



LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM 6 OCTOBER 2022

PRESENT: GAVIN BOOTH (CHAIRMAN)

Amy Stancer (Headteacher, St Giles Nursery School, Lincoln), Kyna Adkins (Head Teacher, St Christopher's Special School), Alan Howe (Governor, Sutton on Sea County Primary School), Anthony Stevens (Governor, The Holt Primary School, Skellingthorpe), 1 Vacancy (Primary Maintained Governors), Callum Clay (Head Teacher, Church Lane Primary School, Sleaford), Catherine Stratton (Head Teacher, Saxilby Church of England Primary School), 1 Vacancy (Primary Maintained Head Teachers), Michele Anderson (Head Teacher, Spalding High School), Rachel Barrett FCCA (Governor, North Kesteven Academy), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The King's School, Grantham), Jo Slesser (Governor, Carres Grammar School, Sleaford), Steve Baragwanath (Executive Principal, University Academy Holbeach), Frances Green MA (Oxon) (Head Teacher, Somercotes Secondary Academy), Simon Pickett (Head Master, The King's School, Grantham), 1 Vacancy (Secondary Academies Head Teachers), 2 Vacancies (Primary Academies Governors), Lea Mason (Executive Head Teacher, Lincolnshire Wolds Federation, Louth), Josh Greaves (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Wellspring Academy Trust) (Vice-Chairman), Peter Tomlinson (Diocesan Business and Operations Manager, Diocese of Lincoln), Andrew Watts (NEU) and Julia Merivale (Manager, Trinity Day Nursery),

Officers in attendance:- Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager – Schools Finance Team), Mark Popplewell (Strategic Finance Lead – Children's Services), Martin Smith (Assistant Director – Children's Education), Rosemary Akrill (Senior Commissioning Officer), Tony Warnock (Head of Financial Services), Kate Capel (Head of Service for Inclusion) and Thomas Crofts (Democratic Services Officer)

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Katie Gravit and Simon Morley.

15 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

There were no declarations of members' interest made at this stage of the proceedings.

16 MINUTES OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum meeting held on 30 June 2022 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

17 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the Forum aware that the Council had taken the decision to continue using emPSN managed network and had undertaken a process of procuring a new contract for managed services activities. The contract had been awarded and emPSN were engaging with the schools sector directly to secure broadband connectivity from 1st November 2022. As such, the standing item for school broadband arrangements was removed from the work programme.

18 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS - UPDATE 2023/24

Consideration was given to a report from Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager – Schools Finance Team, which provided a summary of the updates from the Department for Education (DfE) relating to the national funding formula for schools, central schools services, high needs and early years for 2023/24. It was explained that there was an increase in per pupil funding for Lincolnshire mainstream schools; however, there were concerns regarding the financial position of schools in relation to proposed pay awards and inflationary pressures.

For the Primary and Secondary sector, formula factors linked to deprivation would increase by 4.3%, all other formula factors would increase by 2.4%. Within the High Needs block the funding floor had been set at 5%, resulting in Lincolnshire receiving protection funding of £8.692m, and an overall increase in funding of c.£6m. The Council planned to meet with the DfE regarding the consultation on the Early Years National Funding Formula. For the Central Schools Services Block, historical commitment funding was set to reduce by a further 20%.

The Forum noted the report, and the following comments were received:

- Pay awards were factored into the formula under the DfE's supplementary funding; however, funding did not cover all of the costs due to higher than anticipated pay settlements. The supplementary funding was also intended to support unforeseen cost rises in energy but the funding was not expected to cover the significant increase that schools are experiencing. No additional funding had been offered to account for this at this point in time. Officers continued to raise concerns to the Department and relevant parties.

- Medium term financial planning estimated that that there would be an 8-10% pay uplift. Work was underway with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to review budget assumptions.
- Supplementary Funding for special schools was being fine-tuned in light of economic changes to ensure a fair allocation of unforeseen costs was allocated to the schools. The special schools representatives felt that reassurance was required on whether they would receive supplementary funding and require to know the funding allocations and that some schools were not in a position where they could wait. Assurances needed to be communicated by the Council as soon as possible so that governors could be informed. The Council confirmed that special schools and alternative provision supplementary funding would be allocated to the sector, and the allocations would be shared in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments be noted.

19 DE-DELEGATION OF MAINTAINED PRIMARY SCHOOLS BUDGETS (2023/24)

Consideration was given to a report from Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead – Children’s Services, on the Council’s proposals for the de-delegation of the following budgets in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The Forum noted that the government’s decision to implement the national funding formula still allowed for de-delegation arrangements for maintained schools to continue.

Details of the de-delegation position at March 2022 reported a £1.027m cumulative underspend, of which £0.466m remained uncommitted. The de-delegation services underspent by £0.166m in 2021/22. There were a number of variables to the de-delegation budgets, listed on page 27 of the report, therefore prudence was required where unexpected costs arise due to the delivery of services and their demand-led influences, in particular causes from current economic circumstances.

The Forum noted the DfE consultation that concluded the removal of the funding for Local Authority School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant supporting maintained schools. The Council strongly responded to the consultation opposing such a change. The Council considered its investment in the education sector as a strategic priority. The Council had temporarily managed the 50% reduction in funding in the current year, but the current financial position meant that a permanent solution could not be secured through this route. The Council had reviewed opportunities for general efficiencies within the school improvements service. The Council considered it an opportune moment to review existing de-delegation budgets with an option of re-purposing to support the direct work with maintained primary schools. Such an approach would not bear additional financial burdens on schools. Also, the Council considered the Education Locality Leads role to be a priority for maintained primary school improvement, previously funded through the grant.

The Council proposed that the current contingency rate of £29.23 per pupil continued for 2023/24, which supported the hybrid approach of maintaining the support to maintained primary schools from Education Locality Leads.

The Board noted that page 29 of the report provided details of the per pupil rates for 2023/24.

It was highlighted that the charges for 2024/25 (in principle) continued to be at the baseline amounts per pupil for the de-delegation budgets.

The Forum noted the report, and the following comments were received:

- It was anticipated that funding levels would change as more schools became academies, but the Council remained fully supportive of maintained schools. The role of the Council was to be a strategic support to maintained schools and academies, which also required resourcing through the core Council budget.
- Data metrics were being analysed to determine what worked best in supporting schools.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Forum agree the proposals for the use of de-delegation reserves.
2. That the Forum agree the de-delegation of the budgets for the period 2023/24, and 2024/25 in principle, as set out in the report.

20 REVISED SCHOOLS BUDGETS 2022/23

Consideration was given to a report from Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead – Children's Services, on the Revised Schools Budgets for 2022/23 and the proposed use of cumulative underspending from 2021/22.

The Forum were reminded that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was a ring-fenced grant that could only be spent for the purposes as outlined in the Department for Education Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations.

Page 41 provided details of the carry forward for 2021/22. The Forum noted that the cumulative underspend carried forward as of March 2022 was £11.969m. The uncommitted sum of the underspend was £6.858m. This reflected the net underspends of £3.288m on budgets in 2021/22 held centrally within the DSG. Details of which were shown in Appendix A to the report. The Forum considered Appendix A, which outlined the financial year variances.

The Forum was advised that a thorough review of existing commitments had taken place, and that prudent financial estimates had been made. Details of the existing commitments were shown in Appendix B to the report, which totalled £4.331m. The Forum gave consideration to Appendix B.

The Council sought to utilise DSG funding to contribute towards creating new childcare places in the county for sufficiency reasons. The Council proposes to capitalise £0.780m from the DSG reserve, which had previously been earmarked for Early Years initiatives (£0.977m). This had originated from the government's rollout of the disadvantaged 2-year-old funding. There are areas in Lincolnshire identified through the childcare sufficiency review that require additional childcare places in the immediate future. A development plan has been produced, however capital investment would be required to support the plan.

Details relating to the proposal for use of the uncommitted sum of £6.858m were shown on pages 42 to 43 of the report and these were considered by the Forum.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that an increasing number of local authorities continued to incur deficits on their overall DSG account, largely because of overspends on their High Needs blocks, valued at over £1bn nationally with two thirds of LAs overspending their DSG. It was highlighted that Lincolnshire was not in that position, as it had available reserves, however based on current spending levels in the area of SEND and the uncertainty in the financial environment going forward, a prudent approach is to be applied.

The Forum noted the report, and the following comments were received:

- Alternative Provision underspend had been due to the Free School place funding funded through the DfE.
- The capitalisation of DSG funding for early years childcare places has considered the cost of inflation in construction costs being experienced.
- The Council is committed to supporting the unforeseen costs within the special and Alternative Provision schools in 2022/23 from the supplementary funding received.

The recommendations, as outlined in the report, were proposed and seconded. The recommendation to capitalise £0.780m of DSG funding for new childcare places were put to a vote.

VOTE:

13 For 0 Against 5 Abstain

RESOLVED:

1. That the report and comments be noted.
2. That the Forum agree to capitalise £0.780m of DSG revenue monies for childcare sufficiency purposes by securing new childcare places, through the Disapplication Request process for approval by the Secretary of State.
3. That the Forum support the Local Authority's proposed use of the uncommitted sum, as outlined in section 5.
4. That Forum's comments be passed on to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement for decision.

21 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES EARLY SUPPORT LEARNING PROVISION

Consideration was given to a report from Rosemary Akrill, Senior Commissioning Officer, which recommended that improved joint working and partnership working across Early Years settings was needed to develop an integrated model with the new Best Start contract alongside widening the scope of the Best Start offer. This aimed to ensure access to the right support, by the right people, at the right time and reduce waiting lists for ESLP.

It was reported that the requested funding was in line with the 2021/22 costs, plus an inflationary uplift of 2% to support supplier delivery.

The Forum noted the report, and the following comments were received:

- Expansion plans championed a move towards integrated care with further mainstream offers and provision for carer respite.

RESOLVED:

That the Forum support the funding of £234,828 per annum from the High Needs block for Early Support Learning Provision starting from 1st October 2023 for up to five years to 30th September 2028.

22 ALTERNATIVE PROVISION ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report from Kate Capel, Head of Service for Inclusion, on Alternative Provision (AP) arrangements. The following was highlighted:

- The Local Authority commissioned 252 places within Springwell Academy.
- Lincolnshire's Ladder of Behavioural Intervention was introduced to provide educational settings with SEND support in mainstream settings. The Ladder provided steps and support to ensure early intervention and avoid escalating needs that

require suspension or exclusion. The Ladder continued to show positive impact within Lincolnshire.

- Attention was drawn to Lincolnshire's exclusions and suspensions rates in comparison to the national picture.
- The Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Pathway was launched to provide schools and stakeholders with clarity about how to respond to the challenge of EBSA pupils. When attendance was compromised because of EBSA there was a statutory duty to deliver education – the Pathway provided partners with clarity around steps to be taken and in this situation.
- An overview of the current stages of the SEND / AP Green Paper was presented.

The Forum noted the report, and the following comments were received:

- There was no evidence to support increasing the needs to AP schools.
- The Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS) programme had proven successful – it had linked special schools with mainstream schools and helped AP schools further develop services. BOSS was to be re-tendered from September 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments be noted.

23 ACADEMIES AND TRUST UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager – Schools Finance Team, on the latest number of academies and pupils in academies, and academy trusts. The Forum was guided through the report. It was highlighted that one school had become an academy school since the last report – 51.8% of Lincolnshire schools (72.4% of FTE pupils) were now academies.

RESOLVED:

That the report noted.

24 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM - WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the work programme presented be received.

8
LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
6 OCTOBER 2022

25 FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED:

That the following meeting dates be agreed

- Thursday 19 January 2023, 1pm
- Thursday 20 April 2023, 1pm
- Thursday 29 June 2023, 1pm
- Thursday 5 October 2023, 1pm

The meeting closed at 2.36 pm