

Schools' Members

John Beaven (Headteacher, Scampton Pollyplatt Community Primary), Ellenor Beighton (Headteacher, De Aston, Market Rasen), David Bennett (Governor, Horncastle Queen Elizabeth's Grammar), John Beswick (Governor, Stickney Church of England Primary), Teri Bryant (Governor, Stamford Queen Eleanor), Graham Burks (Headteacher, Kesteven & Grantham Girls'), Vicky Cook (Headteacher, Welbourn Church of England School) Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The Kings, Grantham), Claire Flavell (14 – 19 Partnerships), Michael Follows MBE (Governor, Boston John Fielding Community Special), Jane Grey (Bourne Grammar School); Richard Thomson (Headteacher, Rauceby Primary), Roger Hale (Headteacher – Caistor Grammar School), Simon Hardy (Faith Groups), Jeremy Newnham (Headteacher, Caistor Yarborough), Joanne Noble (Head Teacher, Gainsborough Nursery School), Chris Rolph (Headteacher, Monks' Dyke Tennyson College), Patricia Ruff (Headteacher, Dunholme St Chad's Primary), Nigel Ryan (Headteacher, Spalding Grammar), Jennifer Wheeldon (Headteacher, Ellison Boulton Primary, Scothern) and Ian Wilkinson (Headteacher, Deeping St James' Primary).

Officials

Children's Directorate – Debbie Barnes (Executive Director of Children's Services), Meredith Teasdale (Interim Assistant Director of Children's Services); Resources Directorate – Tony Warnock (Head of Finance – Children's & Specialist Services); Performance and Governance Directorate – Andrea Brown (Democratic Services Officer); Frances Bowen (Eco-Schools Resource Efficiency Officer – South Lincolnshire), Jonathan Parkin (Eco-Schools Resource Efficiency Officer – North Lincolnshire) and Vanessa O'Brien (Sustainability & Climate Change Project Assistant).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell (Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning), Bridget Robson, Head Teacher – Lincoln The Fortuna Primary) and Jonathan Maddox, Head Teacher – Bourne Grammar School, who was represented by Jane Grey.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2012

Under minute number 5 (School Funding Reform), the resolution referring to Question 20 was passed using the casting vote of the Chairman, despite not having the right to speak on that item. It was deemed important that the minutes be amended to reflect this.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 October 2012 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, with the above amendment noted.

3. ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

Frances Bowen introduced the report and gave a presentation to the Forum. The remit of the team was to deliver the Schools Collaboration on Resource Efficiency (SCoRE) Programme across Lincolnshire. In order to do this, the Total Facilities Management process was being rolled out to schools to improve asset registers thereby identifying schools who need to improve sustainability.

It was acknowledged that some schools, due to the nature of their build, heating systems, etc, may find it difficult to provide an accurate analysis of consumption and would therefore require additional support.

The project team were looking to work in geographical clusters and confirmed that all schools, including academies, would be included as the project was funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) underspending.

Progress had been made with the Automated Meter Reading system although access to the system for individual sites would attract further licensing fees. Once licensing fees had been purchased, monthly reports would be free thereafter. This fee would not be included within the £50k maintenance contract.

To ensure best practice, the PQQ process was being followed with the project currently out to tender. Further information regarding the process could be provided by officers if necessary.

The process was ready to launch but, in order to do so, 100% of schools were to have provided the relevant information to officers. Unfortunately, information from two schools was outstanding which had resulted in significant delays.

Officers were asked to ensure progress was made prior to the next meeting and that an update report be presented to the Forum which was to include details of live access for each school.

AGREED

1. That the report and presentation be noted.
2. That a progress report be presented at the meeting of the Forum scheduled for Wednesday 24th April 2013.

4. SCHOOL AND EARLY YEARS FINANCE REGULATIONS

Tony Warnock presented a report which set out the Early Years Finance Regulations, which was intended to provide Schools Forum Members with an understanding of the regulations prior to consideration of the next item on the agenda.

The following areas were highlighted as points to note:-

- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) will result in the 1.5% reduction in per pupil funding having to be implemented, whereas this was previously at the discretion of local authorities.
- Services relating to historic commitments could only be retained centrally if planned expenditure did not exceed that reported in the 2012/13 financial year.
- To ensure schools budgets were affordable within the total DSG there was a requirement to put a cap on the gains. A proforma submitted to the DfE in January 2013 suggested that the cap in Lincolnshire remain at the same level as that shown in the proforma submitted in October 2012, i.e. 5%. Some anomalies had arisen and contact had been made with the DfE for clarification. The Forum was reassured that these were minor issues for Lincolnshire and not issues for concern.

In response to a question regarding the review of these regulations and whether the arrival of a new Minister would result in a review of the block grant, Mr Warnock explained that work was underway with a small group of Local Authorities to discuss initial concerns. This would then be widened into a consultation with all Local Authorities. It was hoped that decisions would be made near to May 2013 which would give a twelve week consultation period.

Several schools in the county, including four special schools, have an element of Private Financial Initiative (PFI) within their budget to fund any deficit which may arise within the PFI budget. A grant from Central Government would help contribute to the scheme.

Significant funding into the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was expected from April 2013 to cover additional responsibilities for learning with learning difficulties and disabilities. Funding transferred to Local Authorities was based on historic spending and, although there was a high level of spending in Lincolnshire compared to neighbouring authorities, there was no disadvantage to the funding of schools as a result.

The Executive Director for Children's Services, Debbie Barnes, confirmed that there were three issues that the Local Authority would continue to lobby on, i.e. the funding rate per pupil, the size of the secondary block allocation and the inability to incentivise small school collaborations.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted and agreed.

5. SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS 2013/14

Tony Warnock presented a report which sought to update the Schools Forum on school funding arrangements for 2013/14 and to gain support for the Local Authority's proposals in relation to a number of centrally held budgets..

The following areas were highlighted as points to note:-

- A large amount of money was being transferred into the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from the Early Intervention Grant (EIG).
- The main changes proposed to the central DSG budgets were noted within Table 3, the first of which was in respect of Broadband. The reduction was due to significant savings from the new contract and further delegation (i.e. schools having to purchase services in relation to firewalls, etc, themselves).
- Schools Forum Regulations indicate that the Schools Forum must approve and decide the budgets. Should no agreement be reached, the DfE would adjudicate. All affected budgets were noted in Table 4. The precise budget requirements for items to be de-delegated were not known, with School Intervention being the only area of major change requiring consideration.

Cuts implemented as a result of the reduction in Children's Services budgets in years 1 and 2 of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) would provide schools with a view of how those impacts would affect the wraparound services for children and young people. The context of increasing need, complexity of need of families even before the welfare reforms take effect, would be considered.

Information regarding replacement of the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) was available in time to ensure that plans were put in places to react to these changes. This issue had been discussed at a regional meeting where it was agreed that for most Local Authorities this would be managed through a corporate reserve to remove the risk of affecting Children's Services budgets.

Until LCC agreed their budgets, the situation could not be confirmed, however the proposal was that stability within Children's Services was paramount over the next two years and so officers were hopeful that stability of funding would remain.

Approximately £100k was to come into Lincolnshire schools directly from the DfE to support schools in difficulty. Priority schools had been identified, 25 of which did not need LCC funding support but may benefit from this particular funding from the DfE.

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Clarification was received that CfBT had previously worked with schools in difficulty to develop an action plan for improvement, with the funding justified by the level of detail. It was noted that good and outstanding schools had the option to convert to academies, although at the present time the number of challenging schools supported by CfBT remained the same as many of those had chosen not to convert. Concerns of the Forum were acknowledged in respect of the contract with CfBT, however it was noted that the contract was in place until 2015 and could not be amended without incurring significant penalties. Additionally, the core contract for CfBT did not form part of the Schools Budget which members were being asked to consider.

The contract regarding Stamford Endowed Schools would be allowed to run until the contract end. The new scheme allowed for a phased reduction. This would allow those children currently within that school system to finish their education. The reduced amount of places purchased would lower the budget requirement significantly in future years. Previously the School's Forum were not required to approve the budget for this arrangement but this was now included as part of the new regulations. Unfortunately, due to the contractual commitment of the Local Authority, contractual penalties would be received should the School's Forum choose not to support the funding for the remaining period of the contract and payments then ceased.

The School's Forum expressed an appreciation of the difficulties being had in "crystal ball gazing" and recognised that officers were unfairly put under these pressures in unchartered waters. To this end the School's Forum supported the proposed actions which were based on current information. They also agreed to consider each budget line separately.

RESOLVED

1. Broadband Budget (£2.504m), as set out within Table 3 of Report Reference 5.0, was **APPROVED**.
2. Funding for significant pre-16 growth budget (£1.500m), as set out within Table 4 of Report Reference 5.0, was **APPROVED**.
3. Places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils (1.273m), as set out within Table 4 of Report Reference 5.0, was **APPROVED**.
4. Admissions (0.449m), as set out within Table 4 of Report Reference 5.0, was **APPROVED**.
5. Servicing of the Schools Forum (£0.020m), as set out within Table 4 of Report Reference 5.0, was **APPROVED**.
6. Carbon reduction Commitment (£0.630m), as set out within Table 4 of Report Reference 5.0, was **APPROVED**.
7. Central expenditure from revenue (CERA) (£5.146m), as set out in Table 4 of Report Reference 5.0 was **APPROVED**.

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8. Schools centrally funded termination of employment costs (£0.045m), as set out in Table 4 of Report Reference 5.0 was **APPROVED**

The representatives of the **maintained primary schools** were asked to approve the authority's proposals relating to the de-delegation of funding for the school intervention budget, including an increase of £200k to leave a budget of £600k.

RESOLVED

1. The proposal relating to the increase in funding for the school intervention budget, noted on page 7 of Report Reference 5.0 was **REFUSED**.
2. The retention of the existing budget was **APPROVED**.

6. INCREASING THE RATE OF PUPILS CLAIMING FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Tony Warnock presented a report which shared the findings of a recent DfE research report in to pupils who were not claiming free school meals. Its aim was to explore opportunities to increase the uptake across all schools and academies within Lincolnshire.

It was agreed that further work was required in this area due to the change in the definition of free school meals. A range of different actions were being investigated although it was reported that local authority pupils accessing free school meals had increased by approximately 1500.

Language and vocabulary used when explaining these incentives to parents was considered to be a potential reason for the lack of take up of free school meals. Additionally, the forms may appear too technical with little support available to assist parents in completing them.

The general feeling of the members was that the fee to buy back this provision was great and yet the increase in the number of pupils taking up free school meals was few. It was acknowledged, however, that a number of families eligible were probably not applying as they were reluctant to provide a third party with their tax details. As reasons for the poor take up of free school meals was being looked at in detail, the Chairman requested that an update report be presented at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the report be **NOTED**.
2. That the comments, noted above, on how the number of pupils in Lincolnshire entitled to Free School Meals but not claiming them may be reduced, be considered by officers.
3. That an update report be presented at the next meeting of the School's Forum for members' consideration.

7. SCHOOLS' FORUM GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Tony Warnock introduced the report, explaining that work had been undertaken with the previous Clerk, Catherine Wilman, to ensure further compliance with the Good Practice guide, including matters relating to the website, papers for meetings and publications of minutes, etc.

The Chairman was pleased that the recommendation for consideration of urgent items had been included in the guide. There was, however, a lack of clarity in respect of voting (as mentioned in item 2 of these minutes).

Members reiterated their request to limit the number of officers attending meetings of the School's Forum however they were content for the relevant Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director to attend on a regular basis.

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the report be **NOTED**.
2. That the comments, as noted above, relating to the LA's proposals for ensuring further compliance with the DfE's guidance be considered by officers.

8. SCHOOLS' FORUM 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 April meeting:-

1. Schools' Forum Good Practice Guide – Paragraph 2.28 re Schools Budgets
2. Free School Meals Update
3. Schools' Pension Fund

RESOLVED

That the work programme and all changes made therein be noted.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 24 April 2013 2.00pm
Wednesday 26 June 2013 2.00pm (AGM)

The meeting closed at 4.55pm.

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