

**LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM  
 24 APRIL 2013**

**PRESENT: TERL BRYANT (CHAIRMAN)**

David Bennett (Governor, Horncastle Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School), Graham Burks (Headteacher, Kesteven & Grantham Girls' School), Jonathan Maddox (Headteacher, Bourne Grammar School), Jeremy Newnham (Headteacher, Caistor Yarborough), Jennifer Wheeldon (Headteacher, Ellison Boulters Primary, Scothern), Vicky Cook (Headteacher, Welbourn Church of England school), Chris Rolph (Headteacher, Monks' Dyke Tennyson College), Michael Follows MBE (Governor, Boston John Fielding Community Special school), Bridget Robson (Headteacher, Lincoln The Fortuna Primary School), Scott Healy (on behalf of Ellenor Beighton (Headteacher, De Aston, Market Rasen)), Roger Hewins (Governor, Corringham Church of England Primary School) and Joanne Noble (Headteacher, Gainsborough Nursery School).

**In attendance:-**

David Morgan, NASUWT  
 Ken Rustidge (National Executive Member & Divisional Secretary of Lincolnshire N.U.T)

**Officers in attendance:-**

Children's Directorate – Debbie Barnes (Executive Director of Children's Services) and Meredith Teasdale (Assistant Director of Children's Services)  
 Resources Directorate (Children's & Specialist Services) – Tony Warnock (Head of Finance) and Mark Popplewell (Assistant Head of Finance)  
 Performance and Governance Directorate

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from John Beaven (Headteacher, Scampton Pollyplatt Community Primary School), John Beswick (Governor, Stickney Church of England Primary School), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The Kings, Grantham), Roger Hale (Headteacher, Caistor Grammar School), Simon Hardy (Faith Groups), Julie Marshall (representative of the Private, Voluntary and Independent Early Years Providers), Patricia Ruff (Headteacher, Dunholme St Chad's Primary School), Richard Thomson (Headteacher, Rauceby Primary School), Ian Wilkinson (Headteacher, Deeping St James Primary School) and Ellenor Beighton (Headteacher, De Aston, Market Rasen).

An apology for absence was also received from Councillor Mrs Patricia A Bradwell (Executive Councillor for Children's Services).

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2013**

The minutes stated an update report would be presented to this meeting in relation to minute number 3 (Energy and Sustainability Update). However, due to the unavailability of the relevant officer for this item, a written update had been included within the Information Pack. It was understood that further information was available and problems encountered with the supply of relevant equipment had been resolved. This item would be added to the work programme for the next meeting for a further update.

Minute number 4 (School and Early Years Finance Regulations), suggested that Government's next consultation regarding school funding reforms might be received in May and have a 12 week consultation period. The document was, however, published in February with a five week consultation period. Tony Warnock offered to bring the Government's proposals for further reform to the next meeting, if they had been received.

Meredith Teasdale suggested that the first sentence of bullet point number 3 in minute number 5 (School Funding Arrangements 2013/14) be refined. It was clear that School's Forum *decide* budgets but it may have been helpful to clarify *which* budgets. Tony Warnock confirmed that officers were comfortable with the minutes but wanted to reassure members that what had been decided at the meeting in January was correct and appropriate.

The Forum had requested that the Schools' Pension Fund be added to the agenda for this meeting. Tony Warnock confirmed that he had emailed Forum members, to ask what particular issues they would like to incorporate into that session. Only three responses had been received and all indicated that those members were content with the information already received. It was, therefore, decided to remove this item from the agenda.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.
2. That Energy and Sustainability be added to the Work Programme for consideration at the next meeting.

**3 SECTION 251 BUDGET STATEMENT 2013/14**

Tony Warnock presented the report which provided the Schools Forum with a copy of the Section 251 budget statement for the 2013/14 financial year. He explained that the Department for Education (DfE) had altered the format of the statement in light of its school funding reforms. It was agreed that representations would be made to DfE on behalf of the Schools Forum, to help improve the format.

Mark Popplewell noted key areas for members' consideration and explained aspects of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in detail. The DSG was £481m in totality.

Post 16 children with learning difficulties and disabilities were now included in the statement. This group had previously been managed by the EFA but a decision had been made that the EFA would delegate the money to the local authority to manage.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- A number of former lines within the s251 statement had been combined. Members were reassured that many of the underlying budgets had not changed but the presentation of them had.
- Confirmation was received that no funding had been taken from other budgets to fund the Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities budget.
- Concern was expressed about the percentage of the overall schools budget that was allocated to SEN funding. Officers confirmed that these budgets were similar to previous years and that a report on SEN arrangements was due to be presented to the next meeting.
- Tony Warnock explained that the DfE had recently published some analysis of how local authorities planned to fund their schools in 2013/14, following introduction of the funding reforms. Lincolnshire continued to receive less DSG funding than most local authorities, but the way that it devolves funding to schools is very similar to most other local authorities. An analysis would be brought to the meeting in June as this should assist Schools Forum members.
- It was agreed that the new section 251 format published by the DfE was difficult to follow. Reassurance was given that the DSG funding had stayed the same in cash terms, and that central budgets had not changed significantly, other than for those agreed at the January meeting of the Forum. It was acknowledged that despite receiving relatively low DSG funding and having a low council tax base, a large amount of the local authority's funding was spent on school transport, thereby presenting it with some major challenges.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted;
2. That representations be made to the DfE regarding the format of s251;
3. That the percentage of the DSG distributed for SEN be monitored.

#### 4 ARRANGEMENTS FOR EARLY YEARS PROVISION

Tony Warnock presented the report which provided the Schools Forum with information regarding arrangements for early years provision in 2013/14.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- The budget noted for 2013/14 was £23,673,669 but this was different to that shown on the s251 spreadsheet. Although this appeared to be a discrepancy, it was confirmed that the difference was to fund the Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes.
- Although not confirmed, it was thought that the duty to undertake quality assessments and provider training would be removed from local authorities.

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RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

**5**      FREE SCHOOL MEAL UPTAKE

Tony Warnock presented the report which updated Schools Forum members on the actions taken as a result of communications from the DfE regarding the uptake rates of Free School Meals (FSM).

The report detailed work undertaken to address the issues raised within the DfE report, although it was felt that the figures quoted in the DfE's report for Lincolnshire were inaccurate.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- Localised data to assist in identifying those families would benefit from FSM had been requested from the DfE but was not forthcoming.
- It was confirmed that once a child had been provided with FSM, the funding would continue for six years even if the child was no longer eligible during that period.
- The Child Poverty Strategy and its partnership working, also helped to identify vulnerable families.
- School Forum members felt it would be more attractive to families if the term "Free School Meals" was not used. The Pupil Premium was now the main financial support available. Some families were reluctant to accept FSM due to the stigma previously attached to this and it was felt that by promoting the Pupil Premium and all of the benefits to the schools, it would result in a higher uptake.
- Despite the agencies involved, information sharing continued to be a major issue. The local authority and schools need to work in partnership to tackle this issue.

It was agreed that urgent action was required but that this would have to be joint working between schools and the local authority and would have to promote best practice.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the promotion of the pupil premium for the child's benefit be actively pursued by officers working with schools and third parties.

6     ACADEMIES UPDATE

Tony Warnock presented the report which provided information on the latest number of pupils in academies on 1 April 2013 (based on the January 2013 census data). Although the table provided on page 26 of the papers was similar to that previously received, an additional row showing figures in special schools had been added.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- Figures shown for TLC and Solutions 4 were real pupils rather than phantom places.
- Reassurance was given that funding approved by the Schools Forum in January 2012 for small school collaborations was having a positive impact. A report in respect of school collaborations, expected to be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in September 2013, would include funding information.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7     WORK PROGRAMME

No changes were made to the Work Programme. It was noted that the following items be added to the Work Programme for the June meeting:-

1. Energy and Sustainability Update – Doug Robinson
2. SEN Outreach – the Schools Forum had agreed to set aside two years' funding for special schools' outreach support for mainstream schools, but this was scheduled to end in July 2013. An update on the future of this programme was requested.
3. Open Hive – this was a virtual learning platform for all schools. It was reported that there were no further DSG implications expected at this stage. Training was funding by DSG. It was thought that this was non DSG funded but Debbie Barnes, Executive Director for Children's Services, agreed to clarify. An update was requested to help assess the value for money of this project.

It was also agreed to add "Commissioning Strategy" to the Work Programme for a future meeting. Special Schools would need to help lead on the development of a strategy for special schools, but the local authority could provide a broader strategy on commissioning.

RESOLVED

That the work programme and all changes therein be noted.

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8 INFORMATION PACK (SEPARATE FROM THE AGENDA)

RESOLVED

That the items on the Information Pack be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.57 pm