

**LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
10 OCTOBER 2019**

PRESENT:

Joanne Noble (Headteacher, Gainsborough Nursery School), Allison Sunley (Governor, Great Steeping Primary School), Martin Kyle (Head Teacher, St Faith and St Martin's Junior School), Ian Randall (Head Teacher, Reepham Church of England Primary School), Catherine Stratton (Head Teacher, Saxilby Church of England Primary School), Rachel Barrett FCCA (Governor, North Kesteven Academy), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The King's School, Grantham), Gavin Booth (Head Teacher, Boston St Thomas' C E Primary School), Katie Grivil (Head Teacher, Kirkby la Thorpe Church of England Primary Academy), Simon Morley (Head Teacher, Boston West Academy), James Ellis (Head Teacher, Grantham Additional Needs Fellowship), Lynsey Norris, Martin Shelton (College Principal, Linkage Community Trust), Helen Stokes (Branch Secretary, UNISON) and Julia Merivale (Manager, Trinity Day Nursery).

Andy Watts (Lincolnshire NEU) attended the meeting as an observer

Officers in attendance:-

Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Heather Sandy (Interim Director of Education), Martin Smith (Interim Assistant Director of Education) and Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance (Children's Services)).

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Michele Anderson (Head Teacher, Spalding High School), Josh Greaves (Alternative Provision Academy), Ian Widdows (Head Teacher, Giles Academy, Old Leake) and Mark Woods (Chief Executive Officer, ~~Spalding High School~~ Stamford Welland Academy).

It was noted that David Whittaker (Alternative Provision Academy) had substituted for Josh Greaves (Alternative Provision Academy) for this meeting only.

14 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

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

**15 MINUTES OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM MEETING HELD
ON 20 JUNE 2019**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum meeting held of 20 June 2019 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

On behalf of the Forum, the Chairman extended thanks to former Secondary Academy Headteacher representatives David Scott and Caroline Saxelby for their contribution and support to the Forum.

The Forum was advised that an election to fill current vacancies on the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum would be commencing on Friday 11 October 2019; and that all relevant information would be made available via Schools News.

The Forum noted that the current vacancies were:

- One Primary Maintained Governor Representative;
- Two Secondary Academy Headteacher Representatives;
- Two Primary Academy Governor Representatives; and
- One Special Academy Governor representative.

17 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS - UPDATE FOR 2020/21

The Forum gave consideration 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 school services, high needs and early years for 2020/21.

The Forum noted that this was the second year of the implementation of the government's National Funding Formula (2019/20). The Forum noted further that Lincolnshire had replicated the National Funding Formula along with the government's agreed funding floors and ceilings approach to enable incremental steps for schools to move towards the hard formula.

It was highlighted that the Operational Guidance published by the (DfE) on 21 December 2018, had confirmed the 'soft' approach that was due to finish at the end of 2019/20 was to be extended into 2020/21, whereby Local Authorities (LAs) would be continuing to determine local formulas for 2020/21.

It was highlighted that on 30 August 2019, the Prime Minister had announced an investment of over £14bn in primary and secondary education between 2020/21 and 2022/23. Details of the funding package for schools were briefly explained on page 16 of the report, and a link to the Schools Revenue Funding 2020/21 Operational Guide published on 13 September 2019 was provided for the members of the Forum to access.

Bullet points on pages 16 to 18 of the report confirmed published information within the Schools block; High Needs block; Central School Services; Early Years block; Teachers' Pay Grant; and Teachers' Pension Grant.

The Forum was advised of the following information relating to the published information with the Schools block:

- That the DfE were proposing to make the minimum per pupil funding levels a mandatory factor in LAs local formula; and that a consultation had been launched concerning this proposal;
- The minimum per pupil funding level were set at £3,750 for primary schools (currently £3,500) and £5,000 for secondary schools (currently £4,800). It was noted that the primary level was planned to rise to £4,000 in 2021/22;
- All pupil-led factors would increase by 4%; and that the exceptions to this included the free school meals factors, which would increase by the rate of inflation; and premises funding, which would continue to be allocated to LAs on the basis of actual spend in 2019/20;
- That there would be no gains ceiling cap in 2020/21; and that all schools would attract at least their full allocations under the formula. It was noted that a LA would still be able to use a cap in their local formula;
- That the LA had the flexibility to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee between +0.5% and 1.84%;
- That the funding floor to protect per pupil funding in real terms would be at 1.84%;
- The new formulaic approach would be applied to the mobility factor from 2020/21; and that schools would only trigger funding if the proportion of mobile children exceeded 6% of the schools' pupil numbers;
- Through the LA local formula, it had been agreed that the LA would undertake a rates funding adjustment to ensure that schools were funded the actual rates cost they incur. It was agreed that the LA would fund this from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves for 2018/19 and 2019/20; and
- That LAs would continue to have the ability to transfer up to 0.5% of their Schools block to other blocks of the DSG subject to Schools Forum approval.

It was noted that within the published information outlined, the High Needs block funding floor would be set at 8% to enable each LA to plan for an increase of at least that percentage. It was highlighted that officers were seeking further clarification concerning the impact for Lincolnshire, and were waiting for confirmation of funding allocations.

It was noted further that the published information outlined within the Central School Services block, for 2020/21 was yet to be confirmed. It was also highlighted that the historic commitments category of funding would start to reduce from 2020/21; and therefore without confirmation of funding allocations, it was unclear of what impact this would have on Lincolnshire's historic commitments for schools.

It was reported that the Chancellor had announced on 4 September 2019, that early years funding would be increased by £66 million to increase the hourly rate paid to childcare providers through the government's early year's entitlement.

The Forum was advised that the Teachers' Pay Grant would continue to be paid separately from the National Funding Formula in 2020/21; and that rates per pupil

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were yet to be confirmed for 2020/21. The Forum was advised further that the teachers' pension employer contributions grant would continue to be funded through a separate grant over the next three years.

The Forum noted that the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had launched a consultation on 10 September 2019, seeking views on how LAs should implement the National Funding Formula mandatory minimum per pupil funding levels in local funding formulas. The Forum was assured that the LA would be providing a comprehensive response to the consultation.

It was highlighted that an increasing number of LAs were incurring a deficit on their overall (DSG), largely due to overspends on their Higher Needs block. The Forum noted that from 2019/20 the ESFA had tightened up the rules under which LAs had to explain their plans for bringing the DSG back into balance. The Forum noted further that where a LA's cumulative DSG deficit was more than 1% of its overall DSG at the end of the financial year, the LA would be required to produce a report signed by the Chief Finance Officer detailing the recovery plan.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that the funding announcements for Lincolnshire were positive. It was however noted that there was still great uncertainty at national level, but it was hoped that greater clarity would be provided in the coming months.

The Forum was reminded that at the meeting on 11 December 2017, the Forum had approved that subject to affordability, the LA would replicate the NFF for Lincolnshire schools.

Details of the next steps required were shown on page 19 of the report.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following points:-

- Ceiling Cap – It was highlighted that there would be no gains ceiling cap in 2020/21 and that this was a positive outcome for gaining LAs like Lincolnshire. It was highlighted that the LA must ensure affordability of the Schools block when replicating the National Funding Formula. The main reason that could cause affordability issues was the use of lagged data when funding the Schools block compared to the National Funding Formula, which used the latest October census information. Reassurance was given that LA officers would explore all opportunities if affordability became an issue to minimise the impact amongst schools;
- The nursery school representative expressed concern that their hourly rate would not increase due to the supplementary funding nursery schools received. The Forum was advised that officers were continuing to seek clarification from the ESFA regarding the 'supplementary funding' for nursery schools post September 2020; and
- Some concern was expressed regarding the national uncertainty. The Forum was advised that at the moment the proposals were intentions; and that if implemented would be good news for Lincolnshire; however, there was a note of caution that things could be subject to change and that schools should be

following the guidance circulated by the DfE (via School News) concerning Brexit. Schools were also encouraged to sign up for Brexit News, and to undertake scenario plans for each potential outcome.

RESOLVED

That the National Funding Formula for Schools – Update 2020/21 presented be noted.

18 REVISED SCHOOLS BUDGET 2019/20

Consideration was given to a report from Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance, Children's Services, which advised the Schools' Forum of the revised Schools Budget for 2019/20; and sought support for the proposed use of the underspending from 2018/19.

The Forum were advised that the cumulative underspend carried forward at 31 March 2019 was £18.187m before accounting for existing commitments of £7.233m. Appendix A to the report provided explanations for major underspendings and overspendings on budgets in 2018/19 (included within the cumulative underspend), which accounted for the £6.082m underspend. The Forum noted that £1.533m of the underspend related to Lincolnshire's share of the £125m made available nationally by the DfE to respond to the growing high needs pressures. Appendix B provided the Forum with details of the 2018/19 commitments for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Forum noted further that a thorough review of commitments had taken place. The Forum were guided through Appendix A and B to the report presented.

It was reported that the Local Authority (LA) was proposing to capitalise £5.000m of the DSG underspend to support the implementation of Building Communities of Special Provision Strategy. It was noted that this strategy would transform SEND support for local children and young people. It was noted further that the strategy would bring major infrastructure improvements to Lincolnshire special school buildings to ensure they had the right facilities to meet all types of need including special schools having greater capacity to meet the increasing demands for places in Lincolnshire. The strategy would also ensure that an integrated system was created where by pupils attended their nearest school.

The Forum was also advised that the government had allocated funding to LAs through the special provision capital fund to invest to improve the quality and range of provision for children and young people with SEND aged 0-25. Lincolnshire's share of the government's £365m investment nationally between 2018/19 to 2020/21 was £3.929m.

The Forum noted that in the last round of government free school applications, Lincolnshire had been unsuccessful in its special free school application for Lincolnshire. It was noted further that to support the fulfilment of the strategy including Lincoln area place requirements, and to secure funding, the LA was seeking with Schools Forum support to utilise the DSG funding of £5.000m to contribute towards the major improvements to Lincolnshire special schools.

The proposal for use of the uncommitted sum was detailed in section 5 of the report. It was noted that the cumulative underspend (£18.187m) less existing commitments (£7.233m) and proposed developments (£5.000m) left £5.953m. The Forum noted that as previously mentioned there was likely to be other commitments that could arise during the year within the schools arena that the LA would be required to respond to.

The Forum noted that within the DSG blocks of the Schools block; Central Schools Services block; Early Years block; and High Needs block, there remained areas of financial risk for affordability purposes (particularly the level of High Needs block protection received compared to the National Funding Formula allocation), therefore a level of prudence was required to enable the LA time to respond to financial changes and cost rises.

In conclusion, the Forum noted that an increasing number of LAs were now incurring a deficit on their overall DSG account, largely because of overspends on their High Needs blocks. The Forum was advised that Lincolnshire was not currently in this position, however, expenditure was forecasted to grow; and as a result the position would be carefully and prudently managed. The Forum noted that the LA proposed that the remaining sum was not committed and held in reserves due to the anticipated growth in costs in the area of high needs and the much tighter financial environment expected going forward.

It was reported that for 2020/21 the LA was not proposing to move funding from the Schools block to an alternative block.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following points:-

- Whether there could be a reduction in the uncommitted sum. Officers confirmed they felt the carry forward appropriate, due to the demand led nature of the service (e.g. cost of out of county provision) and the growing trajectory of high needs costs. It was confirmed that during 2018/19, the LA had tried to create greater financial capacity in the High Needs block through Children's Services core budget; an example given was Healthy Minds which the LA had funded fully rather than match funded;
- Use of DSG for capital funded projects – The Forum was advised that final approval would be sought from the Secretary of State through a disapplication request to the Regulations to use the DSG for the capital purposes. It was noted that evidence would be provided on the importance of this invest to save project and the benefits that it would bring to secure greater outcomes for pupils, but also to enable high needs pressures to be managed;
- Free School Bid – The Forum was advised that the LA had been very disappointed of being unsuccessful in the last round of government free school applications, mainly due to other areas being able to demonstrate a greater need; as nationally other LAs were either at or nearing crisis point;
- The amount individual schools receive to meet the needs of young people requiring SEND. The Forum noted that as Lincolnshire had a high number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP); a review was being carried out to

identify whether, if an earlier point of intervention had been undertaken in the child's journey whether the outcome would have been different. It was highlighted that so far indications were that early intervention would have an impact. It was noted that the LA was committed in investing in more early intervention; and that working together would make the overall offer for Lincolnshire more resilient; and

- Nursery school funding – The Forum noted that funding for nursery schools remained cash flat and that there was no clear indication of future funding levels after September 2020. It was highlighted that there was lots of work to do as children attending nursery schools were from deprived areas and their needs were now increasing. An example given was that some two year old children coming into nursery school were unable to communicate. Officers advised that the issue of funding for nursery schools was on-going; and the LA was waiting for a national decision, however, the LA was continuing to work with the nursery school sector to promote joined up working and to consider optimum delivery models. Recognition was given that speech and language was a growing problem; and health visitors were being trained to help identify at their birth to two and half year checks; so that referrals could be made quicker.

RESOLVED

1. That the Revised Schools Budget for 2019/10 as presented be noted.
2. That the Forum voted to support the LAs proposed development to capitalise £5.000m of the DSG underspend to support the implementation of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy; and to support the LAs proposal to retain the remaining uncommitted sum of the DSG underspend as detailed in section 5 of the report presented.

19 DE-DELEGATION OF MAINTAINED PRIMARY SCHOOL BUDGETS 2020/21 AND 2021/22

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance, Children's Services, which sought approval from the maintained primary school representatives to the Local Authority's proposals for the de-delegation of certain budgets in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The Forum was advised of the background of the de-delegation arrangements, and the National Funding Formula implementation which still allowed the de-delegation arrangements for maintained schools to continue.

The Forum was reminded that for 2018/19, maintained primary schools had agreed to de-delegate funding for:

- Contingency – (termination of employment costs for schools in financial difficulty); and exceptional unforeseen costs; and
- Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Team.

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

The Forum were reminded that for 2019/20, the maintained primary school representatives had agreed at the June 2018 meeting the de-delegation services and budgets, and the final per pupil rates, had been determined using the October 2018 census, details of the current services were shown in Appendix A to the report.

The Forum was advised that for 2020/21 it was proposed that the existing charges would continue at the same per pupil rate as in 2019/20. The pupil numbers for October 2019 were planned to be lower in primary maintained schools, as a result of a small number of academy conversions, and officers agreed that for 2021/22 de-delegation budgets would be fixed to respond to the reduction in maintained primary schools.

It was highlighted further that the proposed primary maintained de-delegation budgets were termination of employment costs; interim head teacher support; primary maintained intervention fund, and ethnic minority and traveller education team.

It was highlighted that the Schools' Forum maintained primary schools were required to agree de-delegations on an annual basis, however, the LA would continue to seek agreement in principle from the Forum for 2020/21 also. It was highlighted further that the outcomes from the decisions made by maintained primary representatives on the Schools' Forum would be reflected in maintained primary schools' future budgets.

It was reported that the Forum would be informed of any LA changes to the support provided to Lincolnshire's most vulnerable maintained primary schools.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following points:-

- Whether the level of the remaining de-delegated balance of £0.211m was acceptable. Officers confirmed that this was an earmarked reserve for any de-delegation activities that exceeded budget requirements; due to the budgets being predominantly demand-led in nature. A question was asked whether any amounts could be used for school intervention beyond that currently provided. The Forum noted that the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership (LLP) benefitted from other monies; if however, there was a project that could demonstrate need then the LA could consider this proposal including the appropriate funding source. It was highlighted that any request would be managed in a planned and co-ordinated way. The Forum noted further that the de-delegation reserve was one-off monies.

RESOLVED

That the maintained primary school representatives of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum voted to approve the proposals for de-delegation of the budgets for the period 2020/21 and 2021/22 (in principle), as set out on page 34 of the report presented.

20 SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team, which provided an update on the latest publication by the Department for Education (DfE) of its revised guidance on the schemes for financing schools.

The report provided the Forum with background information relating to schemes for financing schools; and the role of the DfE in reviewing the scheme on an annual basis. A link for the latest guidance was provided for members of the Forum to access. It was highlighted that the Local Authority (LA) was required to publish a scheme for financing schools; and that any amendments to the scheme had to be consulted on with all maintained schools and then be approved by the Schools' Forum.

The Forum was advised that from a Lincolnshire's perspective, there were no significant amendments to the scheme. Details of the most relevant revisions from 1 April 2019 were outlined on pages 43 to 45 of the report presented. It was highlighted that the direct revisions by the DfE of the scheme became part of the scheme from the date of the direction; therefore in these instances maintained schools were not required to approve the scheme changes.

The Forum was advised that the LA would publish revisions to the scheme by November 2019 and that this information would be accessible from the link as shown on page 45 of the report.

The Forum was advised that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had launched two consultations: Financial Transparency in LA maintained schools and Minimum per Pupil Funding Levels. It was noted that officers were expecting the ESFA to make further amendments to the scheme, which the LA would be required to replicate in its local scheme following the outcomes of the said consultations.

RESOLVED

That the Scheme for Financing Schools report be noted.

21 ALTERNATIVE PROVISION ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report from Martin Smith, Interim Assistant Director – Education which provided the Schools' Forum with an overview of Lincolnshire's current alternative provision arrangements.

The Forum were reminded that to stem the rising number of permanent exclusions, the Lincolnshire Ladder of Intervention had been introduced; and the Schools' Forum had agreed to fund additional resource through the behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS) with commissioned Alternative Provision (AP) places also being made available to schools as a resource for them to access prior to permanent exclusion, should the BOSS intervention prove insufficient.

Details of the current pupil numbers were shown on page 48 of the report presented. It was highlighted that the 252 commissioned places that formed the Wellspring Academy Trust/Springwell Lincolnshire were now equally divided across four purpose-built free schools, three of which had opened during the summer. It was highlighted that current pupil numbers had highlighted a geographical challenge. The Forum noted that there was potential to resolve the geographical issue through the LA's second AP partner, Build a Future (BaF), which provided for KS4 and vocational pathway for disaffected adolescents. The Forum was advised that BaF currently operated out of West Ashby and Boston; and that the provider was actively seeking a third site in the Lincoln area, which if secured, would alleviate the geographical/transport challenges.

The Forum was advised that Springwell Lincolnshire and BaF enabled the LA to deliver its statutory duty to provide full-time education on the sixth day following a permanent exclusion. It was noted that both providers delivered the third step of the Ladder, and an extract from the Ladder: Step 3 was shown on page 49 of the report. It was highlighted that for the year 2018/19 an amendment had been introduced to the Ladder when the option of single-registered place into AP, via the ladder, was removed. It was highlighted further that this had been necessary to ensure that the LA processes were compliant with Ofsted's definition of off-rolling, as published in September 2018. A copy of the Ofsted's definition of 'off-rolling' was shown on page 50 of the report.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that the LAs AP arrangements had played a critical role in reducing permanent exclusion. It was highlighted that the primary sector had delivered a 62% decrease in permanent exclusion since 2015/16, against a national context which had seen the primary rate increase for the first time ever, and the rate for five year olds double since 2016/17. It was highlighted further that for the secondary sector, Lincolnshire was out-performing all of its statistical neighbours (0.18%).

The Forum was advised that Build a Future had been judged by Ofsted in March 2019 as being 'Good'. Details of the key strengths identified were shown on page 52 of the report, as were attainment headlines from BaF.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following issues:-

- Some concern was expressed to the number of secondary pupils excluded. A request was made for further information pertaining to fixed term exclusions. Officers confirmed that fixed term exclusions was a matter that would be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; and
- A further question was asked as to whether the LA was working with secondary schools that were excluding. The Forum was advised that the LA was and continued to work with secondary schools; and in some instances the LA referred schools to either Ofsted or the Regional Schools Commissioner where concerns were raised.

RESOLVED

That the Alternative Provision Arrangements report as presented be noted.

22 ACADEMIES AND TRUST UPDATE

The Head of Finance, Children's Services presented the Academies and Trust update report, which provided information on the latest number of academies, pupils in academies and academy trusts.

It was highlighted that since the effective date of the last report (1 May 2019) there had been three further academy conversions of primary schools, which meant that 37.0% (104) primary schools were now academies, which represented 46.9% (27,015) of primary pupils.

The Forum also noted that there had been one sponsored conversion of a secondary academy. The Forum noted that there were now 52 secondary academies (96.3%) with 43,789 (95.2%) of secondary pupils.

Information relating to the projected six month status of all Lincolnshire State Schools was provided on pages 56 to 57 of the report presented.

The report also provided a list of academy trusts that currently had the greatest number of academies in Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

That the Academies and Trust update be noted.

23 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM - WORK PROGRAMME

The Forum gave consideration to the work programme presented.

The Forum verbally agreed to operate paper free. Reassurance was given that a limited number of paper copies would still be available at the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be noted.

The meeting closed at 2.50 pm