE OF THE ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM

A discussion took place on the value of the Rotherham Schools' Forum and how best to engage and seek representation from learning communities, academy trusts, schools and other stakeholders and whether or not to operate in a slightly different way or even in a virtual capacity.

In accordance with the Schools' Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide it was noted that the full Forum must meet at least four times a year.

On this basis it was suggested that a number of working groups/sub-committees be established to discuss specific issues and to produce draft advice and decisions for the Schools Forum itself to consider. The reference group would then be able to give its considered view on the Local Authority's proposals to the Schools Forum.

However, the guidance did indicate that Schools Forums should not delegate actual decisions or the finalisation of advice to a working group

or sub-committee, as this may have the effect of excluding legitimate points of view.

The Forum raised the matter of clerking the relevant sub-committees should they be agreed. Taking minutes of the various sub-committees would have to be subject to further discussion and agreement due to the very limited availability of relevant staff.

It was, therefore, suggested that three sub-groups be proposed:-

- High Needs Sub-Committee – Chair, Paul Sylvester
- Finance Sub-Committee – Chair, David Naisbitt
- Early Years Sub-Committee – Chair – TBC.

with membership representation from secondary and primary learning community representatives. Terms of reference for each sub-committee would be considered in due course.

In order to progress matters considered and discussed as part of today's agenda it was suggested that a joint meeting be arranged between the Finance Sub-Committee and the High Needs Sub-Committee and take place on Wednesday, 29th November, 2017 at 8.00 a.m. at Oakwood High School.

Agreed:- That three sub-committees be established to take forward the work of the Schools' Forum, as indicated above, and formulate proposals for decision by the Schools' Forum in due course.

63. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

In accordance with the Schools' Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide it was noted that the full Forum must meet at least four times a year on dates yet to be confirmed.

However, it was noted that due to the need for business to be transacted to be agreed a further meeting of the Schools' Forum needed to be scheduled before 19th January, 2018.

Agreed:- That the date of the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum be confirmed in due course and take place at Rockingham Professional Development Centre.