

**Leicester City Council
Schools Forum**

**DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting held at 1:00 pm on Thursday 21st September 2017 at
Soar Valley Training Centre**

Present:

Schools members:

Academies:	Jim Cook
Special Academies:	Julie Aquilina
Special School Governors:	~
Special School Heads:	Eleanor Shaw
Secondary School Governors:	Steph McDonald, Janet Washington
Secondary School Head representatives:	Simon Catchpole, Neil Lockyer, Julie Robinson
Primary School Governors:	Steve Wilson, Daniel Routledge, Bernadette Ambler
Primary School Head representatives:	Liz Warren, Karl Stewart, Jane Ridgewell, Nigel Bruen
Pupil Referral Units:	Shaun Whittingham

Non-Schools Members:

Teaching Unions:	Peter Flack (Chair)
School support staff Unions:	~
14-19 Partnership:	Sandra Hamilton-Fox
Early Years PVI Providers:	~
Voluntary Sector:	~

In attendance:

Ian Bailey	Interim Director of Learning
Martin Judson	Head of Finance, Education and Children's Services
Matt Wallace	Director of Estates and Building Services (items 1-5 only)
Paul Gobey	Library Development Manager (items 1-6 only)
Ed Rowe	Clerk to the Forum

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Ian Johnson, Anne-Marie Jameson, Wendy Brickett, Wendy Martin and Simon Walton.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2017 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

i. Update on Free Schools

The Interim Director of Learning provided an update on the status of recent Free School applications. Krishna Avanti was hoping to open in 2018 at a temporary site. The Babington and Rushey Mead applications were further advanced than others, but sites and opening dates had not yet been confirmed. This clearly had implications for pupil place planning.

ii. Children's Centre Teachers

The Chair advised that he had been contacted by Julia Pillsbury, Service Manager, Early Help -Targeted Services, with regards to an issue over the performance management of the lead practitioner. Regulations required that this had to be carried out by a qualified teacher, and therefore Julia was unable to carry out that role. The Chair therefore sought Forum's agreement to carrying it out himself.

A concern was raised that there may be a potential conflict of interest, noting that Schools Forum commissioned the activity.

It was agreed that the Interim Director of Learning would discuss the matter with Caroline Tote, Director of Social Care and Early Help, before any outcome was agreed.

Action: Ian Bailey

iii. Secondary revenue growth per pupil funding (additional places)

The Head of Finance confirmed that the arrangements for academies had been revised as discussed in the previous meeting.

5. Update on re-pooling of landlord CMF monies for 2017/18

The Director of Estates and Building Services tabled a paper that outlined the timeframe for development of the commercial offer to schools. He confirmed that this was in line with the contents of a letter that had been sent to all schools in February. The intention was to hold further consultations with schools in order to help shape the offer that was to be presented in December.

Members expressed concern that, despite recent meetings, schools still did not have clarity over exactly what was and was not covered by their existing arrangements and what additional benefits they would receive if they chose to accept the new offer that was being developed.

Schools were unclear regarding what action, if any, was required on their part to obtain sufficient information to enable them to take an informed decision regarding arrangements for the coming year. Frustration was expressed regarding the apparent lack of progress over recent months, noting that the timeline presented did not match that provided by Rachel Webster in May.

The Director of Estates and Building Services acknowledged these concerns, and advised that schools were intended to be a key customer for the redesigned Estates and Building Services team. He stated that as some schools had already taken the decision not to re-pool their CMT monies, they must have already completed due diligence to ensure that they were fulfilling their statutory obligations. However, in light of the feedback received during the meeting, he would try to accelerate the process of drafting the commercial offer.

It was again noted that as a starting point, schools needed to better understand exactly what their current arrangements covered. It was suggested that revisiting the list of services provided under the Lowe Electrical and ATS contracts would be helpful, and that the local authority could provide clarity over the additional services that were provided as part of the existing buy-back and CMF arrangements.

It was agreed that a small working party of Schools Forum members should be formed to meet with the Director of Estates and Building Services in order to try and address the situation. It was suggested that members could include Jane Ridgewell, Steph McDonald and Karl Stewart. Arrangements for a suitable meeting date would be agreed outside of the Schools Forum.

It was agreed to add the issue to the agenda for November's Forum so that all members could receive an update on progress.

Action: Clerk

6. Bookstart funding to 2018/19

The Library Development Manager presented his report. This requested additional funding of £65,000 to support the continued delivery of the Bookstart project until March 2019 from the Early Years Block of DSG.

This request was approved by Forum members.

7. Outturn and school balances

The report of the Head of Finance was received. This confirmed that the total DSG carried forward balance had reduced by £2.5m to £14.2m at the end of the 2016/17 financial year. The balance had been used to provide £1.2m of additional support to the primary sector, as previously agreed by Schools Forum, and to support pressures in the High Needs Block where expenditure had exceeded the budget by £0.71m.

In 2017/18, 60 extra special school places required funding. It was noted that the new national funding formula for the High Needs Block only provided growth funding of £4000 for each additional place, while mainstream special school places typically costed between £20,000 and £35,000.

The current funding position was unsustainable in the long term, so the local authority would be developing proposals to reduce the scale of services funded in the future. The Interim Director of Learning advised that the intention was to find overall savings amounting to 10% of the high needs expenditure. A collective view was being sought with the aid of consultations with primary, secondary and special school colleagues. The aim was to provide detailed recommendations by April 2018, which would seek to deliver improved outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Special school representatives noted that some outstanding GCSE results had recently been delivered by Leicester's special schools. The Interim Director of Learning acknowledged that, but noted that in the national context, Leicester's results lagged behind in areas such as NEET statistics. The review of services would provide an opportunity to re-model the use of resources to help maximise the outcomes for SEN pupils.

The Head of Finance confirmed that his report detailed the balances carried forward by each school at the end of the 2016/17 financial year. A request was received for these balances to be published earlier in future, if possible, and it was confirmed that agreement would be sought to achieve that.

8. National funding formula

The Head of Finance confirmed that the Department for Education had published its policy document on the new national funding formula last week. Some additional funds had been added to previous proposals and the paper confirmed that every school would be at least 1% better off than their previous baseline funding. However, members advised that it had proved difficult to establish exactly how that baseline figure had been arrived at.

The local authority could take a decision during a two year transition period to continue with the existing local funding formula, use an amended local formula or to adopt the new national formula. The Head of Finance advised that his initial view was that it may well be sensible to adopt the national formula immediately, but that modelling of the implications would be carried out before any decision was taken. The impact of the Minimum Funding Guarantee, the introduction of the new IDACI bandings and the distributional effect of the new formula were all important factors that had to be fully understood.

The issue would be discussed further in the November Forum and a short consultation with schools was also planned.

It was confirmed that the policy document specifically allowed de-delegation for school improvement purposes, but was otherwise silent on the issue. In the absence of any guidance to the contrary, The Head of Finance was therefore working on the assumption that de-delegation would continue to be available indefinitely.

9. De-delegation for 2018/19

The draft consultation document for 2018/19 school funding arrangements was received. The Head of Finance confirmed that the document was virtually identical to that used last year, The unit values were unchanged, but the total amounts had been impacted by changes in the number of maintained pupils.

Initial feedback was received from members on the draft consultation. Various suggestions were received and it was agreed that all feedback would be provided to the Head of Finance by Monday 9th October.

To allow adequate time for the consultation exercise to run and for the results to be collated, it was decided to reschedule the next Schools Forum. The meeting on 2nd November would be moved to 30th November instead.

Action: Clerk

The Head of Finance confirmed he would distribute the results of the funding formula modelling exercise well in advance of that meeting.

10. School milk subsidy administration service

The Interim Director of Learning advised that, in light of previous decisions to withdraw local authority services, he was mindful of the need for appropriate consultation before final decisions were taken. He therefore advised Schools Forum members that consideration was being given to withdrawing the administrative support service that was currently offered to schools to reclaim subsidy for milk supplied to pupils.

A recent audit had been completed by one of the funding agencies, and if the local authority was to continue to offer the service, it would be required to implement an entirely new system of audit inspections within schools. This was not viable for the local authority to undertake with the limited resources available. There were a number of specialist external suppliers that provided this service and a significant number of Leicester's schools had already opted to sign up with them. The intention was to consult with schools with a view to withdrawing from the service at the end of the year, if possible.

Members raised no queries or concerns regarding this proposal. It was noted that the free school meals eligibility service was unaffected by these proposals.

11. Any other business

i) Support for schools with licenced deficits

A proposal was received that some of the funding that was set aside for the running costs of Schools Forum could be used to pay for Business Managers to support schools with a licenced deficit. The Interim Director of Learning noted that this would provide the Exceptional Cost Pressures Panel with the capacity to engage more fully with schools, and that pre-emptive action may help avoid problems arising in future.

Members agreed that they were happy to support the proposal on a trial basis.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.10 p.m.