

**Leicester City Council  
Schools Forum**

**DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting held at 1:00 pm on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 at  
Soar Valley Training Centre**

**Present:**

**Schools members:**

<b>Academies:</b>	~
<b>Special Academies:</b>	~
<b>Special School Governors:</b>	~
<b>Special School Heads:</b>	Eleanor Shaw, Ann Marie Jameson
<b>Secondary School Governors:</b>	Steph McDonald, Sumeya Bhiku
<b>Secondary School Head representatives:</b>	Simon Catchpole, Bernie Green, Ian Johnson
<b>Primary School Governors:</b>	Steve Wilson, Daniel Routledge
<b>Primary School Head representatives:</b>	Liz Warren, Karl Stewart, Martin Fitzwilliam
<b>Pupil Referral Units:</b>	Shaun Whittingham
<b><u>Non-Schools Members:</u></b>	
<b>Teaching Unions:</b>	Peter Flack (Chair)
<b>School support staff Unions:</b>	~
<b>14-19 Partnership:</b>	~
<b>Early Years PVI Providers:</b>	~
<b>Voluntary Sector:</b>	~

**In attendance:**

Ian Bailey	Interim Director of Learning
Kate McGee	Principal Accountant, Education and Children's Services
Simon Walton	Senior Accountant, Finance
Martin Judson	Head of Finance, Education and Children's Services
Paul Gobey	Library Development Manager, Children's Services
Ed Rowe	Clerk to the Forum

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Sandra Hamilton-Fox, Jim Cook, Gary Garner, Janet Washington and Wendy Brickett.

**2. Declarations of interest**

A declaration of interest was made by Daniel Routledge in connection with item 7 in respect of the impact of de-delegated funding for Whatever it Takes and Academic Coaching.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016 were agreed as an accurate record of the proceedings, subject to one amendment:

*Item 6 Outturn and school balances: Page 3 Penultimate paragraph:*

The Interim Director of Learning noted that there was no legal impediment to schools converting while they were running a budget deficit, although the Regional Schools Commissioner appeared to be taking that factor into account and indeed the Lancaster conversion had already been delayed as a result of the deficit that existed. Although the plan was that they would convert on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017, there was still some uncertainty as to whether or not that would actually happen as scheduled.

**4. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

***i. Non-domestic rates***

It was confirmed that a revaluation exercise on the rateable value of all schools had been completed. Although a couple of secondary schools reported their valuations had decreased, the Principal Accountant,

Education and Children's Services, advised that provisional data showed most schools appeared to have had theirs increased.

It was noted that a decision was still required as to whether or not it was worthwhile pursuing efforts to reclaim any historical overpayments. It was agreed that quotations would be obtained from a business rates specialist who could potentially be employed to pursue this issue on behalf of schools. It was agreed that this could be funded from the £30,000 available to support the servicing of Schools forum.

**Action: Ian Johnson**

**ii. Funding Formula Review group**

The Principal Accountant, Education and Children's Services, confirmed that the disapplication request regarding IDACI values had been submitted, but no response had yet been received.

The Head of Finance, Education and Children's Services, advised that the DfE had also required the local authority to submit the rationale for the ongoing historic commitments, of which the central maintenance fund was a big part (c. £1.5m). This funding was currently used to allow the authority to fulfil its obligations as landlord, and if the DfE refused to allow this in future, revised proposals would be required to distribute this money back to schools.

**iii. Children's Centre Teachers**

The Chair drew the attention of Forum members to the post meeting note included within the minutes of the previous meeting. Although it was viewed as unlikely, if the Department for Education changed their proposals regarding centralised early years expenditure, the issue would need to be considered again by Forum.

**iv. School balances**

A secondary governor representative noted that school balances would be required to increase in future as schools were required to create their own lifecycle funds for items such as IT. It was agreed that the discussion in the previous meeting noted that there was no issue specifically with balances increasing, but there had been concern expressed that not all governing bodies had appropriate oversight of this issue.

**5. Bookstart**

The report of the Library Development Manager, Children's Services, was received. It was noted that Schools Forum had supported this programme for a number of years with £23,000 of funding. This had complemented £55,000 received from other Council funding. However, under the Early Help Services consultation exercise that was currently underway, it had been proposed to remove the £55,000 support. Forum was therefore asked to consider any further contribution that could be made to support this project, which had an excellent track record in delivering results.

It was noted that the project received resources worth c. £200,000 from the Book Trust, but this was dependent upon a partnership agreement that currently included commitments to appoint or retain dedicated staff members to promote the scheme and engage with parents. One staff member had recently resigned due to uncertainty over future funding.

Forum members were invited to consider the options of either continuing the existing £23,000 of support or increasing this to £78,000 if the proposed Early Help budget reductions were implemented. The Head of Finance, Education and Children's Services, confirmed that appropriate funding was available from the early years block, and that nursery providers would not be disadvantaged by any decision to support Bookstart through either option.

By a unanimous vote, Forum agreed to support the Bookstart programme with a minimum funding of £23,000, increasing to £78,000 if the Early Help funding cut is implemented.

**6. Responsibility for school redundancy payments**

The briefing note from the Interim Director of Learning was received. This provided clarification of the approach the local authority was intending to adopt with regards to premature retirement and redundancy costs in maintained schools. It was felt unreasonable that the General Fund should be used to pay for redundancy costs in schools, and the paper set out the reasons why any such requests could potentially be refused. Feedback was invited from Forum members.

Members expressed concerns that many schools had undertaken redundancy programmes to avoid getting into significant financial difficulties, but that other schools could choose not to take such action and instead rely upon the Schools in Financial Difficulty scheme to support them if required. There was a danger that schools would effectively be punished for doing the right thing.

The Interim Director of Learning confirmed that the SIFD panel would challenge any such behaviour, and noted that governors had an absolute duty to work within available resources and could not choose to deliberately create a deficit budget.

It was agreed that members needed some time to consider the proposals and to consult with their constituents. It was therefore agreed that all feedback on the proposals would be submitted by Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

## **7. Results of the consultation on de-delegation**

The report of the Head of Finance, Education and Children's Services, was received. It was confirmed that 25% of maintained primary schools and 47% of maintained secondary schools had responded to the consultation exercise.

Consultation had taken place at an earlier stage this year compared to previous years, in order to allow time for any redundancies to be organised before the start of the next financial year, should any of the items not receive sufficient support from the respondents.

Overall responses had been supportive towards continuing de-delegation, although it was noted that certain services had received more support than others. However, there were no services with a majority in favour of stopping de-delegation.

The Interim Director of Learning proposed that, as the final amounts required for 2017/18 could not yet be confirmed, members should be asked to vote on an "in principle" decision as to whether or not to continue de-delegation for a further year, with the final details being confirmed in a report for January's Forum. This proposal was accepted.

Those Forum members that were eligible to vote upon de-delegation were asked to choose whether they wanted to vote by phase for each service separately or alternatively to vote on all services en bloc. By a majority of 7 votes to 3, it was decided to cover all services en bloc.

Voting then took place, split by phase. In the primary phase, members voted unanimously in favour of continuing de-delegation for all services in 2017/18, with one member abstaining as a result of his earlier declaration of interest.

In the secondary phase, there was also unanimous support for continuing de-delegation for all services in 2017/18, with one member abstaining.

It was also decided that the comments supplied by respondents in the consultation exercise regarding the individual services would be analysed in more detail.

## **8. Any other business**

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2.27 p.m.