



**LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
7 OCTOBER 2015**

PRESENT: MARK ANDERSON (CHAIRMAN)

Joanne Noble (Headteacher, Gainsborough Nursery 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), Roger Hale (Head Teacher, Caistor Grammar School), Jeremy Newnham (Head Teacher, Caistor Yarborough Academy), James Storr (Governor, The Deepings School), Helen Hilton (Head Teacher, Little Gonerby Church of England Infant School), Jerry Tucker (Head Teacher, The Acorn Free School, Lincoln), Bridget Starling (Business Manager, Church of England, Diocesan Education Centre), Helen Stokes (Branch Secretary, UNISON) and Georgie Brock (Manager, Mulberry Bush Nursery, Uffington),

Also in attendance:

David Morgan attended the meeting as an observer

Officers in attendance:-

Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Debbie Barnes (Executive Director of Children's Services), Elizabeth Bowes (Team Leader, Schools Finance Team), Mark Popplewell (Assistant Head of Finance Children's & Specialist Services), Heather Sandy (Chief Commissioning Officer for Learning), Sarah Grundy (Historic Environment Officer), Tony Warnock (Operations and Financial Advice Manager) and David Marshman (Education & Outreach Officer – Heritage Lincolnshire)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Mark Anderson be elected as the Chairman of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum for 2015/16.

MARK ANDERSON IN THE CHAIR

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

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That Geraldine Willders be elected Vice-Chairman of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum for the year 2015/16.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Due to the number of new members present at the meeting the Chairman invited all present to introduce themselves to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Ron Hall (Interim Head Teacher of Lincolnshire Teaching and Learning Centre), Amanda Mosek (Further Education/Post 16 Sector), Lea Mason (Executive Head Teacher, Lincolnshire Wolds Federation, Louth), Patricia Ruff (Head Teacher, Dunholme St Chads Church of England Primary School) and Nigel Sisley (Governor, St Francis Community Special School, Lincoln).

4 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

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

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2015

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Lincolnshire Schools Forum meeting held on 22 April 2015 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6 SCHOOLS' FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised the Forum that elections had been held during August and September 2015. The vacancy situation following the election was as follows:-

- Primary School Governor – 1 vacancy;
- Secondary School Head Teacher - 1 vacancy; and
- Primary Academy Governor – 1 vacancy.

The Forum were also advised that two further resignations as a result of extra work commitments had been received from Bridget Robson (Head Teacher, Fortuna Primary School, Lincoln) and Jonathan Maddox (Head Teacher at Bourne Grammar School). The resignations had generated the following further two vacancies:

- Special School Head Teacher – 1 vacancy; and
- Secondary Academy Head Teacher – 1 vacancy.

It was reported that at present there was no intention to conduct a further election.

**7 SCHOOLS' BLOCK FUNDING FORMULAE 2015/16: ANALYSIS OF
LOCAL AUTHORITIES' SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FORMULAE**

Consideration was given to a report from Tony Warnock (Operations and Financial Advice Manager), which shared with the Forum the Department for Education's (DfE's) analysis of Local Authorities' (LA) school funding formulae for 2015/16. The purpose of the report was for the Forum to see how Lincolnshire's funding of mainstream schools compared to other LA's.

The Operations and Financial Officer guided the Forum through the report making particular reference to:

- The delay of the national fair funding formula until at least 2016/17;
- Appendix 1 to the report, which provided the LA's views of the DfE's latest analysis of LA's local funding formulae. It was highlighted that overall, the level of funding available through the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) had materially remained unchanged, and Lincolnshire's relative position had changed very little too. Details relating to the issues affecting Lincolnshire were shown on page 18 of the report in points 1 – 6;
- It was highlighted that it would be inappropriate for any LA to use the DfE's analysis to seek to gravitate towards the LA average, as each LA had different needs and these should be reflected in the funding formulae. Two areas for closer consideration and debate which might lead to a change in the local funding arrangements related to the amounts of funding distributed through the low prior attainment factor; and English as an additional language factor for primary schools; and
- The Forum noted that a letter had been sent to all schools in the County to support the F40 Group to petition members of Parliament regarding the introduction of a National Fair Funding Formula.

During discussion, the following points were highlighted:-

- Whether the LA was holding any monies back. The Forum was advised that Lincolnshire was a high delegating authority, as evidenced by the Section 251 benchmarking report which described Lincolnshire's planned spending. It was highlighted that a later report on the agenda regarding de-delegation described how the LA had distributed funding previously held centrally to schools. It was noted that a substantial contingency budget used to be held back for in-year adjustments, but that was now included in the school budgets. The Forum was advised that a report relating to Section 251 benchmarking would be presented to the 13 January 2016 meeting, as the information had not yet been published in time for this meeting; and
- It was noted that the LA was one of 40 lowest funded authorities. It was highlighted that 89% of the primary and secondary schools' funding was distributed through pupil-led factors. That was the same as the national average.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

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The Forum gave consideration to a report from Tony Warnock, Operations and Financial Advice Manager, which provided information regarding Lincolnshire's maintained schools' carry forwards as at 31 March 2015.

Elizabeth Bowes, Team Leader – Schools Finance Team, guided the Forum through the report and Appendix 1, which provided carry forward information at 31 March 2015. The Team Leader – Schools Finance Team responded to points raised which included the following:-

- Whether any consideration had been made to increase the percentage carried forward for secondary schools, to equal that of primary schools. The Forum was advised that no representation had ever been made from secondary schools on this. If a school was to make a representation, then the request would be looked at. Confirmation was given that representation had been made from the nursery sector in the past, which the LA had considered;
- It was highlighted that there had been a reduction in the number of schools in deficit. At the end of 2014/15 the number had been 5 representing a reduction of 4 on the previous year. The LA always worked with schools with an overspend, to ensure that appropriate systems were put in place, and to ensure that the deficit was recovered in a relatively short period;
- Some members expressed their concerns with regard to Agresso and the fact that it was very difficult for schools to operate prudently when it was difficult to obtain figures from the system. Some members felt that the failings of the system prevented effective governor monitoring of the budget position, making it challenging for them and Governing Bodies to fulfil their roles. Areas highlighted were payroll issues and accounts information. Reassurance was given that work was on going with the contractor Serco; although it was noted that the position was not acceptable and was being addressed at the highest level possible within the Local Authority. The Operations and Financial Advice Manager invited any member of the Forum from a maintained school with a problem with the Agresso system to stay behind after the meeting for further advice. The Forum noted further that the Value for Money Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee were currently looking into the situation with Serco and that with the help of the Council's finance staff the system would be working correctly in the very near future; and
- That secondary schools were losing grounds on primary schools. The Forum was advised that the percentage for each sector carried forward varied, and within sectors some schools' carry forwards were high, and some were low. It was felt that overall; carry forward levels in each sector were prudent.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9 SCHOOLS' FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD

Consideration was given to a report from Tony Warnock, Operations and Financial Advice Manager, which provide the Forum with an update on the Schools Financial

Value Standard (SFVS). It was noted that as in previous years, the Department for Education (DfE) had launched the SFVS after the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) had been withdrawn by the Secretary of State in November 2010.

Elizabeth Bowes, Team Leader – Schools Finance Team, guided the Forum through the report, making particular reference to the following:-

- That the SFVS was mandatory and was intended to assist maintained schools to manage their finances and to give assurance that some secure financial management was in place. LA's were expected to audit a school or issue a notice of concern when the SFVS was not completed. Maintained schools were required to complete the SFVS by 31 March each year, full details of the LA's submission to the DfE was detailed on page 38 of the report presented;
- It was highlighted that 12 schools had not submitted their returns and had been exempted as they were currently in the process of converting to an academy. Discounting those, the return had shown that 17 primary schools and one secondary school had failed to submit the completed return by the due date. The LA's Finance Team were in contact with the said schools, and at the time of writing the report; a total of 10 of the primary schools still had to submit their returns; and
- It was reported that the SFVS returns provided the LA with very little information on which to base sound reliable judgements of the effectiveness of school financial management. The LA would therefore not be placing significant reliance on those that had been submitted. The Forum were advised that since April 2015, the LA's Finance Team had been offering schools the opportunity to purchase an enhanced service to help them strengthened their financial management practices. Many schools had taken up this offer.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10 DE-DELEGATION OF MAINTAINED PRIMARY SCHOOLS BUDGETS
2016/17 AND 2017/18

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Tony Warnock, Operations and Financial Advice Manager, which sought the maintained primary school representatives' approval to the Local Authority's (LA) proposals for the de-delegation of certain budgets in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

In guiding the Forum through the report presented, Mark Popplewell, Assistant Head of Finance – Children's and Specialist Services made reference to the following:-

- The background behind the radical reforms to school funding arrangements;
- For 2015/16 maintained primary schools had agreed to de-delegate funding for:-
Contingency, i.e. termination of employment costs for schools in financial difficulty; and exceptional unforeseen costs; and

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Equality for minority communities.

It was highlighted that no funds had been de-delegated for maintained secondary schools;

- The matters agreed in 2013/14 with regard to de-delegated budgets, details were shown on page 42 of the report presented;
- Proposals for 2016/17 and 2017/18, the report highlighted that it was proposed that the charges for 2016/17 would remain as those previously agreed and that for 2017/18, the charges would be set at:-

Contingency £26.64 per pupil

Ethnic Minority and Traveller education Team £5.44 per pupil

This would then finance:-

Termination of Employment costs £0.250m

Interim head teachers £0.292m

Exceptional unforeseen costs £0.380m

Equality for minority communities £0.188m

It was noted that the increase in the proposed charge for Contingency was due to the fact that the £1.080m underspend at 31 March 2015 would have been fully utilised and would be no longer available to subsidise future charges;

- Appendix 1 provided the Forum with details of the current service provision; and
- The Forum noted that the outcomes from the decision made by the maintained primary representatives on the Schools Forum would be reflected in maintained primary schools' future budgets.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- The level needed for 2017/18, the Forum were advised that this would be kept under review and any changes would be notified to the Forum;
- Increase in the Contingency per pupil figure. It was highlighted that the 2015/16 reduction figure was only temporary; and
- Maintained schools representatives supported the proposals presented.

RESOLVED

That support was given by the maintained primary school representatives to the proposal for de-delegation of the budgets for the period 2016/17 and 2017/18, as detailed below:-

Proposals for 2016/17 and 2017/18

That the charges for 2016/17 would remain as those previously agreed in the previous year as set out in the report presented; and that the charges for 2017/18 would be set at:-

Contingency £26.64 per pupil

Ethnic Minority and Traveller education Team £5.44 per pupil

This would then finance:

Termination of Employment costs £0.250m
Interim headteachers £0.292m
Exceptional unforeseen costs £0.380m
Equality for minority communities £0.188m.

11 REVISED SCHOOLS' BUDGET 2015/16

Consideration was given to a report from Tony Warnock, Operations and Financial Advice Manager, which notified the Forum of the revised Schools Budget for 2015/16; and sought support for the proposed use of the underspending from 2014/15.

In guiding the Forum through the report presented, Mark Popplewell, Assistant Head of Finance – Children's and Specialist Services made reference to the following:-

- That the underspend carried forward as at 31/3/15 was £10.566m. This figure represented 2.15% of the £492.049m 2015/16 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), and reflected a one-off allocation of £5m of the 2013/14 DSG underspend to all schools; a one-off protection of £0.598m for schools as a result of changes made to Band 6 to 8 statements; and net underspendings of £2.289m on budgets held centrally within the DSG. Full details were contained within Appendix 1 to the report presented;
- It was highlighted that a thorough review of commitments had taken place and prudent estimates had been made, which totalled £4.810m. Details of which were contained within Appendix 2 to the report presented;
- Proposals for use of the uncommitted sum of £5.756m, it was reported that the LA proposed that the above said sum was not committed, but was held in reserves as this was considered prudent; and reasons for the action were detailed on page 54 of the report in points (a) to (g).
The Forum were advised that the uncommitted sum only represented 1.1% of the DSG and was considerably lower than the average carried forward by maintained schools and, probably, academies; and
- The Forum was advised that the views of the Schools Forum would be reported to the Children's Services Departmental Management Team (DMT) and the Executive Councillor with responsibility for Children's Services before final decisions were made.

Discussion ensued, from which the following points were raised:-

- Some concern was expressed by some members as to whether the uncommitted sum should be distributed to schools, as schools were struggling and more money should be pushed out to them, if it was available. Clarification was given that it was not just the schools' money and the LA thought it prudent for the reasons given in the report to put the uncommitted sum in to reserves, because of future pressures and challenges on the horizon. It was highlighted that in the previous year £5m had been given out; pressures were highlighted relating to SEND reforms and exclusions;

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- With regard to the committed sum of £1.524m to energy saving initiatives in schools, some members felt that this money could be better spent, as the Forum had received little evidence as to the benefits of this initiative; and
- Some members extended their full support to the recommendations as detailed in the report presented; the money should be left in the centre to help underperforming children, as and when required.

All but two members present supported the proposals as detailed in the report presented.

RESOLVED

- That report presented be noted.
- That support be given to the LA's proposals for use of the uncommitted sum, as outlined in paragraph 8 above.
- That the Local Authority review commitments in relation to energy savings initiatives.

12 SCHOOLS' REVENUE FUNDING 2016/17

Consideration was given to a report from Tony Warnock, the Operations and Financial Advice Manager, which advised the Forum of the government's plans for school revenue funding for 2016/17.

In guiding the Forum through the report particular reference was made to:-

- The school funding announcements for 2016/17, these were detailed on page 60, points 1 – 9 of the report presented;
- The Operational guide, members were advised of the website address which detailed on page 60 of the report. It was reported that the pre-16 minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for mainstream schools would continue and would be set at minus 1.5% per pupil in 2016/17. It was noted that the LA had no plans for any major changes to the local funding formulae for 2016/17. However, a £1.3m reduction to the primary and secondary schools age weighted pupil unit (awpu) funding might be necessary in 2016/17 to finance a behavioural outreach support service. It was noted further that this had received support from the Forum at its April 2015 meeting;
- It was reported that officers were currently reviewing the DfE's operational guide to ensure that the LA was compliant; and that any significant changes would be reported to the 13 January 2016 meeting; and
- The Forum was advised that the Outreach contract was currently out to the market. The results of which would be announced in due course.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

13 PREHISTORY ON-LINE LEARNING RESOURCES FOR LINCOLNSHIRE

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Sarah Grundy, Historic Environment Officer, which advised the Forum of the intention to produce on-line prehistory learning resources specifically focussed on Lincolnshire, and to support a request for funding from the LEA to assist with their development.

The Historic Environment Officer and Ian Marsham, Education and Outreach Officer – Heritage Lincolnshire guided the Forum through the report.

It was reported that the idea for the project had been as a result of requests at Heritage Lincolnshire from teachers seeking advice and assistance teaching the new 'Stone Age to Iron Age' element of the National Curriculum. Many teachers had informally commented on how this particular period was hard to find resources to engage children.

Following a survey to Lincolnshire Schools (the results of which were detailed at Appendix A) the project team were going to commission a professional archaeological illustrator to create some high resolution reconstruction images for use on smart boards. It was also envisaged that a local story-teller would create some story-telling activities for the classroom which would be included in the resources. Overall, it was reported that the project would cost a maximum amount of £16,000 and that the project team would be seeking funding from external bodies, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Forum was advised that it was hoped to have the project completed by the end of the financial year 2016/17.

RESOLVED

That support be given in principle to the development of on-line prehistory resources.

14 DEVOLUTION - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The Executive Director of Children's Services advised the Forum that a Bid for Greater Lincolnshire had been submitted. (A copy of the proposal was detailed on pages 83 - 94 of the report presented).

The guiding principle of the Expression of Interest being the risks of commissioning and delivery are devolved locally so that they are efficiently managed. This would then give Lincolnshire more opportunities for local decision making.

RESOLVED

That the verbal update be noted.

15 ACADEMIES UPDATE

10

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Consideration was given to a report from John O'Connor, Children's Services Manager – Education Support, which provided the Forum with the latest position regarding the number of Academies and pupils in Academies.

It was reported that since the last meeting there had been five further conversions to Academy status. Four of the conversions had involved special schools, which represented an increase of 19%. The special schools that converted were Gainsborough Aegir Community School, Gainsborough Warren Wood Community School, Horncastle St Lawrence Schools and Louth St Bernard's School. Louth King Edward VI Grammar School had also converted to secondary academy status and Gainsborough Castle Wood had opened a new primary academy. The total rise in the number of Lincolnshire academies was six (1.7%) educating 1323 (1.3%) full time equivalent pupils.

Details of the projected six month status of all Lincolnshire schools was detailed on page 97 of the report presented.

It was noted that funding for the Alternative Provision Free School was now top sliced from the LA's DSG but it was not clear how, overall, the Free School was funded.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a report on the funding of the Alternative Provision Free School be presented to a future meeting of the Forum.

16 FUTURE MEETING DATES

The Forum gave consideration to the dates proposed and agreed:

RESOLVED

1. That Wednesday 13 January 2016 meeting should commence at 1.00pm;
2. That the 20 April 2016 date should be changed, and that an email should be sent out to all Schools Forum members once a new date and time is agreed; and
3. That the 29 June 2016 meeting should commence at 1.00pm.

17 INFORMATION PACK

RESOLVED

That the contents of the information pack be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.25 pm