

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM

21 January 2021

PRESENT:

School Representatives

Mr B Lawrance, Mrs D West, Mr R Biglands, Miss A Nuttall, Mrs R Stephenson, Mrs A Cvijetic, Mrs M Potterton

Academies Representatives

Mr P Raspin, Miss Z Bidmead, Mr M Adnitt and Mr A West

Non Schools Representative

Mr P Thompson

PVI Representatives

Mrs M Drury and Mrs C Williams

Executive Elected Members

Cllr J Reed

Local Authority Officers

Ms T Elliott (Strategic Lead – Servicedesk), Mr D Chaplin (Head of Access and Inclusion), Ms R Maughan (Specialist – Commercial), Ms J Frost (Education Inclusion Lead Officer), Mrs J Flintoff (Head of Standards and Effectiveness), Ms N Raines (Early Years Sufficiency Manager) and Mrs A Dawson (Democratic Services – Secretary to the Forum)

The meeting was quorate.

The forum met via MS Teams.

917 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs T Millard, Ms L Wilson, Mrs S Thomas and Mr M Lochran.

918 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – The Chair welcomed members.

919 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND PERSONAL OF PERSONAL PREJUDICIAL INTEREST - There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and personal or personal and prejudicial interests.

920 MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING DATED 1 October 2020 - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020, having been printed and circulated amongst the members, be taken as read and correctly recorded, and be signed by the Chair.

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921 **MATTERS ARISING** - Item 926 – Mr Chaplin advised that discussions were taking place with the council’s finance team to enable more information to be sent to schools.

Item 910 – the Secretary informed the meeting that Mr M Adnitt, Principal of The St Lawrence Academy had filled the vacancy for Secondary Academy representative and that Mrs A Cvijetic, Headteacher of Berkeley Primary School, had filled the vacancy for Primary maintained representative. Both new members were in attendance.

922 **DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2021/22** – Ms T Elliott presented the report.

On 17 December 2020 the Education Funding Agency published the 2021-22 Dedicated School Grant (DSG) allocations. These were based on October 2020 School Census data.

The allocation for North Lincolnshire was £152,810m after deductions for the direct funding of high needs by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The report provided information on the planned use of the DSG for 2021/22. The DSG allocations were presented in four blocks, each block was determined by a separate national funding formula:

- Schools Block
- Central Services Schools Block (CSSB)
- Early Years Block
- High Needs Block

Ms Elliott advised that from 2020/21 the Department for Education (DfE) began to reduce the element of funding within the CSSB for historic commitments. For 2021/22 allocations had been reduced by 20%. The DfE intended to provide further details in due course on how this would be funded for future years.

The council must allocate 95% of its 3 and 4-year-old funding to providers; 5% could be retained for central services or for movement out of the early years block to another block. Schools Forum approval was required for central early years block provision.

National increases to high needs funding meant that councils saw a further increase in funding for 2021/22. Using 2020/21 allocations as a baseline this equated to a minimum per head increase of 8% distributed through the high needs national formula.

The Chair enquired whether the increase in the high needs block would continue? Ms Elliott explained that the national increase was to address pressures, however an uplift could be seen next year. Mr Chaplin continued by stating that the council needed to think about how high needs resources were utilised and that he wished to have a discussion with heads on improving inclusivity.

Resolved – That the centrally retained schools’ budget, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report:

- Central spend on the early years block provision
- School Admissions
- Servicing of Schools Forum

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- Contribution to the responsibilities that councils hold for all schools,
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- be approved.

923 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA 2021-22 – Mrs R Maughan presented the report.

On 17 December 2020 the Education and Skills Funding Agency published the 2021-22 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Allocations, based on October 2020 School Census data.

The element of DSG available for the Individual Schools Budget (ISB), for all mainstream schools was £121.080m (£112.670m in 2020/21). The Operational guide set out how individual ISB shares could be calculated.

To continue the introduction of the National Funding Formula (NFF) the Department for Education (DfE) intended to consult on forward plans to move to a ‘hard’ NFF in the future so that resources were distributed based on the individual needs and characteristics of every school in the country.

The council’s local formula now reflected the NFF for all factors with the variation to use pupils travel distance to school measured by road or footpath rather than ‘as the crow flies’ when applying the criteria for sparsity. The DfE was continuing to work on a more suitable formula to allocate sparsity funding. The factor values were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

The report set out the final proposals for the North Lincolnshire schools funding formula.

Mrs Maughan advised that an analysis had taken place on the minimum and maximum levels of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) permitted and shared her screen in order that members could see the impact.

It was noted that both options for consideration required a contribution from the earmarked reserve.

Resolved – (a) That the distribution of the school’s block funding to all schools using Option 1, as set out in the report at paragraph 3.2, be endorsed, and (b) that the contribution of £7.80 per pupil towards the costs of Education Functions the council provided on behalf of maintained schools be approved by maintained schools’ representatives.

924 EARLY YEARS – DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT – Mrs N Raines presented the report.

Early Years funding was participation based. The Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant for each financial year was revised based on three census counts. Funding allocations were currently provisional for 2021/22 - final allocations are based on 5/12 of January 2020 part time equivalent (pte) child numbers (to cover April 2021 to August 2021) and 7/12 of the January 2021 pte child numbers (to cover September 2020 to March 2022).

Final funding allocations for 2020/21 were based on pte numbers of children recorded on the January 2022 census. The census in January 2021 was confirmed. Where attendance was below 85 per cent of the January 2020 census levels and where councils could provide

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evidence of increased attendance during the spring term a top up would be provided. The top up would only pay for those additional places since the census count and the total allocation for spring term would be limited to a cap equivalent to 85 per cent of the January 2020 census level.

Funding allocations had increased for the 2021/22 financial year with an additional eight pence and six pence per hour per child on the hourly rate for two-year olds (£5.36) and three and four-year olds (£4.44) respectively. Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and Disability Access Funding (DAF) remained at 53p per hour per child and £615 per annum respectively.

Two-year olds were eligible for a maximum of 15 hours funded early learning and care where their family circumstances meant that they were eligible for free school meals, where the family was in receipt of Universal Credit/Tax Credits with an income of approximately £16,000, or where the child was in or had left the care of a local authority; was in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or the child had an education, health and care plan. Approximately 550 children were eligible each term in North Lincolnshire.

All three and four-year olds were entitled to a maximum of 15 hours funded early education in the maintained, private or voluntary sector for 38 weeks of the year. Children with parents in employment may also be eligible for an additional 15 funded hours, if they were both employed. Approximately 44 per cent of funded children took-up the additional funded hours in North Lincolnshire. Provider payments were determined using the Early Years Single Funding formula comprised of a base rate and a number of supplements. EYPP and DAF were ring fenced funding supplements for children that met eligibility criteria.

The report gave details of the revised allocation budgets for two, three and four year funding.

Resolved – (a) That the provisional funding allocation in relation to the Early Years Block of the DSG for 2021/22 be noted; (b) that the proposed rate of £5.32 per hour per child for all funded two year olds be supported; (c) that the proposed local supplements of the Early Years Single Funding Formula, deprivation and a sufficiency lump sum, be supported; (d) that an increase to the base rate of 7p to £4.20 per hour per child, as set out in scenario two in the report and the preference of the childcare sector, be supported and (e) that the proposal the Early Years Pupil Premium (53p per hour per child) and the Disability Access Funding (£615 per annum lump sum) be paid at the nationally required rates be supported.

925 **DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT (DSG) HIGH NEEDS FUNDING 2020/2021** – Ms J Frost presented the report.

The report provided an update on the DSG High Needs outturn figures for 2020/2021 and looked ahead to developments in 2021-22.

Requests for an Education Health and Care (EHC) assessment of need had risen year on year, in line with national comparators. During the coronavirus pandemic there had been a significant increase in requests for an EHC assessment of need, which had also been reported nationally. There were currently 1062 children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Fifty-eight EHCPs were ceased in the previous 12 months and a further 69 EHC assessments were in progress.

The rate of fixed term exclusions at secondary level had considerably reduced during the Covid-19 period. This gave a real opportunity to ‘re-imagine’ inclusion into the future,

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considering the learning from the Covid-19 response. Throughout the autumn term, there continued to be minimal Fixed Term exclusions at primary level. To date, there had been no exclusions notified to the council during the current Covid lockdown.

There has also been a big reduction in permanent exclusion rates in during the Covid period (autumn term 19/20 academic year identified 15 permanent exclusions with 6 for the same period this autumn term 20/21).

The Fair Access and Inclusion Panels continued to sit fortnightly for secondary and monthly for primary. Protocols for both panels were currently being refreshed to include information on access to the new KS2 Coritani. Coritani KS2 opened its doors to pupils this month and an offer of support was in place for schools during Covid lockdown. An official opening would take place at a later date.

Ms Frost also gave members information on the SEND Capital Grant, highlighting key points.

Mr Chaplin advised that North Lincolnshire were around the national average with regard to EHCPs as a percentage of the children's population of the area. He explained that some work had begun and several current strategies would require a revisit. A draft SEND Inclusion Plan 2021-24 would shortly be circulated to schools. Feedback on the draft plan before February half term would be appreciated.

Resolved – That head teachers and principals continued to work with the council to implement and embed area-wide solutions:

- i) Specialist advice and support with reference to behaviour for learning at secondary phase
- ii) Further develop local inclusion opportunities (SEND Capital Funding) to enable opportunities for a further completion exercise
- iii) School level planning/target setting to reduce exclusion.

926 **CENTRAL SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS** – Mrs J Flintoff presented the report.

The report updated the forum on further reductions to the Historic Commitments element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and sought to consider the options with regard to the implications for its current use in supporting schools.

The DSG Historic Commitments funding currently funded two main strands of work:

- Peer Leader and School Improvement Partner programmes: school improvement focussed activities which were managed through the council.
- Learning networks: largely delegated to the professional associations, as well as funding some central workforce development such as the aspirant head programme, Safeguarding Pro, and innovation grants for schools or the Primary Engineering project.

In Autumn 2019 the Department for Education announced the intention to make a 20% year on year reduction to the Historic Commitments budget. The 2020/21 Historic Commitments element of the DSG should have been reduced by £73,000, however Schools' Forum agreed

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that £55,000 could be contributed from DSG earmarked reserves to support transition and enable consultation to happen as to how to secure reductions.

However, this meant that for 2021/22 there would be a steeper reduction across the historic commitments top line, resulting in a total budget for Peer Leadership Programme, SIP School Improvement Support and the Learning Networks of £233,000. This reduction presented some challenging choices.

The report set out the two options available for consideration. A discussion ensued on the issues and implications of both options.

Resolved – That Option 2, as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report, be approved.

927 **THE SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS** – Ms R Maughan presented the report.

Councils were required to publish schemes for financing schools, setting out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintained. It was statutory guidance that set out what councils must do to comply with the law (School & Early Years Finance Regulations 2020).

The scheme contained requirements relating to the financial management and associated issues which were binding on both the council and the Governing Bodies of schools.

From time to time the councils needed to revise the scheme, revisions included directed revisions by the Department for Education, other important changes and administrative changes proposed by the council.

All proposed amendments must be submitted to the Schools Forum for approval by members representing maintained schools.

The report set out the two directed revisions and revisions proposed by the council.

Resolved – That the changes to the Scheme of Finance, as set out in the report, be approved.

928 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** – The Secretary informed members that the representative for the RC Diocese, who had been appointed in January 2020, had not as yet attended a meeting of the forum. **It was agreed that** the Secretary contacts the diocese to ask if the current representative wished to continue as a member.

929 **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS** – **Resolved** – That the next meeting of the forum would take place on Tuesday 23 March 2021 at 2.00pm via MS Teams.

A further meeting was scheduled for Thursday 10 June 2021, also at 2.00pm.