



LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM 7 OCTOBER 2021

PRESENT: GAVIN BOOTH (CHAIRMAN)

Amy Stancer (Headteacher, St Giles Nursery School, Lincoln), Ian Randall (Head Teacher, Reepham Church of England Primary 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), Steve Baragwanath (Executive Principal, University Academy Holbeach), Frances Green MA (Oxon) (Head Teacher, Somercotes Secondary Academy), Simon Pickett (Head Master, The King's School, Grantham), Sarah Wilson (Executive Principal, Stamford Welland Academy), Katie Grivil (Head Teacher, Kirkby la Thorpe Church of England Primary Academy), Simon Morley (Head Teacher, Boston West Academy), Lea Mason (Executive Head Teacher, Lincolnshire Wolds Federation, Louth), Josh Greaves (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Wellspring Academy Trust) (Vice-Chairman), Martin Shelton (College Principal, Linkage Community Trust), Andrew Watts (NEU) and Julia Merivale (Manager, Trinity Day Nursery).

Officers in attendance:-

Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance (Children's Services)), Tony Warnock (Operations and Financial Advice Manager) and Sue Williams (Head of Educational Strategy).

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Daniel Callaghan (Primary Academy Governor, Hartsholme Academy, Lincoln), Dr Stephen Hopkins (Special Academy Governor, Trust Chair of Communities Inclusive Trust), Jo Slessor (Secondary Academy Governor, Carres Grammar School, Sleaford) and Peter Tomlinson (Faith Group Representative).

An apology for absence was also received from Martin Smith, (Assistant Director for Children's Education).

15 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

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

16 MINUTES OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE 2021

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum meeting held on 24 June 2021 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

17 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, advised that recent elections had seen the return of Michele Anderson and himself back to the Forum.

The Chairman also welcomed to the Forum Andy Watts (Union Representative) and Peter Tomlinson (Faith Representative) to their first Lincolnshire Schools' Forum meeting.

The Chairman extended thanks to outgoing members: Martin Kyle, Helen Stokes and Paul Thompson for all their contributions to the Forum.

It was noted that a further election would be held towards the end of October, start of November to recruit to the current vacancies.

18 SCHOOLS FORUM SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

The Chairman invited Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance - Children's Services to present the report, which was detailed on pages 19 to 22 of the report pack.

The Forum were reminded that at the 24 June 2021 meeting, consideration had been given to the revised constitution and membership of the Forum, which was subsequently formally approved by the Executive Councillor Children's Services Community Safety and Procurement on 10 September 2021.

Minute number 7(2) from the 24 June 2021 meeting requested that the Department for Education documents on powers and responsibilities should be circulated to all members of the Forum, which was done following the meeting; and that further consideration should be given by the Forum to the self-assessment checklist.

It was reported that officers had consulted the Chairman on the questions and answers as detailed on pages 19 to 22 of the report pack.

Overall, it was felt that the Forum was running in accordance with the guidance and expectations as set out by the Department for Education. Members' attention was drawn to question 11, which made reference to the availability of an induction pack or training programme for new members. The Forum was advised that an induction pack was in place, but that training for new and existing members was something that had been in place previously, but had been identified by the toolkit, as an area that needed to be updated further. Reassurance was given this this piece of work would be taken forward in the new year, so that new members and existing members who felt they needed to up skill or required refresher training had the opportunity to access the necessary training.

The Forum was asked to consider and comment on the checklist document presented. It was suggested the roles and responsibilities document should be circulated annually to members, to act as an aide memoir as to the roles and responsibilities of the Forum. The Forum were reminded that the Constitution and membership was scheduled to be reviewed annually (at the June meeting), and that the circulation of the roles and responsibility document could be done as part of that process.

RESOLVED

That the schools forum self-assessment checklist presented; and the comments raised be received and noted.

19 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS - UPDATE FOR 2022/2023

The Chairman invited Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team to present the item, which provided a summary of the updates from the Department for Education (DfE) relating to the national funding formula for schools, central schools services, high needs and early years for 2022/23.

The Forum noted that 2022/23 was the final year of the £14bn investment in primary and secondary education announced by the government in 2019. It was noted further that at the moment, the local authority was the decision-maker on the funding formula within the DfE funding framework and that the local authority had replicated the formula since its introduction in 2019/19. However, in 2021/22, although the local authority was able to replicate the formula in terms of monetary value, Lincolnshire had to set the minimum funding guarantee at half of a percent due to the increase in free school meals, as a result of the pandemic, in order to ensure the formula was affordable.

It was reported that in July 2021, the DfE had announced their funding intentions for 2022/23. It was highlighted that the dedicated schools grant would continue to consist of four blocks which were the schools block; central schools services block; high needs block; and the early years block. Details of the provisional allocation for 2022/23 were detailed on page 24 of the report pack.

The Forum was advised that the schools block was calculated by aggregating schools' national allocations under the national funding formula with a separate rate for primary and secondary for each local authority. The report highlighted (at the top of page 25) that Lincolnshire's position had continued to improve but was still below the national average.

It was noted that changes to the formula within the schools block were detailed on pages 25 and 26 of the report pack. Some changes highlighted included that the key formula factors would be increased by 3%, the free schools meals would be increasing by 2%; the minimum per pupil funding levels would increase to £4,265 for primary schools and £5,525 for secondary schools; that every school would attract an increase in their pupil led funding of a least 2%, that the local authority would continue to set the minimum funding guarantee between 0.5% and 2%, the rate would be subject to affordability; that following the rates

consultation the methodology for paying rates bills would be changing for all schools and academies; that further financial support would be provided to small and rural schools through an increase to the monetary value of the Sparsity Factor; that free school meals funding would be based on the October census rather than the preceding January (Appendix A to the report provided funding comparison information relating to the national funding formula factors from 2021/22 to 2022/23); and that for 2022/23, as there were minimal changes to the formula, and the Forum had agreed in the past to replicate the NFF, if the local authority was able to replicate the funding formula in full with no funding issues, there would not be a requirement to consult.

For the central school services block the Forum noted that funding would continue for the two elements: on-going responsibilities and historic commitments. Further details of the on-going rates were showed on page 27 of the report which included a further reduction in the historical element of the funding by a further 20%..

It was highlighted that within the high needs block, the provisional allocation for 2022/23 had increased by £7.630m to £110.294m. This increased funding was welcomed by the local authority, however, budget setting and detailed trajectory work was still needed to be undertaken in the autumn to substantiate the requirements of the high needs spending, as there continued to be concerns regarding long-term affordability of the high needs block.

It was noted that information regarding the early years block was expected in the autumn; and that updates to nursery schools funding had still not been published by the DfE.

The Forum noted further that the pupil premium would continue for 2022/23, however, rates were still to be confirmed.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that the funding announcements were positive news for Lincolnshire schools for 2022/23. Page 29 of the report provided the Forum with details of the next steps, which included that the local authority was still awaiting receipt of the modelling tool to allow officers to undertake financial modelling and to fully understand the impact of the funding announcements as detailed in the report presented. It was highlighted that the local authority had also provided a response to the DfE's initial consultation on the next stage of reforming the formula, the DfE direction of travel was to remove local decision-making powers, however, the local authority was not in favour of such a move due to the vital role local authorities make in the setting of the formula to meet local needs.

The Chairman extended thanks on behalf of the Forum to the Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team for her presentation.

RESOLVED

That the National Funding Formula for Schools – Update 2022/2023 report as presented, be noted.

20 DE-DELEGATION OF MAINTAINED PRIMARY SCHOOL BUDGETS 2022/23 AND 2023/24

The Forum considered a report, which sought approval from the maintained primary school representatives of the Forum to the local authority's proposals for the de-delegations of certain budgets in 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The Chairman invited Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance - Children's Services to present the item to the Forum.

The Forum noted that the government's decision to implement the national funding formula still allowed for de-delegation arrangements for maintained schools to continue.

Details of the de-delegations for the previous financial year 2020/21 were showed on page 34 of the report pack.

The Forum noted further that the de-delegation budgets for 2021/22 had been agreed by the maintained primary school representatives at the Schools Forum meeting held in October 2020. Details of the final per pupil rates using the October 2020 census were set out on the top of page 35; and information regarding the current services provided was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Forum noted that the primary maintained schools 'Contingency termed' budgets were demand-led in nature and required a degree of prudence, and therefore the local authority proposed to retain a £0.300m provision within the available cumulative underspend. This provision would ensure certainty in de-delegation amounts for primary maintained schools where unexpected costs arose due to the delivery of services, i.e., an increased demand from primary maintained schools.

It was highlighted that Lincolnshire's children had performed less well than most of their peers nationally and statistical neighbours and that early intervention was necessary to ensure the on-going development of young children as they moved through their school career. The Forum noted that the local authority proposed to deliver a two-year programme to increase pupils' fluency in reading by Year 2 and then working towards providing a sustainable model to ensure the on-going development of this approach in Lincolnshire. It was noted further that the remaining reserves would be earmarked for this project (£0.31m) It was reported that this initiative was seen as being of benefit to all primary schools across Lincolnshire, and that stand-alone primary academies and those within multi-academy trusts would be encouraged to purchase this programme from the selected provider.

Page 37 of the report provided details of the per pupil rates for 2022/23.

These were as follows:-

Contingency	£29.93 per pupil
Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Team	£6.97 per pupil

This would finance:

Termination of employment costs	£0.213m
Interim headteachers	£0.218m
Primary maintained Intervention Funding	£0.263m
Intervention Locality Lead	£0.090m
Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Team	£0.186m

It was highlighted that the charges for 2023/24 (in principle) would continue to be at the baseline amounts per pupil for the de-delegation budget.

The maintained school representatives on the Forum were asked if they agreed to the proposal for the use of de-delegation reserves; and for the delegation of the budgets for the period 2022/23 and 2023/24 (in principle) as detailed on page 37 of the report. It was noted that through the identified funding, the local authority was proposing to appoint one additional school improvement professional to deliver school improvement expertise on the ground.

During discussion, the following comments were raised:

- The potential of the national funding formula not allowing for de-delegation, or not as much de-delegation in the future and the implications arising from it and whether there was evidence that the hybrid model would work. Confirmation was given that the future of the national funding formula was contained within the consultation and that there was no timescale set as to when the national funding formula would move to the hard formula; but it was clearly the direction of travel from central government. Reassurance was given that there would be the opportunity for the local authority to put their views in going forward and that localism was something that had been included in the consultation response to ensure these types of arrangements could continue. It was hoped that the government would see the importance of de-delegations, in helping maintained schools to recover, should the need arise;
- Some concern was expressed to the earlier fact that primary schools had performed less well; and whether this related to all primary schools; and what plans were in place to resolve the situation. Confirmation was given that from the data, the poor performance related to all schools. It was however highlighted that the data referred to was two-year-old data, however, it had provided an indication of the position that schools were in. To address the declining position the local authority planned to support schools better to improve, particularly the maintained schools sector. It was highlighted that evidence had shown that where schools had received help, they had improved. It was noted that closer working with schools had already commenced;
- One member enquired as to where evidential findings had seen the most impact. The Forum was advised that the local authority did not have any direct evidence from academies; however, there were outcomes for academies and the outcomes from

Ofsted inspections for academies. The Forum also noted that the local authority worked very closely with Chief Executive Officers of academies and any concerns about an academy within a trust would be shared. Also, the local authority worked with the (DfE) relating to any concerns with academies. It was confirmed that there was no analysis data. The Forum noted that schools that received support and were involved in projects tended to improve their outcomes; and that was why the proposal was to look at working with all schools going forward.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposals for the use of de-delegation reserves be agreed.
2. That the de-delegation of the budgets for the period 2022/23 and 2023/24 (in principle), as set out above be agreed.

21 REVISED SCHOOLS BUDGETS 2021/22

The Chairman invited Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance – Children's Services, to present the item which advised the Forum of the revised Schools Budget for 2021/22 and sought support for the proposed use of the cumulative underspending from 2020/21.

The Forum were reminded that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was a ring-fenced grant that could only be spent for the purposes as outlined in the Department for Education Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations.

It was highlighted that a revision to the Schools Budget was necessary each year to reflect the under or overspending arising on the DSG in the previous financial year and adjustment to the DSG once the Early Years figures had been confirmed. The Forum was advised that under the DfE regulations, underspends were carried forward automatically to the following financial year, and that the local authority had to consult with the Schools Forum over its plans to utilise underspends, or address overspendings.

Page 50 provided details of the carry forward for 2020/21. The Forum noted that the cumulative underspend carried forward as of March 2021 was £10.542m. The uncommitted sum of the underspend was £4.573m which represented 0.71% of Lincolnshire's 2021/22 overall DSG (£646.900m). This reflected the net overspends of £1.142m on budgets in 2020/21 held centrally within the DSG. Details of which were shown in Appendix A to the report. The Forum considered Appendix A, which outlined the financial year variances.

The Forum was advised that a thorough review of existing commitments had taken place, and that prudent financial estimates had been made. Details of the existing commitments were shown in Appendix B to the report, which totalled £5.969m. The Forum gave consideration to Appendix B.

Details relating to the proposal for use of the uncommitted sum of £4.573m were shown on pages 50 to 52 of the report and these were considered by the Forum.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that an increasing number of local authorities continued to incur deficits on their overall DSG account, largely because of overspends on their High Needs blocks. It was highlighted that Lincolnshire was not in that position, as it had available reserves. However, the local authority could not be complacent, and that in setting prudent arrangements and supporting transformational activity were seen as important measures to securing a financially sustainable DSG.

The Forum were invited to note the report and to support the local authority's proposed use of the uncommitted sum, as outlined in section five of the report.

During consideration of the report, the Forum raised the following comments:-

- Thanks were expressed for an excellent report;
- Some concern was expressed regarding the costs of out of county placements. The Forum was advised that the purpose of the special school's strategy was to create more places for children with special needs. However, because of the needs and complexities of some children and young people, some outside placements would still be required. The Forum noted the budget figures for the cost of out of county placements could be made available to the Forum after the meeting;
- The Alternative Provision place funding underspend. The Forum was advised that the initial arrangement was for two years; and that a base budget had been created to meet this ongoing cost. The Forum noted that work was also being undertaken with regard to dual and single registration and how that data was being captured for funding purposes; and
- The pressures faced by special schools and alternative provision and whether these settings would be guaranteed a positive minimum funding guarantee, or would they remain at a standstill position. The Forum was advised that this would be included in budget work being undertaken during the autumn. It was highlighted that the intention was to try and support those special schools and alternative provision settings with the increasing costs they are facing.

RESOLVED

1. That the revised Schools Budgets 2021/22 Report be noted.
2. That support be given to the Local Authority's proposed use of the uncommitted sum, as outlined in section 5 of the report presented.

22 ACADEMIES AND TRUST UPDATE

The Forum received an update from Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team, on the latest number of academies and pupils in academies, and academy trusts.

Since the last report (1 June 2021) Horncastle Primary School had joined Wellspring Academy Trust and Gedney Church End Primary Academy and Lutton St Nicholas Academy had joined Keystone Academy Trust as converter academies on 1 September 2021. Therefore, on known information 30,358 (53.1%) FTE primary pupils were now educated in non-maintained schools.

It was noted that overall, currently 51.8% FTE (77,547) pupils were now educated in non-maintained schools.

Page 63 of the report provided details as to the number of academy trusts that currently had the greatest number of academies and free schools in Lincolnshire. It was highlighted that there were 35 active multi-academy trusts operating within Lincolnshire and a total of 148 Lincolnshire academies that were members of multi-academy trusts.

Further information relating to the largest trusts nationally that operating in Lincolnshire was shown at the bottom of page 63 of the report.

RESOLVED

That the Academies and Trust Update report presented be noted.

23 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM - WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited the Forum to comment on the work programme presented.

From previous discussions, it was noted that there would be an update of the Sector Led Approach; and Broadband.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme presented be received.

24 FUTURE MEETING DATES

The Forum was asked to consider the future meeting dates as detailed on the agenda page.

It was highlighted that the June date clashed with one of the Lincolnshire Show dates, Officers agreed to look at an alternative date.

RESOLVED

That the following future meeting dates be agreed and that an alternative date be found for the June meeting date.

Thursday 20 January 2022 at 1.00pm;
Thursday 21 April 2022 at 1.00pm; and

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Thursday 6 October 2022 at 1.00pm.

The meeting closed at 2.18 pm