

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2022**

In Attendance:-

Steve Rhodes – Winterhill (Academy) (in the Chair)
Deborah Ball - Treeton Primary (Primary Academy)
Lianne Camaish, Aspire
Councillor Victoria Cusworth – Cabinet Member for CYPS
Julie Day, Head of SEND, CYPS
Guiseppe DiLasio – Wales (Academy)
Chris Eccles – Oakwood (Academy)
Dean Fenton - Head of ATE, CYPS
Lynsey Hadfield – Executive Head, Arnold Nursery (Observer)
Neil Hardwick – Head of Finance, CYPS
Nathan Heath – Assistant Director of Education, CYPS
David Horrigan – Maltby Academy Trust (Primary Academy)
Andy Krabbendam – CEO JMAT (Academy)
Angela McComb – Primary Maintained Governor
Vera Njelic - Principal Finance Officer, RMBC
Colin Price – NEU Representative
Alan Richards – Secondary Governor
Karen Smith – Nexus MAT (Special Academy)
Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children's Centre
Pam Ward – Head of Service, Education, CYPS
Nathan Williams – Roughwood Primary (Primary Academy)
Mark Windle – Badsley Primary (Primary Maintained)

Apologies were received from:-

Rachel Booth – The Willows (Special School)
Kirsty Peart - Sitwell Infant (Maintained)
Steve Scott – Happy Kids (PVI Nursery)
Melanie Smith – RNN Group (16-19)
Nevine Towers – Diocese of Sheffield

75. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest reported.

77. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes from the previous meeting held on 23rd September, 2022.

Agreed:- That the minutes be approved.

78. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

79. CONSTITUTION AND COMPOSITION OF THE ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS FORUM

Consideration was given to the membership and constitution of the Schools Forum and the suggested changes for approval.

Agreed:- That the nominated persons below be approved for a period of four years:-

- Lynsey Hadfield as Substitute for Sharon Stones (Nursery School Head)
- Karen Smith as Substitute for Joel Hardwick (Special Academy Representative)
- Nathan Williams, Head of Roughwood Primary, inclusion as a Primary Academy Representative.

80. DSG SUSTAINABILITY & HIGH NEEDS FINANCE UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report presented by Neil Hardwick which provided an update on the latest Dedicated Schools Grant position and the DSG projections as outlined in the DSG Management Plan.

It was pointed out that the DfE expected the plan to be updated and presented Schools Forums and High Needs Sub-Groups regularly.

As part of the Department of Education work to address long term challenges in the High Needs funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant a small number of identified local authorities including Rotherham have been invited to have financial agreement known as a 'Safety Valve'.

Following the negotiations, a 'Safety Valve' agreement was collaboratively developed by the DfE and agreed with Rotherham Metropolitan Borough.

The development of Rotherham MBC Safety Valve Agreement had considered key strategic SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) priorities, effective and sustainable financial planning, trajectories of cohort growth across SEND in the borough across the next five years, and the ambitions to support the creation of strong SEND locally based provision in Rotherham.

The 2021/22 outturn on high needs expenditure remained at £0.73m as

reported to Schools Forum throughout the year, however after taking account of other balances in other DSG funding blocks resulted in an in-year deficit of £0.11m increasing the net deficit in the DSG Central Reserve of £21.37m, which was ahead of target in terms of the £22.013m estimated in the DSG Management Plan.

However as Rotherham was approved to enter the DfE's Safety Valve programme at the end of the 2021/22 financial year the Authority received funding of £8.53m, reducing Rotherham's DSG Centre Reserve deficit from £21.37m to £12.84m.

In the 2022/23 financial year the DSG deficit remained on plan taking into account the High Needs Block position and use of other DSG reserves.

Clarification was sought on how the overspend compared to other educational services and if they were significant. It was noted discussions had taken place with the DfE in relation to the safety valve arrangement and seven out of the eight were listed as positive trajectories.

The High Needs Block budget was set to provide a £533k contribution to reserves in line with the management plan, which was on target to be delivered, but only after the School Block funding transfer and would be a £2.742m in-year deficit without this funding.

Based on the funding assumptions in the Safety Valve agreement it would still require a transfer from the School Block for the 2023/24 financial years to dampen the in-year financial pressures, to continue to meet the Safety Valve assumptions and avoid a significant increase in the overall DSG deficit over this period.

The pressures were not unique to Rotherham and the Authority welcomed the safety valve arrangements to help reduce the deficit.

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

81. UPDATE FROM HIGH NEEDS SUB-GROUP

Consideration was given to an update from the High Needs Sub-Group by Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education.

Key Updates were highlighted:-

- High Needs Safety Valve – update shared and position overview provided – plan on track and Rotherham remained on positive trajectory in Q2.
- Key pressures linked to pay awards and cost of living creating emerging pressures on fixed plan.
- Action – shared Rotherham SEND profile data - Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities report for Rotherham

Metropolitan Borough Council/LG Inform.

- High Needs budget position shared and considered.
- Recognition from group on pressures across SEND systems nationally and the interlink into High Needs funding.
- Overview provided on balance of funding where dependency on independent special school costs were impacting on High Needs budgets.
- Detailed analysis and discussion of High Needs Block transfers. Rotherham financial plan and forward planning against the set safety valve plan.
- Collective view on High Needs financial plan agreed and how this informed supportive position of sub-group on block transfer in next year – Officers to seek DfE view on block transfers for Safety Valve Local Authorities.
- Overview on communication and interaction outreach discussed with Expressions of Interest for a universal school pilot agreed – Offices to write to special heads to seek provider support.
- Update on SEND Sufficiency Phase 4 provided and special school capacity assessments – Officers to email all special and PRU heads to seek information on all off site provision utilised to inform SEND capacity assessment.

In terms of Next Steps it was noted:-

- Agreement for Nathan Heath to remain chair for next Sub-Group.
- Next Sub-Group to scope SEND Funding workstream for Rotherham – Officers to seek DfE update on other Local Authorities working on this area, (update provided by DfE).
- Request to go Secondary Heads and Primary Heads to seek Sub-Group representation to support triangulation of all updates linked High Needs Funding back into key school leaders groups.

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

82. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FUNCTIONS

Consideration was given to a verbal update from Pam Ward, Head of Service for Education, referring to funding to support core school improvement activities previously utilised through the former School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant.

The Local Authorities school improvement activity was divided into core improvement activities and additional improvement services and consultation had been taking place with maintained schools as to whether they wished to de-delegate funds for school improvement activity. Maintained school were given two options:-

- Option 1 - £19 per pupil – additional support through ROSIS
- Option 2 - £29 per pupil – additional improvement services

Of the four schools of the twenty two who responded to the consultation, two chose Option 1 and two chose Option 2.

The decision to be taken forward would be included as part of the consultation responses on the next item on the agenda.

Forum Members in noting the detail expressed their disappointment at responses when a decision was having to be made. Schools had every opportunity to contribute as part of the annual consultation process.

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

83. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2023/24 CONSULTATION OUTCOME

Consideration was given to the report presented by Vera Njelic, Principal 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 2023/24:-

- Schools block.
- Central schools services block.

As a result of the Government's intention to implement a national funding formula for school and high needs funding allocations; 2023/24 represented the sixth year of the Government's planned transition towards these proposals.

To comply with the ESFA operational guidance, Local Authorities were required to consult with schools, academies and Schools Forum in respect of planned changes to the schools local funding formula including the method, principals and rules that were to be adopted. The final decisions in respect of the local formula remain with the Local Authority.

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 and attached as appendices to the submitted report.

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.

Clarification was sought from Forum Members on discussions held as part

of the High Needs Sub-Group and the legal position with regards to the Safety Valve arrangements with the Local Authority.

In addition, further discussion ensued on the responses as set out at Appendix A where consultation responses were received from individual schools/academies and those submitted as part of a multi-academy trust.

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 2023/24 (as far as was possible) for submission to the ESFA by 20th January, 2023:-

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

Vote:- **12 For** **0 Against** **0 Abstain**

Question 2 – Considering a transfer of 1.5% from the schools block to support the high needs block.

Vote:- **10 For** **0 Against** **2 Abstain**

Question 3 – Should the Local Authority continue to provide a growth fund in 2023/2024 from reserve?

Vote:- **12 For** **0 Against** **0 Abstain**

Question 4 - Do you agree that the Local Authority should continue to provide for a Growth Fund from reserve?

Vote:- **12 For** **0 Against** **0 Abstain**

Question 5 – Should funding from this block could be retained for the services outlined above?

Vote:- **12 For** **0 Against** **0 Abstain**

Question 6 – Would maintained primary schools wish to de-delegate monies to create a Financial Difficulties Contingency Fund.

Vote:- **1 For** **0 Against** **0 Abstain**

Question 7 - Would maintained schools wish to de-delegate funds, once again, for trade union facilities time rather than buy back from the portfolio of services.

Vote:- **1 For** **0 Against** **0 Abstain**

Question 8 - Do maintained schools wish to de-delegate funds again for

school improvement activity?

Option 1 rate of £19 per pupil

Option 2 rate of £29 per pupil

Vote:- 1 For 0 Against 0 Abstain

Action:- Vera Njelic

84. ROTHERHAM'S NOTIONAL SEN ADDITIONAL FUNDING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA - MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES

This item was deferred to the next meeting and would be included on the agenda by the Clerk.

85. TEACHERS AND NJC PAY AWARDS

This item was deferred to the next meeting and would be included on the agenda by the Clerk.

86. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair invited Forum Members to share any other items for business.

(a) Free School Meals

Nathan Heath again provided a summary of the continued support for those children eligible for Free School Meals.

Arrangements would be made shortly to passport details through to schools for Christmas to distribute to the vulnerable group of pupils. Details would be included on what arrangements were in place to redeem the vouchers/funding.

Agreed:- That the information be noted and appropriate action taken.

87. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Schools' Forum take place on Friday, 13th January, 2023 at 8.30 a.m. at Rockingham Professional Development Centre.

(2) That the date of the future meetings of the Rotherham School Forum at 8.30 a.m. be noted:-

Friday, 28th April, 2023