



LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM 16 JANUARY 2020

PRESENT: GAVIN BOOTH (CHAIRMAN)

Joanne Noble (Headteacher, Gainsborough Nursery School), Anthony Stevens (Governor, The Holt Primary School, Skellingthorpe), Penny Davies (Governor, Saxilby C of E Primary School), Martin Kyle (Head Teacher, St Faith and St Martin's Junior School), Catherine Stratton (Head Teacher, Saxilby Church of England Primary School), Michele Anderson (Head Teacher, Spalding High School), Rachel Barrett FCCA (Governor, North Kesteven Academy), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The King's School, Grantham), Ian Widdows (Head Teacher, Giles Academy, Old Leake), Mark Woods (Chief Executive Officer, Stamford Welland Academy), 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), Josh Greaves (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Wellspring Academy 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:-

Michelle Andrews (Head of Early Years), Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), Matthew Clayton (Admissions and Education Provision Manager), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Eileen McMorro (Senior Project Officer Specialist Schools Project), Geraldine O'Neill (Lead Consultant - Early Years Entitlement), Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance (Children's Services)), Martin Smith (Interim Assistant Director of Education), Tony Warnock (Operations and Financial Advice Manager) and Emily Nicholls (School Admissions Manager).

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Ian Randall (Headteacher, Reepham C E Primary School), Martin Shelton (Linkage Community Trust) and Allison Sunley (Governor, Great Steeping Primary School).

25 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

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

**26 MINUTES OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM MEETING HELD
ON 10 OCTOBER 2019****RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum meeting held on 10 October 2019 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to Minute 13 being amended to read Mark Woods (Stamford and Welland Academy).

27 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Penny Davies (Governor, Saxilby C E Primary School) to her first meeting of the Forum.

The Forum was advised that a further election would be arranged in due course to fill the current vacancies.

The Chairman reported that a request had been made for agenda item 8 to be moved further down the agenda to allow officers enough time to be present at the meeting.

28 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS (2020/21)

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance, Children's Services, which invited comments on the Local Authority's funding formula proposals for 2020/21 following the government's funding announcements on mainstream schools national funding formula proposals.

The Forum was reminded that the introduction of the national funding formula had created consistency in funding across all schools nationally ensuring a fairer settlement for each school. Table 1, on Page 18 outlined Lincolnshire's Schools Block Unit of Funding for 2020/21 through the implementation of the national funding formula compared to other Local Authorities. It was highlighted that Lincolnshire's primary unit value had increased by £373 from 2018/19 and Lincolnshire's secondary unit by £346. It was noted however that Lincolnshire's funding rates were below the England average.

It was reported 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. The announcement required Local Authorities to engage in open and transparent consultation on their 2020/21 funding formula. It was noted that the schools consultation covered the period 25 November 2019 to 13 December 2019, a copy of the consultation document and details of the responses received were shown in Appendix A. The Forum gave consideration to the response document and officers responded to questions raised.

It was highlighted that the government's announcement of additional funding into schools would have a positive impact on Lincolnshire schools. Details of the funding

formula changes and monetary values attached to each formula factor (compared to 2019/20 funding levels) were shown within Appendix A to the report.

The Forum noted the key points for 2020/21 funding arrangements, which were shown on pages 18/19 of the report. It was highlighted that all pupil-led formula factors would increase by 4% in monetary value, the minimum per pupil funding levels would be set at £3,750 for primary schools (currently £3,500) and £5,000 for secondary schools (currently £4,800), and no ceiling gap would be applied. It was highlighted that it was the government's intention to move all schools onto the national funding formula, therefore losing schools currently receiving protection funding were likely to face reductions in per pupil funding at some point in the future. It was highlighted further that this impacted 5 primary schools and 5 secondary schools in Lincolnshire.

It was reported that following the meeting, the Forum's comments would be shared with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 17 January 2020 during their consideration of the Schools National Funding Formula, prior to Executive Councillor approval on 21 January 2020. It was noted that the Local Authority had to calculate and publish individual schools budgets by the 29 February 2020.

Details of the future direction of travel were shown on pages 21 and 22 of the report.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The positive effect for the primary school sector;
- Schools in receipt of protection funding. Confirmation was given that the ten schools affected were a mixture of academies and maintained schools. Officers advised that the schools would need to plan for funding reduction in their medium term financial plans;
- Low response to the consultation. Some members of the Forum felt that the low response was due to the timing of the consultation. Officers confirmed that the comments received had been useful. One member suggested that head teachers needed to be briefed better, as there was a lack of knowledge amongst some head teachers regarding the national funding formula. Further comments raised were that it would be a useful exercise to find out why head teachers had not responded. Officers confirmed that there was a comprehensive training programme available for schools, which was continually evolving, and the Local Authority had made great effort to ensure that information on the national funding formula was presented clearly and in a good level of detail for schools to understand; and
- The positive picture for Lincolnshire and to the fact that the majority of schools were gaining through the formula meant that schools were overall happy and therefore did not feel the need to respond to the consultation.

RESOLVED

1. That the National Funding Formula for Schools (2020/21) report presented be noted.

2. That support be given to the Local Authority's funding formula proposals for 2020/21 including continuing to replicate the national funding formula.

29 SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS 2020/21

Consideration was given to a report from Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team, which provided the Schools' Forum with an update on the school funding arrangements for 2020/21 and sought approval for the Local Authority's proposals relating to a number of centrally held budgets.

Page 1 of the report provided some background information relating to school funding announcements.

The Forum was advised that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) remained a ring-fenced grant which could only be used in accordance with the School's and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations. It was noted that the DSG continued to comprise of four blocks – Schools block, Central School block (CSSB), High Needs block and Early Years block and that each of the blocks continued to be determined by a separate national funding formula. Further information relating to the aforementioned four blocks was contained on pages 3 to 5 of the report.

Table 1 on page 2 of the report provided details of Lincolnshire's 2020/21 DSG allocations. It was noted that Lincolnshire's overall funding levels across the four blocks had increased in 2020/21, particularly in the Schools block due to the government removing the gains ceiling cap; the increase in pupil-led formula factor values by 4% and the implementation of the minimum per pupil formula factor. The High Needs block had also seen an increase, due to the funding floor being set at +8.0% compared to a Local Authorities existing baseline funding.

Page 5 and 6 of the report referenced Pupil Premium, Universal Infant Free School Meals, Teachers Pay Grant and Teachers Pension Grant. The Forum was advised that the funding rates for 2020/21 had not yet been confirmed. The report confirmed that the Teachers' Pension Grant and the Teachers Pay Grant would continue to be funded through a separate grant to the national funding formula over the next three years.

Reference was also made to the DSG School budgets for 2020/21 (details of which were shown on pages 6 and 7 of the report presented); the DSG Central Budgets 2020/21; and the impact upon Local Authorities entering into a DSG deficit. It was highlighted that although Lincolnshire was not in a financial deficit position, costs were continuing to rise in the area of high needs at a significant rate, as a result of the growth and complexity of pupils requiring additional support. It was highlighted further the Local Authority had conducted its annual review of the DSG central budgets; and details of the significant planned changes were shown on page 8 of the report.

Page 8 of the report also provided information relating to the Department for Education regulations relating to the setting of central budgets within the DSG. In

accordance with the regulations, members of the Forum were asked to consider Tables 2 to 4 of the report which set out budgets requiring Schools' Forum approval (pages 9 to 11 of the report).

During consideration of the aforementioned tables, officers highlighted the following:

- Table 2 – Schools Block Funding for significant pre-16 growth (school reorganisations). That the £3.227m budget allocated through the DfEs formulaic Schools Growth was essential for the Local Authority to fulfil its strategic and statutory responsibilities to provide sufficient school places in Lincolnshire;
- Table 3 – Central School Services Block on-going commitments – The Forum noted that the Local Authority had a statutory duty to operate the admissions arrangements in county schools (the proposed budget for 2020/21 was £0.545m). The Forum noted further that the Local Authority had statutory responsibilities for all schools and details of those responsibilities were shown in table two on page 10 of the report (the proposed budget was £1.530m, which was the level of funding the DfE added to Lincolnshire's DSG when the decision was made by the department to move funding into the Central School Services block); and reference was also made to the servicing of the Schools Forum (the proposed budget for 2020/21 was £0.020m); and
- Table 4 – Central School Services Block historic commitments – Reference was made to the Schools Broadband service, which the budget continued to fund an aggregated broadband provision to all schools and that all schools would continue to receive the consolidated core schools broadband contract to 31 October 2022 (Including academies), (the proposed budget for 2020/21 was £1.199m). The Forum noted that the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) related to contractual commitments for seven schools that had been entered in to in early 2000. In response to the government's significant funding reductions (of 20% or £0.556m) to historic commitment funding levels, the Local Authority would be creating a PFI formula factor in 2020/21 to manage the financial risk of future reductions, which would require a budget transfer of £0.535m from the Central School Services block to the Schools block. The budget of £0.573m would be required to meet the affordability gap and unavoidable costs for the four PFI special schools. It was noted that there was a funding gap on historic commitment due to lateness and scale of the funding reductions, which had been flagged to the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for consideration; and
- It was highlighted that in accordance with established practices, the Local Authority would be reporting to Schools' Forum in June 2020 the final budget for 2020/21, as set out in the Section 251 budget statement, which had to be published by 30 April 2020.

The Forum noted that the Local Authority continued to make the decision not to retain funding in the Schools block for statutory duties relating to maintained schools only, and that this would be reviewed on an annual basis.

It was reported that the Executive were currently consulting on a single year Council financial plan for revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21 following the

government delaying the full spending review until 2020. It was highlighted that the Council's medium term financial position was a £6.3m deficit by 2022/23; and the financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 were £0.6m surplus and £12.9m deficit respectively. The Forum noted that a number of assumptions underpinned this budget and it was expected that these would be refined upon central government releasing detailed 2020/21 funding information. It was highlighted that the situation for the Council continued to have significant bearing on Children's Services budget of £115.056m; as the challenge of contributing towards the Council's savings target was more difficult for Children's Services due to the volatile and demand-led budget of home to school/college transport budget and increased demands on social care services.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following points:-

- Members asked for a split of the £1.530 LA retained duties for all schools between the various statutory responsibilities. Officers agreed to bring back further information relating to the cost of the statutory responsibilities for supporting all schools;
- EMPSN model and the buying power for schools. Clarification was given that the issue of Broadband was being raised at head teacher briefings. It was highlighted that the existing contract ran until October 2022, thereafter the Local Authority would be unable to retain a budget centrally. The Forum noted that the Local Authority would be working with all schools to transition onto a new model of direct billing using a sustainable and reliable platform for procuring school broadband services and maintaining the collective buying power of Lincolnshire schools; and
- Confirmation was given that nursery school supplementary funding had been extended to March 2021; and that the matter was still being discussed by the DfE.

RESOLVED

That the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum agreed to the Local Authority's proposals to a number of centrally held budgets as detailed in Tables 2 to 4 in the report presented.

30 EARLY YEARS NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Michelle Andrews, Head of Early Years, which provided the Schools' Forum with a summary on the early year's national funding formula for 2020/21; and sought agreement relating to the allocation and distribution of the centrally retained budgets.

In guiding the Forum through the report reference was made to the background behind the government's early years national funding formula; the national funding to Local Authorities for early years core funding. It was highlighted that Lincolnshire would be funded at the minimum funding rate in 2020/21 of £4.38 per pupil per hour, which was a per pupil increase of £0.08 per hour from 2019/20 funding levels. It was highlighted further that Lincolnshire's hourly funding rate of £4.38 per pupil would

provide indicative funding of £35.614m for 3 and 4 year old entitlement. It was noted that Lincolnshire was one of 46 Local Authorities funded on the minimum funding rate.

The Forum noted that the local universal base hourly rate per pupil for 3 & 4 year old entitlement had been determined at £3.98 for 2020/21, an increase of £0.11 per hour per pupil from the 2019/20 rate. It was highlighted that this had been funded by the additional £0.08 increase announced by the government; a release of funding from the reduction in deprivation allocations determined through the IDACI criteria; a small reduction in funding previously earmarked for the fluctuation contingency fund to respond to demand-led activity, and a reduction in centrally-held funding. Details relating to the theoretical model that determined the local universal rate were shown on page 46 of the report.

It was reported that the Local Authority for 2020/21 would continue to use the same deprivation factor and deprivation monetary values that were currently in place for 2019/20. It was highlighted that the provider survey that had been undertaken had identified that 81% of respondents had supported the continued use of the government's Income Deprivation affecting Children Index (IDACI) measure. The Forum noted that the current approach would allocate £0.982m through the deprivation funding formula for 2020/21. Table 1 on page 48 of the report provided details of the deprivation scores and associated funding.

It was noted that the Local Authority was planning to propose a change to the approach used to distribute deprivation supplements, to support the effective use of this funding in the future. It was noted further that the Local Authority planned to engage with the sector during 2020/21 with a view to implementing changes from 2021/22.

Reference was also made to:

- The SEN Inclusion Fund – The Forum was advised that the inclusion funding model provided a top up payment based upon a percentage increase of the universal base rate for every hour a child attended the setting for their early years entitlement (up to a maximum of 30 hours based on a child's eligibility). It was noted that the planned funding allocation using current the protocol was being increased by £0.050m for financial year 2020/21 to £0.650m per annum, to account for the increased demand for the funding, which represented £0.080 per pupil per hour;
- Fluctuation Contingency Fund – It was noted that the Local Authority was required to fund all participation-led funding and therefore a fluctuation contingency fund was required to meet any additional demand. It was noted further that the annual budget of £0.129m was required, which equated to £0.016 per pupil per hour;
- Local Authority Centrally Retained Funding – It was reported that the government required Schools Forums to agree 2020/21 central spend for early years funding by 28 February 2020 (£1.491m). The Schools' Forum in line with the regulations, were asked to approve the following budgets

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- Early Years Entitlement Team - £261,122;
- Securing Sufficient, Sustainable Provision - £218,616;
- EYFS Quality Improvement, Support, Advice - £786,494;
- Workforce & Training Requirement for the Sector - £147,748; and
- SEND Local Offer - £76,999.

Table 2 on page 52 of the report provided Lincolnshire's early years funding distribution for 3 and 4 year olds.

The Local Authority sought Schools' Forum support to the proposal of releasing c.£1.000m of the DSG underspend to the early years sector during the financial year 2020/21, through a temporary rate increase of £0.12 per hour per child, which was in addition to the 2020/21 established local universal base hourly rate per pupil of £3.98. It was noted that providers would receive this funding based on their 3 and 4 year old participation hours throughout 2020/21. It was noted further that this temporary funding only related to the financial year 2020/21. It was highlighted that this one-off funding would give providers greater resources to provide the best opportunities for Lincolnshire pupils to reach their potential, and increase their life chances as they transition in to school. The Forum noted that the Local Authority would be providing guidance on how it expected providers to invest these one-off monies to improve outcomes and embed practice.

The Forum also noted that Lincolnshire's funding for the most disadvantaged 2 year olds in 2020/21 had increased by £0.08 per hour to £5.28 per hour per child; and that Lincolnshire's indicative allocation for 2020/21 was £5.395m.

Table 3 on page 55 of the report provided the Forum with details of Lincolnshire's Early Years Funding Distribution.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following points:-

- The positive benefits to early years of the extra money; and
- One member enquired why the release of £1m could not be increase to £1.8m. Officers confirmed that considering the context of Lincolnshire's overall DSG and future financial challenges it was felt that £1m (or £0.12 per hour per pupil) was the right amount to release as a one-off, which was in addition to the universal rate of £3.98 per hour per pupil, an increase of £0.11 per hour per pupil from the previous year. It was highlighted that the funding increase would support the sector.

RESOLVED

1. That the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum noted the content of the report presented.
2. That the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum agreed to the Local Authority's proposals for centrally retained funding of £1.491m as detailed in the report.

3. That the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum supported the Local Authority's proposal to release one-off underspends generated through the Early Years block to the sector in 2020/21 only through a temporary rate increase of £0.12 per hour per child for 3 & 4 year old entitlement.

31 SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS APPEAL CHARGES FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to a report from Emily Nicholls, Commissioning Officer, which asked maintained schools representatives on the Schools' Forum to agree School Admissions Appeals Services to be permitted as a chargeable service.

The Forum was advised that when a child or young person was refused a place at a school, there was a right of appeal against the decision to refuse a place; and that the right of appeal was the same whether the application was made for when a child started school, or if the application was mid-year in any year group.

The Forum was advised that currently academies could purchase this service from the Council (Admissions Team and Legal Services) and that currently there was sufficient capacity to meet demand as not all academies used this service. The Forum was advised further that currently maintained schools did not pay for this service, which was historic and the Academy schools were invoiced retrospectively.

It was highlighted that in 2018, DfE Schools Revenue Funding operational guidance had been updated to state that maintained schools and academies should be treated equally when it came to the expenditure of DSG budgets. (Page 75 of the report provided details of the schools operational guidance). It was highlighted further that the payment of admissions appeals was identified as an anomaly.

It was reported that a consultation had taken place asking schools their opinions on charging all schools for this service, and asking them to suggest any alternative arrangements. Appendix A to the report provided further details of the responses received for the Forum to consider. The Forum was advised that to date 17 responses had been received. Details of the concerns raised were shown on page 76 (points 1 to 7).

During discussion, the Forum raised the following comments:-

- That the implementation of a charge would create cost pressures for schools particularly rural schools, and as a result other services might have to be cut to finance this proposed charge. Secondary maintained schools also agreed that support could not be given for the proposal due to its financial impact;
- Concern was expressed to the timing of the consultation, as it was a busy time for schools;
- What other authorities were doing to deal with the situation. Officers were advised that each area had similar issues to Lincolnshire, whether to charge, or not. Officers advised that one smaller authority had decided not to charge;
- Some members enquired what the cost would be to the Local Authority for doing it for free. Officers advised that figures would be difficult to estimate; as

the Admissions section only had information about the appeals they had been involved with; and not all Academies used the Local Authority for their appeals. Officers also confirmed that there would be a risk to the Local Authority to take on the whole liability as there was no budget identified to meet such a cost;

- The inequality of funding streams across the system, as previous funding had now ended, although protection might still be in place;
- A question was asked why the charging authority would be charging their own schools; and a further question was asked as to whether maintained schools had a choice as to where to buy the service from. Officers confirmed that there would be choice available; and
- Some members felt that all schools needed to be treated equally.

In response to the concerns raised, Officers respected the anxiety of those present.

The maintained school representatives were invited to indicate if they were in support of the proposal.

RESOLVED

1. The maintained schools representatives present did not support the School Admissions Appeals services being permitted as a chargeable service.
2. The Local Authority agreed to re-consider the matter further.

32 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SPECIALIST PROVISION STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report from Eileen McMorrow, Senior Project Officer Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, which provided the Schools' Forum with an update on the implementation of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy.

It was noted that significant progress had been made across the capital investment programme with eight out of the fourteen schools being actively engaged in feasibility and design of their planned development. It was noted further that six schools would be 'all needs' operational by the autumn term 2021, with at least two more schools coming on line in 2022. Details relating to the delivery of the capital programme were shown on pages 58 to 62 of the report.

It was reported that work was on going with producing Lincolnshire's Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs strategic vision, and satellite provision, details of which would be shared with the Forum in due course. Work was also on going in the setting up of community led panels for each locality to meet the needs of children and young people requiring a special school place at the right time as close to home as possible.

The Forum noted the health work stream had made significant progress in developing the health offer including the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding

between schools and health providers setting out clear expectations around provision.

It was reported that for all schools to be 'all needs' operational, the identified support systems of workforce development, health offer and SEND design would be established in advance of the first all needs school opening. Reassurance was given that supporting systems had been developed collaboratively with sector experts from the Local Authority, mainstream and special schools and Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum to ensure that they fully met the needs of all Lincolnshire children with SEND and their families.

Details of the funding allocations were shown on pages 64 and 65 of the report. Appendix A to the report provided details of the programme and Appendix B provided design drawings for the Boston John Fielding School.

The Forum noted that despite the delay to the final delivery on St Christopher's School as a result of the unsuccessful special free school bid, the whole strategic vision would still be implemented within five years, as identified in the original strategy.

RESOLVED

That the progress report on the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy be noted.

33 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 September 2019), two primary schools had converted to academy or sponsored academy status, which meant that 37.7% (106) primary schools were now academies and 48.4%(27,564) of FTE primary pupils were educated in academies. It was reported that a further three primary schools were intending to be academies by 1 June 2020.

Information relating to the projected six month status of all Lincolnshire State Schools was provided on pages 98 and 99 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.

34 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM - WORK PROGRAMME

The Forum gave consideration to the work programme presented.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.40 p.m.