

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2020**

In Attendance:- Deborah Ball (Treeton Primary (Academy) (in the Chair);
Raymund Brent – Primary Maintained Governor
Lianne Camaish, Aspire
John Coleman – Nexus MAT
Dom Curran – Aston Academy (Academy)
Pepe Di'lasio – Wales High (Academy)
Neil Hardwick – Head of Finance, CYPS, RMBC
Nathan Heath – Assistant Director of Education, CYPS, RMBC
Janet Hodgkinson – GMB Representative
Andy Krabbendam – Kiveton Park Infant and Harthill Primary (Academy)
Jenny Lingrell – Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion,
CYPS, RMBC
Angela McComb – Primary Maintained Governor
David Naisbitt – Oakwood High (Academy)
Vera Njelic - Principal Finance Officer, RMBC
Alan Richards – Secondary Governor
Kirsty Peart - Sitwell Infant (Maintained)
Lynne Pepper – Herringthorpe Infant (Maintained)
Debbie Pons – Clerk, RMBC
Steve Scott – PVI Sector
Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children's Centre
Paul Silvester – Newman Special School (Maintained)
Nevine Towers – Diocese of Sheffield
Councillor Gordon Watson – Deputy Leader

Also in attendance:-

David Sutton, Maltby Academy (Observer)

Apologies were received from:-

Dean Fenton - Head of Access to Education
Ian Henderson, H.R. Officer, RMBC
Mary Jarret – Head of Inclusion, RMBC
Steve Rhodes, Winterhill School

62. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to today's virtual meeting and introductions were made.

63. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Further to Minute No. 60(a) of the last meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum held on 18th September, 2020 consideration was given to the formal appointment of Chair.

Agreed:- That the current position of Chair, role undertaken by Deborah Ball, remain as is until such time as the Schools Forum can resume meeting in person.

64. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Further to Minute No. 60(a) of the last meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum held on 18th September, 2020 consideration was given to the formal appointment of Vice-Chair.

Agreed:- That the current position of Vice-Chair, role undertaken by Paul Silvester, remain as is until such time as the Schools Forum can resume meeting in person.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

66. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th September 2020.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the last meeting held on 18th September, 2020, be approved as a true and accurate record.

67. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were not contained within the agenda items for this meeting.

68. TRADE UNION FACILITIES TIME

Neil Hardwick, Head of Finance for Children and Young People's Service, introduced the letter that had been submitted for consideration by the Schools Forum by Trades Unions.

The letter was seeking agreement to the delegation of funding for supply cover costs, which included funding for trade union facilities time.

This request was included as a question in the consultation report, which is also included for consideration on this agenda.

The decision on this request would be considered as part of that report.

69. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2021/22 CONSULTATION OUTCOME

Consideration was given to the report presented by Vera Njelic, Principa Officer (Schools Finance), which set out the indicative proposals and sought approval decisions (where needed) for two areas of the Dedicated Schools

Grant (DSG) for 2021/22:-

- Schools block.
- Central schools services block.

As a result of the Government's intention to implement a national funding formula for school funding allocations; 2021/22 represented the fourth year of the Government's planned transition towards these proposals.

To comply with the ESFA operational guidance, local authorities are required to consult with schools, academies and Schools Forum in respect of planned changes to the schools local funding formula including the method, principles and rules that are to be adopted.

The Forum was, therefore, required to decide upon specific elements in accordance with the powers and responsibilities assigned to it by the ESFA and would need to vote on a number of proposals which had been circulated in the report submitted. The proposals were based on the consultation responses received from individual schools and academies.

In accordance with the regulations, only certain members were allowed to participate in a vote regarding the local funding formula. Other members that did not represent schools could engage and participate in discussions but were not eligible to vote.

A narrative and rationale for each of the questions was provided along with any clarification as necessary.

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

(2) That the voting as indicated below be incorporated into the school and academy local funding formula for 2021/22 (as far as was possible) for submission to the ESFA in January, 2021:-

Question 1 – Do you agree with the principle that Rotherham is adopting in terms of prioritising a continued increase to the MFG?

Vote:- 8 For 0 Against

Question 2 – Considering the borough as a whole and to ensure support for the most vulnerable children & young people in the district, do you support the LA's request to continue to transfer 1.5% from the schools block to the high needs block?

Vote:- 8 For 0 Against

Question 3 – Do you have any further suggestions on how the financial pressures in the high needs block can best be addressed?

This is to be considered by the Sub-Group during December, 2020.

Question 4 - Do you agree that the Local Authority should continue to provide for a growth fund? It is estimated for 2021/22 a budget of £280,000 is required

Vote:- 11 For 0 Against

Question 5 – Do you agree that the local authority should provide for a £500 falling rolls fund?

Vote:- 5 For 0 Against

Question 6 – Do you agree that funding from the central school services block can be held centrally for the services outlined above?

Vote:- 7 For 0 Against

Question 7 - Do maintained schools wish to de-delegate monies to create a Schools in Financial Difficulties contingency fund of £100k to support those schools with exceptional costs forcing them into a financial deficit position?

Vote:- 4 For 0 Against

Question 8 - Do maintained schools wish to de-delegate funds once again for trade unions (£2.00 per pupil), maintained school would no longer need to buy back from the Portfolio of services.

Vote:- 4 For 0 Against

70. DSG MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE

Neil Hardwick, Head of Finance for Children and Young People's Service, provided an update on the DEDICSG Management Template that the Council had in place to track its DSG deficit, showing how it would bring the annual in year deficit into balance within the three year time frame.

By way of sharing his screen virtually the Forum were walked through the DSG Management Template, showing graphical data and how this fed into the DSG financial summary.

The Template set out in detail the current and future funding assumptions, projected expenditure based on estimated future demands and implementation of strategies, proposed block re-directions and the associated impact on the DSG deficit in the current year and for future years and the relationship for the High Needs Block and other associated services such as Home to School Transport.

This would all be subject to forensic assessment via Section 251.

It was, therefore, suggested that the template be presented to the School Forum sub-group for the data to be considered in more detail. It was anticipated that this would take place in December where more background and historical information could be provided. An invitation to this sub-group would also be extended to Angela Acomb, Maintain School Primary Governor.

In absorbing the information shared the Forum sought clarification on whether the deficit and pressures were historical prior to 2017/18, whether this was a national issue and not just relative to Rotherham and the deficit projections into future years.

Jenny Lingrell, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion, shared a powerpoint presentation supporting the DSG Management Template which highlighted:-

- Needs Analysis
 - ▲ Increase in requests for EHCP.
 - ▲ Autism – primary numbers.
 - ▲ 42% SEMH.
 - ▲ Preparation for Post 16 Plans.
 - ▲ LAC and SEND Sufficiency interdependencies.
- Placements
 - ▲ Mainstream SEN Toolkit.
 - ▲ Workforce Development Strategy.
 - ▲ Alignment of Inclusion Services.
 - ▲ ISOS Recommendations.
 - ▲ Resourced Provision/SEN Units – Wales, Brinsworth and Wath Victoria.
 - ▲ Special School Places – Milton, Kelford and Hilltop.
- Placements
 - ▲ Individual Provision.
 - ▲ Hospital School.
 - ▲ Post 16 and Future Education.
 - ▲ Health and Social Care/Direct Residential Development Programme.
- Link of all strategies back into the detail/forward plan of work on the budget.

The Forum welcomed the supportive update and found it helpful. It was pleasing to see the grip on the in year spend, the detail of which would be discussed further at the Sub-Group. However, it was highlighted that 1.5% (£3 million) continued to be redirected and would remain at this level with Secretary of State agreement.

Whilst it was noted that the redirections/assumptions/pressures were projected into the future, there were risks to the viability as it was not

known what the funding would be from 2024 onwards. There was a SEN Review being undertaken at Government level due to the mismatch in demand and funding. It was expected that the landscape would eventually shift.

The ISOS Recommendations/Action Plan would have some strong proposals that would support progress on reducing the deficit even further. As previously suggested, a representative from the ISOS Working Group should be invited to give a presentation to the Forum at its next meeting in the new year. Details of the representative to be forward to the Clerk who would confirm dates and extend the invitation.

Agreed:- (1) That the DSG Management Template update be received and the detail noted.

(2) That a Sub-Group be arranged during December to look at the detail of the DSG Management Template and undertake a further review of the data.

(3) That Angela Acomb, Maintain School Primary Governor, be invited to join the membership of the Sub-Group.

(4) That arrangements be made for a representative from the ISOS Working Group to attend the next meeting of the Schools Forum and give a presentation on their findings and recommendations.

ACTION:- Vera Njelic/Clerk

71. SEND SUFFICIENCY PHASE 3

Jenny Lingrell, Assistant Director for Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion, reported on the proposals that were to be considered at the next meeting of the Cabinet on 23rd November, 2020. The proposals would address current and future Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) sufficiency issues that have been highlighted by SEND data and identified in the Rotherham SEND Sufficiency and Social Emotional Mental Health Strategies.

Rotherham currently had two key issues in relation to sufficiency of education for children with special education needs and disabilities that needed to be addressed:-

1. There was a lack of designated social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) educational provision.

2. Newman Special School building needed extensive work in order to bring it to the required standard to effectively deliver education for children and young people with disabilities.

A strategic options appraisal outlined four different approaches to respond to the issues identified and deliver the required outcomes for Rotherham's children and young people.

The opportunity presented was, therefore, to support children and young people with SEND to achieve improved outcomes through the development of new, modern, and well-designed provision on the Dinnington site which have sufficient space and resources to meet the needs of the children who would attend there.

The buildings would provide the opportunity to open a new special school that was dedicated to educating children and young people with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs, and providing safe, modern and well-planned new buildings for children and young people who attended Newman Special School. The upper school at Newman would move to the Dinnington site, providing the space required to do the required capital works on the main school site.

Rotherham had a lack of dedicated educational provision for children with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) and, at present, children in Rotherham with SEMH needs either attended Rotherham PRU provision at Aspire or Rowan. These provisions could meet need, but have physical limitations in terms of building capacity, (both Aspire and Rowan lacked suitable accommodation). Children who did not attend Aspire or Rowan were sent out of area to high cost provision.

In addition, Newman School, Rotherham's oldest special school, was sited in a listed building which was no longer of the required standard to effectively deliver education for children and young people with disabilities and required some investment.

The recommended option was to purchase Dinnington College which incorporated Block A, C, B and D at Dinnington College.

Block A would be adapted to provide a primary and secondary designated SEMH educational provision for up to one hundred and twenty-five children and young people, under the DfE Academy/Free school presumption process.

Block C and D would be adapted to provide upper school provision for around forty young people from Newman School.

Block B would be demolished and adapted to provide (along with other outdoor space) the required soft and hard play area for the two educational provisions.

The proposals themselves were welcomed and Paul Silvester, Head of Newman School, and Lianne Camaish, Principal of Aspire, echoed how much of a positive difference this would make in Rotherham.

This opportunity would allow for a managed transfer of children and young people with SEMH needs from PRUs into the new SEMH provision and allow for the transfer of the upper school provision from Newman site to Dinnington College. This will enable the works to be completed at Newman school whilst remaining operational for the remaining children and young people.

Any new school proposal must be developed under the DfE free school presumption process and would require formal notification to DfE and proposals to be drawn up in the form of a prospectus outlining the need for the new school and context.

Agreed:- That the report be received and the contents be welcomed and noted.

ACTION:- ALL

72. SCHEME FOR FINANCING LOCAL AUTHORITY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (UPDATED SCHEME)

Further to Minute No. 56 and 57 of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 18th September, 2020, the updated scheme was now circulated for information. This would provide a source of practical guidance and advice and reflected the underlying principles associated with good financial management and practice.

Agreed:- That the updated scheme be received and the contents noted.

ACTION:- ALL

73. FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Neil Hardwick, Head of Schools Finance, and Nathan Health, Assistant Director of Education, provided an update on proposals with regards to Free School Meals over Christmas and for the February half term period.

Whilst it was outlined that provision had been made during the October half term, some schools and academies had been more proactive and made arrangements to passport out vouchers early, for which they were reimbursed.

Given notification by Government as part of the COVID-19 Winter Grant Scheme, it was proposed that a similar voucher system would be issued, subject to approval by the Cabinet and allow for consistency across the borough.

Agreed:- That the update be welcomed and the contents noted.

ACTION:- ALL

74. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no urgent business for discussion.

75. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of Rotherham Schools' Forum take place on Friday, 15th January, 2021 at 8.30 a.m. and that it be on a virtual basis unless otherwise indicated.