

Schools' Forum Minutes – Leicester City Council

Minutes of the virtual Microsoft Teams meeting held on the 21 June 2023

Present

Schools Members

	Name
Mainstream Academies	Jane Ridgewell, Mike Hobbs, Rose Angus
Special Academies	~
Special School Governors	~
Special School Heads	Sarah Osborne
Secondary School Head Representatives	Anna White, Sabera Seedat
Primary School Governors	Glenys Mulvany
Primary School Head representatives	Libby Smith (Substitute for Karl Stewart)
Pupil Referral Unit	Shaun Whittingham

Non-School members

	Name
Teaching Unions	Jennifer Day
School Support Staff Unions	Samuel Randfield (Chair)
16-19 Providers	~
Early Years (private, voluntary or independent) providers	~

In Attendance

	Role
Nu'Aimaan Shaikh	Business Support – Leicester City Council
Simon Walton	Principal Accountant, Finance – Leicester City Council
Sue Welford	Principal Education Officer – Leicester City Council

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Karl Stewart, Julie Robinson and Councillor Vi Dempster joined the meeting later. There were no other apologies received from anyone.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest. However, before the forum commenced the chair let everyone know that they were being audited by the Department for Education and they would be joining as a member of the public. He reminded the forum of the rules of members of the public which are they are not permitted to participate in the business of forum. The meeting then commenced with a round of introductions.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The attendance list needed amending to show that Anna was attending as a substitute for Julie Robinson. Liam Mahoney also wanted it to be noted that he had not received an invite for the forum due to an email address issue therefore was not noted on the attendance list. In terms of matters arising, the membership list was circulated at the end of the last meeting and changes were made where necessary. In terms of capital budgets, Sue Welford confirmed that it is in preparation, but unfortunately this term there have been other things occupying which will be briefed on later in the forum. This will be placed on the agenda for next time. The meeting minutes were then approved as accurate.

4. School Building Issues

Sue Welford led the update on the School Building Issues. Sue confirmed that there have been a number of issues for LA maintained schools around the inclusion of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete rack in the construction. The material was used in the early 50's through to the 80's and was used in roofing construction. Around 18 months ago, the DfE started to say the schools should have a look at whether this is at present and then this year they have been undertaking surveys at schools where RAAC is identified. Therefore, Sue confirmed which LA schools had this material in the construction and shared this with the DfE. The level of concern was the increased due to the surveys undertaken by engineers and the DfE guidance was changed. Sue shared an image with the forum to show the risk of the construction and how it should be. Mayflower was surveyed about this, and the concern was so high that the school was closed with immediate effect. This was very traumatic for the children as they had to be placed in different schools. Sue confirmed that her and her team had been working with the DfE very closely to agree next steps and sort these issues out. Currently there are four other schools which have this issue and as a result they have now closed New Parks Primary. The main challenge was noted as the intrusive surveys as it requires children to be removed from the site. The forum then discussed the situation of the other two schools, one being Oakland and the next steps to take to resolve these issues. They discussed where they would move students in the interim. Sophie Maltby also clarified that schools need to check whether they have RAAC or not properly as age does not correlate to whether a school has RAAC in its construction or not. There were no questions related to this item.

5. Schools' insurance – changes to LA provision

Sue Welford also discussed this item on the agenda. For maintained schools, insurance has been provided through the LA's insurance scheme. The LA is seeking new insurance as a whole for the council and what was indicated is the level of cost is going to be greater that we would then have to pass on to schools. They are aware that the RPA, that's run through from the DfE has got a good deal and is what a lot of the academies are with. So, the LA have determined that it is not appropriate for them to continue to offer insurance at the significantly raised rate that we would have to pass on to schools. The director of Finance has written to all schools and outlined that and has also encouraged schools to look at the RPA. There is a briefing set for tomorrow for schools in Leicester for further briefings. Samuel Randfield asked to clarify whether the insurance relates to public liability insurance or other insurances. Sue Welford confirmed that there is a whole range of insurances. There were no further questions on this item.

6. DSG outturn report 2022/23

Martin Judson shared the DSG outturn report to the forum. He mentioned the report showed the overall DSG position across all three blocks. They are looking at the forecast for the high needs block and early years block and a review of the maintained school balances as of 31 March 2023. This is not a decision report but an information report where they are asking for views on review of excess balances. In terms of the overall position for the dedicated schools grant for 22/23, there was an overspend of 2.7 million and this is meant that the overall local authority deficit has increased from 3.6 million at the start of the year to 6 million as of 31 March. Appendix one showed the full breakdown of the movement of balances and Martin went through this with the Forum. Martin went through the High Needs Block and the Early Years block and explained each balance to the forum. Martin also noted the main issue is the level of demand and the fact that it is unsustainable. Sophie Maltby commented on the pilot they are going to take part in. Sophie mentioned that there would be two things they are going to do. The first thing is Peter Gray and Penny Richardson have been commissioned by the DCS across the region to work with each of the local authorities and look at their high needs block spending. Therefore, Peter Gray will come and spend time with the LA and follow up and see if there are any adjustments to be made. There were then discussions within the forum regarding the outturn report where Martin again reiterated the points in the report. Martin then spoke on the maintained school revenue balances. The balance at the end of March 2023 showed 31 million which was an increase overall. Martin then broke down this figure and explained the increases year on year for the forum to understand. The forum then discussed the report after the review of the balances however this was cut short due to the timing of the meeting.

7. Scheme for Financing Schools

Martin Judson confirmed the scheme for financing schools is in relation to the LA updating the scheme that they have now and the purpose of this is to gain approval of the process by which we adopt this revised scheme, which has to be approved by forum. The recommendation is that they have updated the scheme and want to put the draft scheme on the internet for a period of four weeks to allow for comments

and then place the scheme in its final format on the 1 August. The scheme sets out the financial relationship between the local authority and schools and they have changed the format of the scheme to reflect current guidelines. Martin then went through the document which would be placed online and explained this to forum.

Any Other Business

There were no further items to discuss, and the meeting was adjourned.