

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM

21 November 2024

PRESENT: - B Lawrance (Chairman)

Schools Representatives

Mr B Lawrance, Mrs R Stephenson, Mrs D Senior.

Academy Representatives

Mr D Keogh and Mr P Raspin.

PVI Representatives

Mrs C Williams

Non School Representatives

Dr H Beverley

Elected Representatives

Cllr J Reed

Local Authority Officers

Mrs T Falshaw, Mrs J Standing, Mrs W Holmes, Mr P Tinsley, Mrs K Hackett and Mrs A Dawson (Secretary).

Ms R Haigh attended to speak on items 1039-1041.

The meeting was held at Church Square House.

1034 WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS/APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Rachel Abbott, Andrea Nuttall, Nicola Raines, Leon Riley, Rob Biglands, Anna Cvijectic, Nikki Jones and Zoe Birchall.

1035 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND PERSONAL OR PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS (IF ANY)

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Personal or Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

1036 MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING FOR APPROVAL

That the minutes of the last meeting held on 20 June 2024, having been printed and circulated amongst the members, be taken as read and correctly

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recorded, and be signed by the Chair.

The Secretary advised Forum members that Mrs Trish Atkinson, Headteacher of Brigg Primary School, had come forward as a replacement Maintained Primary representative, following Maz Potterton's retirement.

Resolved – That Mrs T Atkinson be nominated as the new Maintained Primary representative and be invited to the next meeting of the Forum.

1037 SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2025/2026

Mrs J Standing presented the report.

The report informed Forum members of the school funding formula for the financial year 2025/26.

In November 2024, the DfE announced an additional £1.3b in funding to cover the remaining costs of the 2024 teachers' pay award, an increase to the mainstream schools National Funding Formula (NFF) and increases to the pupil premium and other elements of core funding.

The report highlighted the changes to the 2025/26 NFF and detailed what was requested of the Forum members. Mrs T Falshaw explained that most of the increase in funding was being rolled into existing grants, the actual increase was 0.5 to 0.6%.

Mr P Thompson asked if, in terms of modelling, there was any way of knowing how certain schools could be impacted using this formula. Mrs Falshaw advised that the DfE had said that the information would be available to schools at the end of November. Mr D Keogh enquired if there had been any information given on national insurance. Mrs Falshaw explained that they had been informed that it would be funded but further information was to follow.

Cllr J Reed updated on the decision regarding the School Improvement Service. Following the conversation last year around whether elected members would take the decision to support the service; the issue was never resolved. She had spoken to the Cabinet, reiterating that she felt the service was very valuable and should be available to all. It was very important that the School Improvement Service was prioritised and accessible.

Cllr Reed explained that she felt it was important to support the service and work together, her view as a Cabinet Member was that a way to support the SIP provision was needed.

Forum members enquired as to rough timescales for the decision on funding the service. Cllr Reed advised that she would feedback on the decision at the next meeting.

Resolved – (a) That the application of the MFG at 0%, which was the

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maximum permissible level and to apply capping and scaling to achieve affordability, be endorsed; (b) that the impact of applying the sparsity distance taper be noted; (c) that the possibility of the removal of the exceptional factor for listed buildings be noted; (d) that final proposals for schools funding will be submitted to the meeting in January 2025, on receipt of the final funding allocations in December 2024, and (e) that Cllr J Reed feeds back on the decision on the SIP service at the next meeting.

1038 CORE SCHOOL BUDGET GRANT (CSBG) 2024/25

Mrs J Standing presented the report.

In July 2024, the Department for Education (DfE) announced additional national funding of almost £1.1b through the Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) to support schools with their overall costs and specifically the teachers' pay award and support staff pay offer 2024/25.

The CSBG was in addition to the Teachers' Pay Award Grant that related to the 2023/24 pay award and the Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant that supported the increase in the employer contribution rate that came into effect on 1 April 2024.

£97m would also be provided for Early Years and Post 16 settings. Funding for early years would be distributed through the Early Years Budget Grant. Post-16 funding information was pending.

The report set out information on eligibility, funding rates, paying the grant and 2025/26 funding.

Resolved – (a) That the details of the Core Schools Budget be noted, and (b) that the methodology to pass funding to special schools and AP settings, as per the outcome of the consultation, be supported.

1039 SEND BANDING REVIEW FOR EDUCATION HEALTH AND CARE PLANS

Ms Rachael Haigh presented the report.

The report provided the Schools Forum with the current position in respect of the Banding Review for Schools.

Funding for North Lincolnshire education providers came in four parts:

- The Early Years Block which funded the free entitlement to nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds and some 2 year olds.
- The Schools Block which funded mainstream schools (and indirectly academies)
- The Central Schools Service Block which provided funding for the council to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in state-funded maintained schools and academies
- The High Needs Block which supported all pupils with needs that cost

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in excess of £10,000. This was all pupils in special schools, alternative provision and the top ups for some pupils in mainstream schools.

The report gave details of the Banding system:

- In July 2024, the Department for Education (DfE) announced additional national funding of almost £1.1b through the Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) to support schools with their overall costs and specifically the teachers' pay award and support staff pay offer 2024/25.
- The CSBG was in addition to the Teachers' Pay Award Grant that related to the 2023/24 pay award and the Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant that supported the increase in the employer contribution rate that came into effect on 1 April 2024.
- £97m would also be provided for Early Years and Post 16 settings. Funding for early years would be distributed through the Early Years Budget Grant. Post-16 funding information was pending.

The funding may enable a range of interventions, training, specialist support, group activities and/or some 1-1 support which may be from a teacher or support staff. The effectiveness of the EHCP would therefore be judged by the achievement of outcomes.

In recent years there had been no review of bandings and funding had not increased for schools to support additional and special educational needs for children in receipt of an EHCP. Independent providers requested uplifts year on year for children accessing their provisions, however there was no system in place for schools to receive an annual uplift for EHCPs which may help to support children remaining in mainstream education with a resultant saving on external provisions.

Following Covid, the needs for many children had significantly increased with far more children needing additional support than ever before. Requests for support through EHCPs has also increased. In January 2020 there were 974. Currently North Lincolnshire held 1,569 EHCPs.

Ms Haigh advised that first meetings had taken place on the review, and further meetings would take place with mainstream schools to investigate how combined bandings would work, these would be likely to happen in September 2025. Representation would be sought through Secondary Matters and Primary Heads.

Mr D Keogh enquired about additional funding for SEND. Mr B Lawrance stated that it was important that the funding was still received, despite schools managing the money responsibly. Mrs K Hackett advised that she was happy to raise the issue at the next DfE meeting; to seek more information on the additional funding.

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Discussion ensued on SEND and Alternative Provision placements, along with resource provision locally.

Resolved – (a) That banding increases for children with an EHCP, with a launch date of September 2024 (backdated to April 2024) be acknowledged and supported, and (b) that Mrs K Hackett raises the issue of additional SEND funding at the next DfE meeting.

1040 EDUCATED OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL (EOTAS)

Ms R Haigh presented the report.

All councils must have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child and parents when exercising its Special Education Needs (SEN) functions (Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014). As part of this, there may be circumstances where a child, young person and/or parents/carers felt strongly that they, or their child with SEND (with or without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)) should be educated at home. This was normally referred to as Elective Home Education.

In consultation with the child/young person, parents/carers, and professionals involved, it may be confirmed it would be inappropriate for the child or young person to receive the necessary special educational provision in a school, post-16 institution, or state-funded early years setting. In cases like these, special educational provision could be made other than at school or college (Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014). This was referred to as Education Other Than At School (EOTAS).

If the council agreed to an EOTAS package, Section 42(2) of the Children and Families Act 2014 placed a duty on the council to ensure that the child or young person was receiving education as set out in the EHCP.

The proposal to introduce guidance on EOTAS from the position of North Lincolnshire, created expectations for the council, settings, parents/carers and children/young people around the process for having EOTAS agreed.

There had been an increase in EOTAS requests – seven requests have been received for EOTAS since the beginning of September 2024. North Lincolnshire currently had a total of 15 young people as EOTAS.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

1041 SPECIALIST RESOURCE PROVISION

Ms R Haigh presented the report.

A shared ambition to develop SEND provision in mainstream schools would enhance practice and support improving SEND sufficiency, as well as providing staff development to improve capacity across the education system in North Lincolnshire.

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Further investigation and potential investment in Specialist Resource Provisions (SRP) was underway. SRPs were beginning to be widely used in a number of councils to enhance SEND provision and support more children to remain in mainstream. SRPs may provide additional specialist facilities on a mainstream school site for a small number of pupils, typically less than 10 per classroom, who would have Education, Health and Care Plans. In SRPs, the pupils were on roll of the mainstream school, and facilities within such provisions were additional to those normally provided in a mainstream school to support special needs.

Following on from the last meeting, progress has been made in engaging schools in developing SRPs. The report gave details of progress and the stages in place.

Pressure and demand for specialist places continued to increase, including that of independent special school places. The lack of spaces had led to a backlog of children and young people having a specialist place agreed but unable to access.

Mr B Lawrance enquired whether the intention would be for children in SRPs in primary school to transition into mainstream. Ms Haigh advised that there had been issue in other authorities when children had reached Year 6, however, it was hoped that they would go into a mainstream secondary school, if the area of need aligned.

Mrs W Holmes believed it was important to acknowledge how the council and schools currently worked together to try and find solutions for existing pressures.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

1042 EARLY YEARS BUDGET GRANT 2024/25

Mrs T Falshaw presented the report on behalf of Mrs N Raines.

An additional £34 million of funding for councils in 2024/2025 had been agreed to support early years providers with their costs, following the teacher pay award. The funding was to be distributed via the Early Years Budget Grant (EYBG).

The grant was payable for a 7 month period between 1 September 2024 and 31 March 2025 and totalled £67,408 in North Lincolnshire. The funding allocation was calculated based on universal and extended hours taken-up by 3 and 4 year olds and was paid at a rate of 7p per hour. Unlike the main funding formula, the allocation would not be adjusted based on actual take-up.

Councils were required to certify that they had passed on the funding to providers; it was not to be used for contingency funding or to support council costs. Councils must pass on the funding in a clear and transparent way, so that providers could understand how allocations had been determined locally.

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It was proposed the grant funding was allocated as an additional lump sum payment to all providers in the spring term 2025, based on actual take-up of universal and extended hours in the autumn 2024 and spring 2025 terms.

It was proposed to pass on, in full, the EYBG hourly rate, at 7p per hour for each of the universal and extended funded hours.

The funding allocation had been modelled, based on funded hours in the spring term 2024 and provisional funded hours in the autumn term 2024. In total, the modelled estimated grant funding payable total was £69,121; this was slightly in excess of the grant allocation. It was proposed that any overspend was met from the early years reserves.

Resolved – (a) That the Early Years Budget Grant allocations was noted, and (b) that the proposal for distributing the funds at 7p per hour per child, based on take up in the autumn 2024 and spring 2025 terms be supported.

1043 DE-DELEGATION OF BUDGETS 2025/26

Mrs T Falshaw presented the report.

As part of the Department for Education's School Funding Reforms introduced from April 2013, councils were directed to delegate specific budgets to schools and academies.

Since the regulations allowed for the de-delegation of budgets for specific services for maintained primary and maintained secondary schools only.

Funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the formula but could be passed back, or de-delegated, for maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools with Schools Forum approval.

De-delegation did not apply to special schools, or pupil referral units (PRUs). However, those schools and academies would have the option to buy back these services at a cost based on the same amount per pupil as for maintained primary and secondary schools.

In the case of special schools and PRUs, the funding to buy such services would be included in any top-up payments. Any decisions made to de-delegate in 2024/25 related to that year only, new decisions would be required for any service to be de-delegated in 2025/26.

Schools Forum members for primary maintained schools and secondary maintained schools must decide separately for each phase whether each service should be provided centrally; the decision would apply to all maintained mainstream schools in that phase. They must decide on fixed contributions for these services so that funding could then be removed through the formula before school budgets were issued. There may be different decisions for each phase.

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The report set out details of services that could be delegated and those which were currently de-delegated in the council.

There had been a consultation on the SIP delegation with regard to a 3% increase, which all schools were in favour of. Free schools meals remained at the current price.

Mrs K Hackett advised that the SIP offer was the same across all schools/academies. Headteachers could request a variety of reviews. The council believed in the ethos for all children but did not want maintained schools to pay for the service and academies not to buy in.

Mr P Thompson stated that his understanding was that the funding for the SIP service was a great offer but that year was funded through an amount of reserve funding. Mrs T Falshaw advised that this year it had been funded through de-delegation reserves, with the remainder from core budgets. The service could potentially be funded from reserves going forward but would leave a very small reserve.

Mr P Thompson advised that he was going to put together a consultation. Mr B Lawrance stated that anything less than what was currently on offer would not be acceptable. It was important to explain how the service worked and why it happened.

Resolved – (a) That Schools Forum members for primary maintained schools approve the de-delegation of budgets, as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report, for the maintained primary phase; (b) that Schools Forum members for secondary maintained schools approve the delegation of budgets, as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report, for the maintained secondary phase, and (c) that Mr P Thompson liaises with the Chair of the Forum with regard to putting together a consultation with reference to the SIP service.