

**Leicester City Council
Schools Forum**

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting held at 1:00 pm on Thursday 30th June 2016 at Soar Valley Training Centre

Present:

Schools members:

Academies:	Jim Cook
Special Academies:	~
Special School Governors:	~
Special School Heads:	~
Secondary School Governors:	Steph McDonald
Secondary School Head representatives:	Simon Catchpole, Bernie Green, Ian Johnson
Primary School Governors:	Steve Wilson
Primary School Head representatives:	Liz Warren, Nigel Bruen, Karl Stewart, Jill Griffin
Pupil Referral Units:	Shaun Whittingham
<u>Non-Schools Members:</u>	
Teaching Unions:	Peter Flack (Chair)
School support staff Unions:	Gary Garner
14-19 Partnership:	~
Early Years PVI Providers:	~
Voluntary Sector:	Wendy Brickett

In attendance:

Ian Bailey	Interim Director of Learning
Kate McGee	Principal Accountant, Education and Children's Services
Simon Walton	Senior Accountant, Finance
Jackie Difolco	Head of Service, Early Help (Targeted Services 0-19)
Ellen Lee	SDSA
Alison Simpkin	Childrens Centre Teacher
Joseph Wyglendacz	Observer (NUT)
Ed Rowe	Clerk to the Forum

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Bernadette Ambler, Martin Judson, Sandra Hamilton-Fox, Daniel Routledge, Rhian Richardson and Eleanor Shaw.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2016 were agreed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

i. Non-domestic rates

The Principal Accountant, Education and Children's Services, confirmed that the increase in rates could be funded from unspent DSG. In year adjustments to budgets were permissible, although they could not be reissued.

A query was raised as to whether or not a collective challenge to the rateable values of schools in Leicester was being progressed. The Principal Accountant, Education and Children's Services, agreed to check on the position and report back.

Action: Kate McGee

ii. EDISS

Members noted that there had been no further engagement with the local authority regarding this issue since the last meeting. A number of schools reported that they had stayed with the council's team but the service that was being delivered was not good and did not meet the package that had been promised. Concerns had been raised with the relevant officer but the matter was not yet resolved.

Members expressed particular concern regarding the examination results that were being released in August. This was always a problematic period where experienced EDISS support was essential.

iii. School academy transfers

A query was raised as to whether any proposed conversions would be delayed due to a lack of resources within the local authority. The Interim Director of Learning confirmed that no conversions had been delayed and that additional resources had been bought in to ensure that remained the case. It was noted that the Regional Schools Commissioner's office was facing similar pressures and could only handle three cases at any one time.

Members asked for greater clarity on exactly what the £5000 charge being levied upon schools was being spent on. The Interim Director of Learning advised that the entire sum was a contribution towards external legal costs, and the charge was actually significantly less than the full amount that was being spent in that respect.

iv. National Funding formula

The Chair of FFRG confirmed that the proposed second consultation from the Department from Education had been delayed. A meeting of FFRG would be arranged once that consultation had been released.

v. SEND provision

A query was raised regarding progress on the SEND cases that had been raised in the last meeting. The Interim Director of Learning advised he would provide an update to the member concerned outside of the meeting.

5. Children's Centre teachers

The report of the Head of Service, Early Help (Targeted Services 0-19), was received. This provided a progress update on activity completed over the 2015/16 academic year and sought in principle approval for further funding for the 2017/18 financial year.

It was noted that the work of the Children's Centre teachers underpinned the strategy for 0-3 year olds in terms of readiness for school. Work was targeted at the most vulnerable pupils in Leicester, which included those living in the most deprived areas and those that had siblings with low EYFSP outcomes.

The report outlined a range of activities that were being undertaken to improve outcomes. It was noted that progress had not been at the pace that was expected, but nevertheless had delivered a 9% increase in numeracy and literacy levels at the early years' stage compared to the previous year.

The recommendations included two options for Forum to consider regarding continuing funding this work either until March 2018 or until August 2017. It was understood that no firm decisions could be made at this stage, but an "in principle" decision was requested.

Members welcomed the very detailed and helpful report and agreed to note the contents. It was noted that Leicester continued to rank bottom of the 152 local authorities in terms of the Early Years baseline and members were supportive of the activities that the Children's Centre teachers were undertaking to address that.

However, given the wider uncertainty regarding the overall funding position, it was agreed that no decision could be taken on future funding for this work at this stage. The potential impact upon the staff concerned was noted and it was agreed that an early decision was clearly preferable. It was therefore decided to add the item to the agenda for September's meeting in the hope that sufficient information would be available at that stage to allow a decision to be made.

Action: Clerk

6. Whatever it Takes evaluation report

The evaluation report was received. This provided an update on outcomes in the 2014/15 academic year and the results of the most recent pupil survey.

Key findings were that attainment in Key Stage 1 reading had declined and the gap to the national average had widened. However, at Key Stage 2, reading attainment had improved significantly, driven largely by the attainment of boys. The long term improvement was amongst the best in the country and had resulted in a narrowing of the gap to the national average.

The reading survey showed that attitudes were relatively stable, but there had been a decline in confidence in reading ability.

It was noted that an independent review of activities undertaken by Whatever it Takes was being commissioned by the strategy board, in order to establish which activities were delivering the most effective results.

Members noted that a recent review of Library Services had resulted in changes to the job descriptions of key members of staff, and concern was expressed regarding the impact those changes may have upon future results.

7. Arrangements for pupils with SEN, at PRUs and for early years

The Principal Accountant, Education and Children's Services, advised that funding arrangements for these pupils was unchanged in the coming year, but the position for 2017/18 was still unclear.

Members noted that changes had been proposed by the Department for Education that potentially meant the financial responsibility for excluded pupils would remain with their school, which would also have to arrange for appropriate specialist support. It was therefore considered possible that multi academy trusts would set up their own alternative provision units, which would impact upon PRUs.

It was noted that the Leicester PRUs worked very effectively currently, and that a PRU review meeting had already been scheduled.

8. Funding for new arrivals

The report of the Head of Finance, Education and Children's Services, was received. This set out the three funding options that were available for increases in pupil population in the 2016/17 financial year. A new streamlined process had been introduced by the ECP panel to deal with bulge classes. This had worked very well to date and enabled funding to be provided without undue delay.

Members welcomed the paper, but noted that there was still some confusion within schools as to whether they needed to submit an ECP bid or whether funding would be provided automatically. The Interim Director of Learning confirmed he was happy to continue to work on the situation, noting that for primary schools the position was largely working well, but agreed that further work was needed to clarify the position for secondary schools.

It was noted that funding from the Growth Fund pot of £1.5m was being provided at 7/12ths of the AWPU rate, being £3352 per pupil.

A query was raised as to where the pot of money for the additional secondary places shown in the report was coming from. It was confirmed that the Head of Finance was investigating and would confirm in due course.

Action: Martin Judson

9. Primary school improvement

The report of the Head of Service, Raising Achievement was received. This had been prepared in acknowledgement of the concerns raised in the previous meeting that the service may not have been delivering what it was funded to provide.

Changes to staffing arrangements had been made, with fewer permanent staff now in place and more associates being utilised to deliver the required support.

Members agreed to note the report contents and no issues were raised.

10. Arrangements for consultation on delegated schools budget

The Chair noted it had previously been agreed that an early consultation on schools budgets was desirable. However, the second government consultation had not yet been launched, so there was still a lack of clarity over future funding arrangements.

It was agreed that a Funding Formula Review Group meeting would be convened for early September, with the intention that the proposed consultation document could be discussed and then brought to Schools Forum on 22nd September.

Action: Jim Cook to convene FFRG meeting.

Primary headteacher representatives noted that the existing agreement on the primary/secondary funding ratio expired shortly and further discussions on that may be necessary if a national formula was not going to be introduced. It was also suggested that the consultation exercise could include the option to introduce EAL as a formula factor.

11. Proposed meeting dates for the next academic year

The proposed meeting dates were confirmed as acceptable.

12. Any Other Business

i. BSF lifecycle fund and retained estate works

It was noted that Colin Sharpe had been due to attend the meeting to provide an update on this matter. As he was delayed, Forum members agreed that a sub-group should meet with him separately and then report back.

It was agreed that the group would consist of Peter Flack, Jim Cook, Simon Catchpole and Steph McDonald.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2.38 p.m.