

EAST SUSSEX SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the East Sussex Schools Forum held at Wellhurst Golf and Country Club on 23 November 2018.

PRESENT

Richard Thomas (Pevensey & Westham Primary)
Richard Blakeley (Parkside Primary)
Lizzie Field (Park Mead Primary)
Emily Beer (Willingdon Community)
Monica Whitehead (Claverham Community College)
James Freeston (King Offa Primary Academy)
Phil Matthews (Hailsham Community College Academy Trust)
Joanna Sanchez (Diocese of Arundel and Brighton)
Julie Fahy (Representing Anna Robinson of Beacon Academy)
Richard Preece (Saxon Mount and Torfield)
Mandy Watson (Diocese of Chichester)
Geoffry Lucas (Etchingam CE Primary School)
Jane Johnson (Newick CE Primary)
Hugh Hennebry - Chair (Uckfield College)
Helen Key (Chailey School)
Frank Stanford (Sabden Multi Academy Trust)
Stuart Gallimore (Director Children's Services)
Cllr Bob Standley (Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability)
Fiona Wright (Assistant Director Education & ISEND)
Edward Beale (Schools Funding Manager)
Mark Whiffin (Head of Finance)
Sarah Rice (Finance Manager – Schools)
Kirsten Coe (BSD Finance)
Gary Langford (Place Planning Manager)
Amanda Altenhoven (Clerk)

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Hugh welcomed all and thanked everyone for their attendance. He confirmed the meeting was quorate, recognising there had been a number of apologies.

1.2 Apologies received from:

- Debbie Gilbert – Burwash CEP School
- Kate Owbridge – Ashdown Primary
- Vicky Richards – St Mark's CEP School

- Anna Robinson – Beacon Academy (Julie Fahy attending to represent)
- Sarah Pringle – Seahaven Academy
- Victoria Stevens – Eastbourne Academy
- Andrew Ferguson – Rye Academy Trust
- Phil Clarke (Trade Union Representative)
- Lesley Brown (Early Years)

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 The Minutes for 28 September were signed off by the Chair as a true record.
- 2.2 Noted that there were revised minutes issued (Wednesday) - due to incorrect headings only.

3 MATTERS ARISING AND DE-DELEGATED ITEMS

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 3.2 Both the previously vacant academy positions have now been filled by Andrew Ferguson for the Primary phase and Victoria Stevens for the Secondary Phase
- 3.3 Fiona gave a verbal update further to the September Schools Forum meeting regarding EALs, the EALs briefing note was sent prior to this meeting. The main discussion on the paper was highlighted by Fiona and she continued to further explain the paper, stressing the requirements needed to run the service. The de-delegated points in the paper were further explained and it was stressed that both primary and secondary support were needed to be able to continue the service. As discussed at the previous meeting primary phase schools were in support of de-delegation for 19/20 and secondary were not. It was then explained that the officers went away to look at how the service could continue using a different delivery model. The officers made contact with academies to gauge what their commitment might be. There was some lack of response, but from information gathered it was found that there would not be an adequate upfront commitment from academies. This means the LA cannot continue to provide the service on behalf of schools. It was then explained that a new strategy was looked at for the service to be delivered for just the primary phase schools. It was explained further as to how to run this cost-effectively and Fiona explained the challenges of this taking in to account the overheads and budget. The view that was ultimately reached was the service would not be viable.
- 3.4 The consultation process has begun informally; staff have been advised and have been given information in meetings. The proposal is that the Service will run up until 31st March 2019 for Secondary and will then cease. The proposal is that the Service will run until the end of August 2019 for Primary and then will cease. The consultation process will launch on 28th November 2018 with a pause over Christmas and will restart for the Spring term.
- 3.5 A question was asked how the funding would work until August 2019. FW said there would be a 5/12 de-delegation from Primary schools to deliver the service until the end of August for primary schools only.

4 ESCC FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION OUTCOME 2019/20

- 4.1 Ed Beale went through the paper and gave an update to the Forum on the outcome of the Funding Formula consultation. EB mentioned that 35% of schools in the Primary phase responded and 50% in the Secondary Phase and went through some of the comments that were received from respondents.

4.2 Of the 53 responses received from Primary schools, 51 were in favour of the proposals, 1 was not in favour and 1 was unsure. Some of the comments from primary schools were that they agreed with the changes but wanted to point out that small schools were affected by reducing the lump sum. EB said that this was recognised by the group, which is why the MFG was set as a positive. Others said it was fair and working towards the NFF whilst another said the proposal was a good compromise, making sure all saw at least a 0.5% increase which is what the DfE wanted and ensuring larger gains for those that were due to receive more under the NFF. There was no additional comments included by the school that was not in favour.

4.3 For the secondary phase, 14 responses were received, all in favour. Examples of responses received included one school agreeing to the proposal as it seemed fair for most schools, whilst another agreed reluctantly. They were concerned that their 3 year plan was very different to what had been previously shown. EB said this could be seen to be due to a change in their NOR and not a change in the formula. The school also said that they were expecting £4,800 per pupil under the NFF which would not be reached under the proposal. EB said that the amount relates to the NFF minimum amount per pupil and due to affordability with this overall proposal, we were unable to reach it, and that a number of other schools were also in that situation.

4.4 A report recommending the changes for the 2019/20 formula as proposed will go to Lead Member for Education and Inclusion Special Education Needs and Disability on 24 January 2019 for final approval.

The Vote to carry this item forward was held: Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

In approving the proposal the item will therefore be carried forward to Lead Member on 24 January 2019.

4.5 Cllr Standley asked why do most schools not respond the FFWG with regards to important issues that are sent out. It was noted that it can sometimes be difficult to get the necessary engagement with some schools on various topics regardless of their importance. EB suggested that in this instance, various routes of communication were used and suggested it could potentially mean there is not a strong opposition against this proposal.

5 GROWTH FUND AND FALLING ROLLS 2019/20

5.1 Gary gave a verbal update on the paper, starting with point 3.4, it was advised that the 2018/19 funds saved would be returned to schools this month. Then he updated with regards to points 3.7 and 3.8 in relation to Hailsham Community College's approval for extending to include a Primary phase.

5.2 It was then asked with regard to the falling rolls, could there be clarification on if the rural schools will get the funding due to the low numbers and enrolment. Forum was advised that funding was distributed according to the formula. It was further commented by a member of Schools Forum that it should mean that schools should close if the numbers drop due to birth rates, as so many schools already could not manage. FW advised that the LA has been in contact with the schools experiencing these challenges and there are strategies to take this forward to support viability. The LA have looked at ways schools could work differently and the range of options available and will continue to work with schools with regard to issues of viability.

5.3 Cllr Standley stressed that the LA doesn't know whether schools will be closing, and are looking at options and are well aware of the issues and there is a lot work being done on this matter. Stuart went on to continue Cllr Standley's point around the work being done and commented that the authority had a track record of making difficult decisions around school closures. He stressed that work is being done on this and the LA will go and speak to schools about the range of options. He stated he was fully aware of the impact of school closure on staff, parents and the community. There was a further comment from the Forum that the number

of excess school places impacted not only on the small schools but all schools in the area. The LA was challenged to take decisive action now to support all schools.

5.4 A comment was raised regarding secondary schools increasing their PAN and how will this be viable in the future. Fiona responded that schools should talk to each other with regards to the varying PANs. Gary advised that we have no power over free schools and academies who increase their PAN, which has already created a problem in Eastbourne. It was commented, that in Eastbourne there was positive communication from the last meeting from discussion around the table, schools were talking and communicating, but there will be a problem when schools stop talking to each other.

5.5 Recommendation:

Schools Forum was asked to approve:

- An allocation of £1,227,000 for the 2019/20 Growth Fund – Carried forward: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1
- An allocation of £39,000 for the 2019/20 Falling Rolls Fund– Carried forward: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1

6 CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK BUDGET 2019/20

6.1 Sarah gave a verbal update on this paper.

6.2 A brief explanation was given regarding the CSSB block and the work that had been done to reduce the allocation of DSG to the areas previously funded by the CSSB block. Schools Forum were advised that the original plans to reduce DSG allocation further for 2019/20 by 1.1m had been increased in recognition of the pressures on schools budgets to £2.23m. The Forum were presented with a line by line breakdown of the CSSB spending plans for 2019/20 for review, discussion and approval.

6.3 It was asked how the central block is funded. It was explained that there are two strands to this with the On-Going responsibilities being funded based on pupil numbers and Historic Commitments as a lump sum from the DfE.

6.4 A question was raised with regard to how do we anticipate the virtual school will work in the future. Fiona explained that we will be bringing a proposal to schools forum in the future, to explain this.

6.5 A vote was taken to approve the proposals for the CSSB for 2019/20. The results were as follows

For: 16 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 There was not any other business.

7.2 Meeting concluded at 9.15 am

Next meeting - Friday, 18 January 2019, at 0830 hours at Wellshurst Golf Club