

## EAST SUSSEX SCHOOLS' FORUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the Schools' Forum held remotely with Microsoft Teams on 19 March 2021

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### PRESENT

Hugh Hennebry - **Chair** (Uckfield College)  
Sarah Pringle (Seahaven Academy)  
Kate Owbridge (Ashdown Primary)  
Gavin Bailey (Swale Academy Trust)  
Mandy Watson (Diocese of Chichester)  
Richard Preece (Saxon Mount and Torfield)  
Joanna Sanchez (Diocese of Arundel and Brighton)  
James Freeston (King Offa Primary Academy)  
Susan Thompson (Ditchling Primary)  
Jo Foulkes (Sabden Multi Academy Trust)  
Jane Johnson (Newick CE Primary)  
Geoffrey Lucas (Etchingham CE Primary School)  
Monica Whitehead (Claverham Community College)  
Phil Matthews (Hailsham Community College Academy Trust)  
Richard Blakely (Harlands Primary)  
Helen Key (Chailey School)

Cllr Bob Standley (Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability)

Mark Whiffin (Head of Finance)

Edward Beale (Schools Funding Manager)

Sarah Rice (Finance Manager – Schools)

Kirsten Coe (Principal Finance Officer)

Nathan Caine (Head of ISEND)

Beth Armstrong (Deputy Head of ISEND & Strategic Lead for Education)

Rachel King (Clerk)

## 1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Hugh welcomed all and thanked everyone for their attendance. It was confirmed the meeting was quorate, recognising the apologies below. Hugh welcomed back Helen Key to Schools Forum

1.2 Apologies received from:

- Tom Scully (University of Brighton Academies Trust)
- Stuart Gallimore (Director Children's Services)

## 2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 15 JANUARY 2021

2.1 The minutes for the meeting held were approved as a true record and will be signed by the Chair and scanned to Rachel King.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

3.1 There were no declarations of interest and there were no matters arising.

## 4. EALS BUDGET 2022/23 (Information)

4.1 Beth Armstrong introduced this paper and gave an update on the EAL Service, including the current EALs consultation (similar to the process that occurred 2 years ago,) ahead of the de-delegation voting decisions taking place in September. Hugh thanked Beth and asked if there were any questions from any new members of Schools' Forum. He also expressed that it was positive to note that EALS was particularly useful during lockdown.

## 5. DfE CONSULTATION – SPARSITY (Information)

5.1 Ed Beale introduced this paper and informed members that there is currently a DfE consultation reviewing the Sparsity factor. The DfE will inform Local Authorities of the consultation outcome in the summer and that information will then be provided to Schools' forum.

Councillor Standley welcomed the changes and said it was good news.

Jane Johnson asked if 'we' as individuals were expected to reply to the consultation as well as ESCC. Ed replied it was correct, it is an opportunity for any interested parties and therefore would include schools. Sending the VSB will help in distributing the information. Jane also expressed concerns that this vital information could be missed and asked if there could be a different way to present the information so that the schools know how important it is to reply to. It was suggested that Schools' Forum members send out their own emails to their own groups to encourage replying.

Sarah Pringle agreed with Jane about contact. Sarah wasn't sure about the consultation, regarding parents and students being involved in the response. Ed expressed that it is interested parties so that suggested that potentially parents and students could respond. Helen expressed she wanted to echo what the other two members had said.

## 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 NFF HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

Nathan Caine advised that there is currently a DfE consultation on how the DSG High Needs Funding Formula, which provides funding for all SEND placements, could change in future years. He wanted to flag up that the consultation was taking place so that people knew they had an opportunity to respond. Question 1 was of particular relevance to East Sussex as, should a historical spend factor be applied to the formula in the way it is proposed, ES would stand to lose a significant amount of funding. Hugh expressed the proposals looked to be unfair and should therefore be opposed vigorously.

Hugh said that members should send emails to encourage responses to consultation. Phil Matthews asked if Nathan had started modelling the impact of losing that amount if it happened. Nathan advised that ES had already modelled expenditure based on the current budget which suggests that current funds will be sustainable for 3 years; if the consultation went forward it would reduce budget and would allow perhaps a year. Jo Foulkes asked if, based on the analysis of the consultation document, the likelihood of people wanting it to be based on historic is strong. Nathan said it was a mixed picture, some LA's will see it as positive as they had high levels of expenditure and pressure on their High Needs budgets. He said it is difficult to predict the number of responses who would support it. Schools Forum will have to have further conversations if the formula is changed in the way it is proposed as this will have a direct impact on the resources available to fund SEND provision.

Mark Whiffin said it was broadly understood that there isn't enough money in total for the high needs block, and that the issue should not be so much as to how to divide it up, but that there is more need in total.

Helen asked Nathan if he could provide Schools forum members with wording in answer to Q1 as she felt that will be much more likely to get a widespread response.

James Freeston also asked for something to be drafted to go to local MP's.

Hugh asked if Nathan could draft the suggested documents to send on behalf of Schools' Forum. James Freeston said that as an academy trust he would be happy to use those words to support.

Jane Johnson asked if the funding for high needs block similar to schools. Nathan said no, it is different from schools funding formula. Ed explained to Schools' Forum how the funding works.

Hugh asked when the two consultation deadlines were mentioned during this meeting.

- Sparsity 09 April 2021
- High Needs Block 24 March 2021

Hugh asked again that Schools' Forum members encourage colleagues to respond.

#### ACTION:

- Draft answer to Q1 in consultation
- Draft letter to MP's

## 6.2 Schools Forum Venue

Mark Whiffin wanted to let members know that the allowance from the DofE to hold these meetings remotely ends on the 31 March 2021. In theory the next meeting should be in person, however Mark is hoping that the DofE will be extending that allowance, but that there has been no information released yet. The expectation is to have the May meeting remotely but it will need to be confirmed.

Meeting concluded at 09:07 am

Next meeting – Friday 14 May 2021 08:30am. Location TBC - Wellshurst Golf and Country Club or Microsoft Teams.