

Leicester City Council Schools Forum

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting held at 1pm on Thursday 31 January 2019 at Soar Valley Training Centre, Gleneagles Avenue.

Present:

Schools members:

Mainstream Academies:	Jim Cook (Chair) Mike Hobbs, Danny Bullock, David Wyatt
Special Academies:	Julie Aquilina
Special School Governors:	~
Special School Heads:	Sarah Osborne
Secondary School Governors:	~
Secondary School Head representatives:	Julie Robinson, Anna White
Primary School Governors:	Khalid Mahmood, Wendy Martin
Primary School Head representatives:	Liz Warren, Karl Stewart, Nigel Bruen, Jane Ridgewell
Pupil Referral Units:	Shaun Whittingham

Non-Schools Members:

Teaching Unions:	Jessica Edmonds
School support staff Unions:	~
16-19 Providers:	~
Early Years PVI Providers:	Michelle Orton

In attendance:

Paul Tinsley	Director of Learning and Inclusion
Martin Judson	Head of Finance, Education & Children's Services
Simon Walton	Senior Accountant, Finance
Ed Rowe	Clerk to the Forum
Purminder Samaria	Observer

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Glenys Mulvany and Steve Wilson.

2. Declarations of interest

A declaration of interest was received from Khalid Mahmood with regards to de-delegation decisions, as a result of his employment by SDSA.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2018 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings, subject to the clarification that for Item 4 v) Page 2 COLGA it was Wendy Martin who was pursuing closing the account, rather than Alan Bowles.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

i) Update on re-pooling of landlord CMF monies for 2017/18

The Director of Learning and Inclusion provided an update from the Head of Services, Estates & Building. This confirmed that re-pooling of CMF monies was no longer an option. Schools were either using the BESS scheme or contracting other providers or agents to provide services.

ii) Performance management of the lead professional, Children's Centre Teachers

This issue had been resolved and no further action was required.

iii) COLGA

There had been difficulties in finding a second authorised signatory in order to close the account. The matter was being progressed and in due course the funds would be returned to the schools that had originally subscribed.

iv) Bookstart

The Director of Learning and Inclusion noted that £12,000 of funding was available via Closing the Gap.

Schools had been contacted to establish if they might be willing to contribute funding in order to continue the service. Primary schools had expressed a keenness to see the project continue and would now be formally asked for contributions. Secondary schools had not collectively reached an agreement to contribute.

Members agreed to a proposal from the Director of Learning and Inclusion that he would confirm to the service manager that agreement had been reached to continue the project for a further year, and that a decision would subsequently be made on where the funding would come from.

v) Membership & constitution

The Director of Learning and Inclusion confirmed he had taken steps to identify a representative from the Early Years PVI providers, and Michelle Orton had been appointed.

The Chair confirmed that he had written to regular non-attenders, and as a result one member had resigned. A replacement maintained special school governor representative was required as a result, and nominations had been requested by the clerk.

The Chair had attended a recent meeting of MAT CEOs to discuss the selection process for mainstream academy representatives to Schools Forum. It had been decided that future nominations would be sought from both MAT CEOs and headteachers. Mike Hobbs had recently joined as a member which meant one vacancy remained. Jane Ridgewell noted that in future she would most likely be unable to attend as a maintained school representative, due to conversion plans, but it was possible that she may subsequently put herself forward as an academy representative.

The Chair advised members that he would be stepping down from Schools Forum at the end of the academic year, so a further mainstream academy vacancy would arise at that time. It would also be necessary to elect a replacement Chair.

vi) School Funding de-delegation arrangements

a) Schools in Financial Difficulty

Maintained primary school representatives unanimously confirmed they wished to reject de-delegation for 2019/20.

b) Schools Facing Exceptional Cost Pressures

Maintained primary school representatives unanimously confirmed they wished to reject de-delegation for 2019/20.

Members welcomed the contents of the report that had been provided detailing year to date expenditure for the ECP and SIFD schemes. One further panel meeting had been scheduled to deal with remaining bids in the current financial year. The Head of Finance confirmed any underspend would be rolled forward into DSG reserves.

It was agreed that a report detailing the final figures for both ECP and SIFD schemes would be presented to the March Schools Forum.

Action: Martin Judson

The Director of Learning and Inclusion noted that as these schemes were being withdrawn, schools with an overspend would in future require a licensed deficit agreement and would also carry forward the deficit within their own books for a potentially longer period.

c) Behaviour Support Services

It was noted that secondaries had decided not to de-delegate funding for this service in the coming year. It was also suggested that the service may potentially have an underspend of £34,000 in the current financial year, and that instead of refunding a portion of that money to secondary schools, the service could be requested to carry out the usual Year 6 transfer work instead.

The Head of Finance advised that it was not yet clear if the service would indeed be underspent at the end of the academic year and noted that the authority do not refund underspends or ask for additional funding for overspends.

Members requested more information be provided to them in-year on forecasted expenditure for de-delegated projects, rather than having to wait for out-turn reports after the end of the financial year. It was noted that the Closing the Gap fund was monitored very closely, and it was suggested the same approach could be adopted for other services. The Director of Learning and Inclusion supported the request for greater transparency during the financial year.

The Head of Finance agreed to provide figures for both the Behaviour Support Team and Primary School Improvement at the next Forum in March.

Action: Martin Judson

vii) School resource management self-assessment tool

The self-assessment tool published by the Department for Education had been circulated to all members by the clerk.

5. Schools Block budget 2019/20

The report of the Head of Finance was received. This set out the DSG allocation and Schools Block budget for 2019/20.

The Schools Block allocation had increased to £248.856m, with pupil numbers increasing by 1162 to 52,439. Total DSG including Central Schools Services Block, Early Years Block and the High Needs Block amounted to £325.178m.

Members were reminded that the Department for Education had advised they would base this year's Growth Fund on historical expenditure. Forum had therefore specifically taken a decision to increase growth funding to £4.5m last year. However, the DfE had actually adopted a different formula-based method for 2019/20 and, as a result, funding provided for growth only totalled £2.494m. This was believed to be insufficient to provide places for the anticipated increase in pupil numbers, which was expected to be very similar to the previous year.

Furthermore, the authority was required to set aside £777,131 to fund places at the new Castle Mead Academy. No additional funding had been received from the DfE for this expenditure.

The report therefore proposed capping gains in schools to 0.5% in order to increase the total Growth Fund to £4.246m, including the Castle Mead funding. This would deduct almost £1m from schools' allocation. Table 5 on page 7 set out the impact upon schools of this proposal.

Members were invited to express their views on the proposed Growth Fund. It was noted that the local authority had a duty to ensure adequate school places were available, but there was a danger that, if schools were not adequately funded for growth, they might refuse to take additional pupils.

It was suggested that the proposed funding rates for growth be evaluated to see whether or not they were still appropriate. It was noted that secondary growth was currently funded at £2603 per annum, with primary schools being funded via individual bids based on marginal costs. By contrast, the DfE were using rates of £2050 for secondary and £1370 for primary.

Members also requested a table showing the specific impact upon each individual school before arriving at a decision. This was agreed by Forum, although the Head of Finance stressed that this would include confidential information regarding budgets that had not yet been made available to schools.

The Director of Learning and Inclusion agreed to ask the Director of Capital programmes for the latest growth forecasts.

It was agreed that a Funding Formula Review Group meeting be convened to consider the proposal, before Schools Forum members took a collective decision via an electronic vote.

The FFRG meeting was arranged for Wednesday 6 February in the Soar Valley training centre. All Schools Forum members were welcome to attend if they wished.

Members were then asked to consider the recommendations set out on the report, with the following outcomes:

- i. Note the 2019/20 DSG settlement – **agreed**
- ii. Note the Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0.5% - **agreed**
- iii. Approve the recommended Growth Fund of £4.246m – **deferred**
- iv. Note that overall cap on gains will be 0.5% - **deferred**
- v. Maintained primary school representatives to confirm whether or not to de-delegate ECP and SIFD funds - **agreed not to de-delegate either scheme**
- vi. Request maintained school representatives agree the final de-delegated funding totals in the report – **agreed**
- vii. Approve the expenditure to be funded from CSSB - **agreed**

6. Any other business

i) General Fund budget 2019-20

The Head of Finance noted that the Council had published the proposed 2019/20 General Fund budget. Members were invited to consider the proposals and submit any comments via the Council website.

It was agreed that a link to the report would be circulated to all members.

Action: Clerk

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