



LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM 13 JANUARY 2016

PRESENT: MARK ANDERSON (CHAIRMAN)

Joanne Noble (Headteacher, Gainsborough Nursery School), Nigel Sisley JP (Governor, St Francis Community Special School, Lincoln), Vicky Cook (Headteacher, Welbourn Church of England Primary School), Ian Wilkinson (Headteacher, Deeping St James Community Primary School), Geraldine Willders (Head Teacher, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Grantham) (Vice-Chairman), Marilyn Bell (Governor, The Fenland Federation), Roger Hewins (Governor, Corringham Church of England Primary School), David Bennett (Governor, Horncastle Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The King's School, Grantham), Jeremy Newnham (Head Teacher, Caistor Yarborough Academy), James Storr (Governor, The Deepings School), Helen Hilton (Head Teacher, Little Gonerby Church of England Infant School), Lea Mason (Executive Head Teacher, Lincolnshire Wolds Federation, Louth), Helen Stokes (Branch Secretary, UNISON) and Matthew Orford (Director of Education, Linkage).

Councillor David Brailsford (Executive Councillor for Children's Services) attended the meeting as an observer.

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes (Executive Director of Children's Services), Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), John O'Connor (Service Manager Education Support), Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance, Children's Services), Heather Sandy (Chief Commissioning Officer for Learning), Tony Warnock (Operations and Financial Advice Manager), Mary Meredith (Children's Services Manager, Inclusion) and Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and invited all members present to introduce themselves to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Roger Hale (Head Teacher, Caistor Grammar School), Jerry Tucker (Head Teacher, The Acorn Free School, Lincoln) and Bridget Starling (Business Manager, Church of England, and Diocesan Education Centre).

It was also noted that an apology had been received from K Rustidge (NUT).

19 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

No declarations of Members Interests were made at this stage of the proceedings.

20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2015

Whilst reviewing the minutes, particular reference was made to:

- Minute Number 6 – Schools' Forum Membership – The Senior Democratic Services Officer agreed to look into this matter with the possibility of arranging an election prior to the June meeting;
- Minute Number 8 – Schools' Carry Forwards – Some concerns were raised regarding problems still being encountered with the Agresso system. Particular reference was made to problems with P60's and financial year end. The Forum was advised that the matter was being scrutinised by the Executive; and that Serco had establish a dedicated Project Board to resolve issues encountered by Schools across the County. The Forum was reassured that the Executive would be continuing to work with Serco to address all outstanding issues; and would be looking for compensation for the inconvenience caused. It was agreed that as the matter was not the core business of the Forum, members of the Forum were invited to speak to officers concerning Agresso issues at the end of meeting; and
- Minute Number 11 – Revised Schools' Budget 2015/16. It was reported that a detailed report concerning the energy saving initiative School Collaboration on Resource Efficiency (SCoRE) would be presented to the April meeting for the Forum to consider.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum meeting held on 7 October 2015 be agreed, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

21 2015/16 SECTION 251 BENCHMARKING INFORMATION

Consideration was given to a report from Lizzie Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), which advised the Schools' Forum of the latest Section 251 benchmarking data published by the Department for Education (DfE) in September 2015.

In guiding the Forum through the report, the Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team highlighted the following:-

- That all local authorities were required to publish a statement showing planned expenditure on Children's Services. It was noted that Lincolnshire would be presenting its Section 251 budget statement to the Schools' Forum at its April meeting. It was highlighted that despite DfE guidance relating to the completion of the statement, there was likely to be variation due to interpretation, and it was felt that this might explain some of the apparent variations in planned spending between Local Authorities (LAs). Care was therefore needed when interpreting figures;

- Appendix A to the report provided the Forum with a copy of the benchmarking data from the Local Authority Table of Section 251. The information contained within the Appendix provided information relating to 27 Upper Tier Authorities who were similar in character to Lincolnshire. Full details of key issues that the Forum should be aware of were contained within pages 18/19/20 and 21 (Tables 1 to 8) of the report presented. The Forum was advised that their principal role was to focus on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant which was shown on the lines up to 1.6.1, or Column 40 of the above mentioned Appendix. The other budget lines related broadly to children's services across the County; and
- It was reported that the Sector 251 benchmarking data would continue to be used by the local authority (LA) each year to inform its future spending plans.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that Lincolnshire's overall position had not changed significantly since the previous year. It was highlighted that in 2015/16 an additional £390m had been added to LAs budgets that were most in need, this additional funding had been allocated to 69 LAs. Lincolnshire had received an additional £4.5m, but as this was only c.1% of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). It was noted that this would have little impact on the benchmarking and on Lincolnshire's relative position, as the County continued to receive one of the lowest levels of DSG funding in the County. Table 4 in the report, provided the 'per pupil' spending on the Schools Budget the figure of £376 was less than the England average (median). It was highlighted that this adverse situation continued to be compounded by the fact that Lincolnshire also spent £148 per pupil more on school transport than the England average (median) due to the rurality of the County.

It was reported that on the 25 November 2015, the Chancellor had announced the outcome of the Spending Review 2015. The Forum was advised that the Government intended to introduce the first ever national funding formula for schools, high needs and early years, so that funding was transparent and fairly linked to a child's needs. The Government was also planning to launch a detailed consultation in 2016, with its implementation planned for 2017/18.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following issues:-

- One member enquired whether there were any areas that officers felt needed to be highlighted. The Forum noted that the DSG funding envelope had been lower than expected;

The Forum were advised that a Project Board had been established to look into reducing the cost of Home to School Transport for young people with Special Educational Needs by looking into making existing Special Schools more generic to meet the needs of young people with Special Educational Needs. This would then reduce the travelling distances of young people with special educational needs. The Forum noted that there was some capital available to invest in the project, which was intended to have a positive impact on reducing the amount spent on Home to School Transport, and reducing the journeys of young people with Special Educational Needs.

The continued investment in prevention with regard to safeguarding and Looked After Children. It was highlighted that Lincolnshire placed a higher percentage of Looked After Children in foster care, rather than being in residential accommodation, as the costs were lower and the outcomes were better.

The Forum was advised that if the Government decided to fund all schools at a national level, the formula for funding might not be flexible enough to meet Lincolnshire needs. Therefore, members were encouraged to respond to the Government's fairer funding consultation, once it was issued.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

22 SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS 2016/17

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance, Children's Services), which advised the Schools' Forum of the funding arrangements for 2016/17, and sought support from the Forum for the Local Authority's (LA) proposals to a number of centrally held budgets (details of which were show in Table 3 of the report presented).

It was reported that the Government was not planning to make any changes to the school funding arrangements for mainstream schools for 2016/17. The operation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would therefore remain largely unchanged.

It was highlighted that schools block per pupil unit values for 2016/17 would be the same starting position as in 2015/16, subject to non-recoupment of academy adjustments. The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) would continue to apply, and would be set again at 1.5% per pupil for 2016/17. It was noted that the MFG excluded sixth-form funding and academies Education Support Grant funding. That the schools block would continue to be based primarily on the proceeding October census. And, that the Government had announced an additional £92.5m increase nationally in DSG high needs funding for 2016/17, which would mean that Lincolnshire would receive just over £1m.

It was reported that the Chancellor had announced in the autumn spending review that around £600m savings would be made from the Education Support Grant (ESG) including the phasing out of the additional funding academy schools receive through the ESG. The general funding rate for ESG would fall from £87 to £77 per pupil in 2016/17. Also, the rates for alternative provision and special academies would fall to £288.75 and £327.25 per place respectively. The Forum noted that the retained duties rate the LA received for all pupils would remain unchanged at £15 per pupil.

It was highlighted the DfE still intended to converge the academies ESG rates with those used for LA's i.e. £77 per pupil. Officers highlighted that this amount was expected to reduce significantly in future years.

The Forum were advised that funding for the pupil premium in 2016/17 would be protected at the 2015/16 current rates, details of which were contained within the report presented.

With regard to 2016/17 DSG allocations, overall, Lincolnshire's DSG would increase by 1.05% in 2016/17. It was however noted that the LA's main change to the 2016/17 mainstream schools funding formula related to the planned 0.5% reduction in AWPU funding to fund the new behavioural outreach support service and to provide a range of early intervention activities, preventions and support for Schools, families and to the pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The report set out that it was important for the LA to take a prudent approach to the setting of central budgets within the DSG, on page 33 of the report, Table 2 detailed the main changes proposed to DSG central budgets in 2016/17, and it also included the provisions in relation to the setting of central budgets within the DSG.

The Forum was invited to consider Table 3 within the report presented, which detailed budgets requiring the Schools' Forum support. During consideration of Table 3, the following issues were raised:-

- Funding for significant pre-16 growth – The budget proposed for 2016/17 was the same as that set for 2015/16. The figure proposed was £2.000m. The Forum made no comments;
- Places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils (Stamford Endowed Schools) – The Forum were advised that there was sufficient supply of good educational places available in the area;
- Broadband – It was highlighted that the budget allowed the funding of an aggregated broadband provision to all schools (including academies) and that the budget for the year was the same as the previous year. Some concern was expressed that if schools withdrew from provision, it would put pressure on those left. Officers acknowledged the issue. Some members advised that their current broadband provision did not meet their current needs. The Forum were advised if that was the case, there was a route that could be followed and effected members were encouraged to speak to the Head of Finance, Children's Services outside of the meeting. It was also agreed that all schools needed to be aware of the options available to them, and that better communication was required with regard to Broadband. The Forum noted that there was a need to communicate early with schools to understand the collective requirements of schools in the future, so that plans were in place provide a sustainable offer to schools at the end of the contract;
- Admissions – The Forum were advised that the budget proposed was the same as the one set for 2015/16. The figure proposed was £0.449m. The Forum made no comments;
- Servicing of the Schools Forum – Some members enquired whether the figure represented good value for money. The Forum was advised that the amount was used mainly for training for Forum members and funding formula consultations, but this budget typically remained underspent at the end of the year;

- Central expenditure from revenue (CERA) – One member enquired as to the length of the contract. The Forum was advised that the contract ran until August 2032, and at the end of that time the Council had the asset of the seven schools. Some discussion was had as to whether if one of the schools was extended would the PFI costs increase, but officers advised that in the specific case raised, LCC land had been used so there was no extension to the contract; and
- Schools centrally funded termination of employment costs – A question was asked as to whether this provision represented good value for money. Officers felt that the service represented good value for money. The Forum was advised that there had been fewer redundancies, and that there had been less demand on the post. Officers agreed to provide the Forum with a report, or to circulate a report on this matter to a future meeting.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum supports the Local Authority's proposals for the setting of the central budgets as shown in Table 3 of the report.
3. That a report on the Re-Deployment Officer be circulated to the Forum.

23 INCLUSIVE LINCOLNSHIRE STRATEGY - PUPIL REINTEGRATION CHARGE

Consideration was given to a report from John O'Connor (Children's Services Manager, Education Support), which asked the Schools' Forum to agree to the principle of introducing of a pupil reintegration charge for those schools that could not demonstrate that they had done everything reasonably possible to prevent an exclusion. It was highlighted that where schools could demonstrate they had done every possible there would be no charge to the school for the continued education of the individual.

It was reported that the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy had been adopted and endorsed by the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership. A copy of the strategy was detailed at Appendix A to the report presented. The strategy detailed the significant issues within Lincolnshire of the growing number of permanent exclusions from schools.

The Forum was advised that pupils in Lincolnshire were more likely to be excluded than in many other local authority areas and was ranked 135th out of 139 for permanent exclusions from all school types.

It was highlighted that the inclusive strategy was dependent on the commitment of all schools. It was highlighted further that the LA would commission a new Behaviour Outreach Support Service that would operate on two levels for all schools, in addition to running a whole school restorative programme with 20 schools as a pilot.

The Forum was advised that there was already a range of services that were currently provided by the Council and other organisations to support specific pupils and their needs.

Reference was also made to Targeted Support; Escalating Need - Intensive Intervention; the eight actions that make up the 'Inclusive Lincolnshire Contract'; and comments made by the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership with regard to the pupil reintegration charge. The three comments raised were detailed within the report presented.

It was noted that currently the cost was borne by all schools as a top-slice off the DSG. The schools that worked to identify and meet pupils' needs, using good practice recognised through the County, would not incur escalating costs associated with exclusions.

In conclusion, it was highlighted that there was a need to change the way that the Council supported pupils with challenging behaviour and shift away from specialist and intervention to earlier help and support. The Forum noted that the Council wanted to ensure that capacity and skills were aligned at all levels, and that the thresholds between each level were clearly understood and implemented. It was highlighted that the pupil reintegration charge was one of eight measures within the strategy that would help the Council achieve its objectives.

During discussion, the following issues were raised by members of the Forum:-

- The Forum was advised that the issue had been discussed at Head Teacher briefings, and that a lot of work had been done surrounding the ladder of intervention. The ladder of intervention was detailed on page 50 of the report presented. The Forum was advised further that the purpose of the strategy was to introduce consistency across all schools;
- The circumstances leading up to exclusion; and the policies used by schools. Particular reference was made to cases where there were no warnings of escalating behaviours, but that there was a single incident i.e. knife threats and drug related issues. It was highlighted that each school dealt with matters in different ways. The Forum was advised that a lot of work had been input from Head Teachers; and that the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership was the vehicle to strategically support this strategy and they would work with the LA on associated protocols to address the concerns highlighted by the Forum;
- Overall, the Forum agreed to the principle, but felt that there needed to be more clarity with regard to how the strategy was to be implemented. A suggestion was made to implement the strategy in September 2016, but not implement the charge until December 2016, and to ask the Learning Partnership to explore associated protocols;
- The legality of the proposed charge. The Forum was advised that legal advice had been sought and would be taken formally before any changes were implemented; and
- The Forum highlighted that they thought existing school policies would need modifying and that the governing bodies would require further information.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that the 'Inclusive Lincolnshire' strategy would be underpinned by a set of clear performance indicators which would enable impact and progress to be monitored. Performance information would then be reported to the Lincolnshire Partnership Board and the Schools' Forum.

RESOLVED

That agreement in principle be given to the introduction of a pupil reintegration charge for those schools that cannot demonstrate that they have done everything reasonable to prevent an exclusion, subject to further details relating to the ladder and associated protocols being presented to the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership Board.

24 ALTERNATIVE PROVISION ARRANGEMENTS

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance, Children's Services, which outlined the Education Funding Agency high needs funding guidance arrangements for Alternative Provision; and provided information relating to the Alternative Providers in Lincolnshire and their present funding arrangements.

In guiding the Forum through the report the Head of Finance, Children's Services highlighted that the Schools Forum regulations outlined that the arrangements for Alternative Provision (AP) should be discussed at a local level, with engagement not only from the Local Authority, but also from the mainstream schools and academies, pupil referral units and AP in academies and free schools. It was highlighted that the Education Funding Agency had advised that it was in the interests of LA's, it schools and academies and institutions offering AP, to agree a referral process.

It was reported that place funding for AP providers was funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and that any increase in places would have to be met from Lincolnshire's DSG. It was therefore felt that cost transparency was a very important feature of the new high needs funding arrangements, and that the Schools' Forum should be aware of how AP was funded; top up funding rates for AP institutions and where top up funding and place funding came from.

The Forum was advised that a standard top up funding rate was often set for each Pupil Referral Unit, AP academy, or AP free school, which reflected the overall budget needed to deliver the service for pupils and students. The Forum was advised further that the Government had made it clear that where growth had increased that LA DSG's high needs DSG block would not be funded for increases, therefore the LA needed to ensure that this area was monitored and controlled.

Details pertaining to the Lincoln Teaching and Learning Centre (LTLC); Pilgrim School were contained within the report presented. The Forum was advised that the LA was still awaiting information from the Acorn Free School (a copy of the request letter was attached at Appendix A to the report). The report recommended that a robust initial referral Gateway Panel led by the LA was established for placement into

all alternative provision. This arrangement would then provide a control mechanism to safeguard the DSG financial position.

The Chairman advised the Forum that he had received a letter from Jerry Tucker, Head Teacher at the Acorn Free School, which he had passed to the Executive Director of Children's Services to respond to. The Executive Director for Children's Services advised that a meeting had been arranged with the Local Authority and Governors from the Acorn Free School.

It was outlined that for dual-registered pupils accessing Alternative Provision, the Local Authority had no statutory duty to provide transport. The Local Authority plans were to give a terms notice on; and for the school to source and pay for the transport in future.

In conclusion, to ensure that the Lincolnshire's DSG and schools budgets were maximised effectively at a time when the LA faced financial challenges, the LA wanted to ensure processes were in place to make sure this area was closely monitored and the Schools' Forum were asked to agree on how place number growth would be managed in the future.

During discussion reference was made to:-

- The need to ensure that good value for money was reached in order to maximise funding received;
- That school's needed guidance with regard to Alternative Provision as they would remain responsible for students on their roll who they placed and would be inspected in respect of these arrangements. There needed to be checks to ensure that what was being received represented good value for money; and
- The fact that some students were having more than one place i.e. mainstream provision for three days; alternative provision for two days; some go straight to the AP pathway outright; others go to alternative initially, and then the young people come back to mainstream education. This was considered beneficial for some pupils; and
- The Executive Director for Children's Services advised that a single standard transport charge for dual-registered pupils could be applied to schools for pupils accessing Alternative Provision which would not disadvantage schools because of their location. The single standard transport charge approach was supported by the Forum as being fair to all schools.

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the reported be noted.
2. The support be given for the Education Funding Agency's and Local Authority's desire for transparency and openness of Alternative Provision providers full costs across all institutions allowing Local Authority's schools and academies to make placement decisions on the basis of the cost and quality of what is on offer.

3. That support be given for the Pilgrim school delivery model particularly the short term assessment provision approved through the referral gateway panel.
4. That agreement be given to a consistent referral panel process for pre-exclusion places in Alternative Provision.

25 SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to a report from Lizzie Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team, which advised the Schools' Forum of the latest publication by the Department of Education of its revised guidance on Schemes for Financing Schools.

It was reported that from a Lincolnshire perspective, the most important revisions to the scheme from 1 April 2016 were:-

- That maintained schools were required to publish a register of the business interests of their governors, along with any relationships with staff; and
- That clarification of borrowing included the use of finance leases and that was not allowable, with the exception of certain schemes approved by the Secretary of State. It was reported that currently only Salix loans had such approval.

The Forum was advised that the Local Authority would be publishing a revised scheme before April 2016; and details of the link to the website were included within the report presented.

RESOLVED

That the report presented be noted.

26 THE SCHOOL AND EARLY YEARS FINANCE REGULATIONS 2016/17

The Schools Forum gave consideration to a report from the Lizzie Bowes, Strategic Manager, Schools Finance Team, which advised of the response received to the consultation of the School and Early Years Finance Regulations for 2016/17.

It was reported that in December 2015, the Department of Education had published the draft Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2015. It was highlighted that the Regulations applied to the 2016/17 financial year and had come into effect on 7 January 2016. The purpose of the regulations was to put in place arrangements for Local Authorities to set school budgets, and allocate funding to early years providers.

Details of the six proposed changes to the Regulations were summarised on pages 74/75 of the report presented. It was also reported that an additional amendment had been made to the Regulations, which had not been subject to the consultation, which was that Local Authorities must include at least the equivalent amount per

hospital education place, as they had included in the budget share for special schools, or pupil referral units in the previous funding period. The Forum was advised that Lincolnshire's funding formula was transparent and clear between hospital schools and other special schools/pupil referral units. It was highlighted that Lincolnshire was already complying with this amendment.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that the majority of respondents to the consultation had agreed with the changes to the Regulations, as the proposals were broadly welcomed as providing consistency, clarity and flexibility to the current funding system

RESOLVED

That the report presented be noted.

27 ACADEMIES UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance, Children's Services), which provided the Forum with information pertaining to the latest number of academies and pupils in academies.

It was reported that since the last report there had only been one further conversion to Academy status. This had been the sponsored conversion of North Somercotes Birkbeck, a Specialist Science, Maths and Art College, which was now sponsored by Tollbar Multi Academies Trust, and had reopened as the Somercotes Academy.

The current status of All Lincolnshire Schools was of the 362 schools, 231 (63.8%) were Maintained 40,710 FTE (39.3%), and 131 (36.2%) 62,800 FTE (60.7%) were Academies. It was noted that there was an expectation that there would be acceleration in the number of schools converting, or are required to convert as sponsored academies as the year progressed.

The projected six monthly status of Lincolnshire Schools was of the 362 schools, 227 would be Maintained (62.7%), 40,955 FTE (39.6%); and 135 (37.3%); 62,555 FTE (60.4%) would be academies. It was noted that there were four conversions due to happen before the 1 June 2106, and that a further four schools had engaged in the academy process, but had not received confirmed conversion dates.

RESOLVED

That information on the latest number of academies and pupils in academies be noted.

28 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM - FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to a report from Katrina Cope, Senior Democratic Services Officer, which provided the Forum with details of its Work Programme up to October 2016.

12
LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
13 JANUARY 2016

The Forum was invited to suggest items for consideration at future meetings.

The following items were put forward:-

- An update on the Training and Learning Centre;
- Speech and Language Provision across the County;
- Trade Union Support – Academies; and
- Redeployment of staff.

The Forum was also advised that hard copies of agendas would no longer be posted out to members, except in extraordinary circumstances. It was agreed that an email would be sent out by the Senior Democratic Officer to this effect.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme presented be agreed, subject to the inclusion of the items detailed above.

The meeting closed at 3.20 p.m.