

EAST SUSSEX SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the East Sussex Schools Forum held at Wellhurst Golf and Country Club on 17 May 2019.

PRESENT

Richard Thomas (Pevensey & Westham Primary)
Richard Blakeley (Parkside Primary)
Lizzie Field (Park Mead Primary)
Jane Johnson (Newick CE Primary)
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)
Debbie Gilbert (Burwash CEP School)
Mandy Watson (Diocese of Chichester)
Julie Fahy – (Representing Beacon Academy)
Hugh Hennebry - Chair (Uckfield College)
Andrew Ferguson (Rye Academy)
Sarah Pringle (Seahaven Academy)
Geoffry Lucas (Etchingam CE Primary School)
Phil Clarke (Trade Union Representative)
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 (Principal Finance Officer)
Lesley Leppard (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:

- Emily Beer (Willingdon Community)
- Kate Owbridge (Ashdown Primary)
- Anna Robinson (Beacon Academy) Julie Fahy Representing
- Victoria Stevens (Eastbourne Academy)
- Helen Key (Chailey School)
- Vicky Richards (St Mark's CEP School)
- Richard Preece (Saxon Mount and Torfield)
- Stuart Gallimore (Director Children's Services)

- Frank Stanford (Sabden Multi Academy Trust) Did not attend

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 The Minutes for 18 January were signed off by the Chair as a true record.

3 MATTERS ARISING AND DE-DELEGATED ITEMS

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3.2 Fiona gave an update to the group on the progress regarding future operating models for EALS. A range of models had been agreed. Four options are being brought before a group of head teacher representatives to be discussed before finalising proposed options. This will then go to consultation with all schools and academies to see which of the options is preferred. A paper will then be brought back to Schools' Forum in July. Phil Matthews advised that he will be representing Academies at a meeting next Tuesday to discuss this.

Action: Meeting next week for the consultation with head teacher representatives. The four models will then go out to all head teachers and Schools' Forum. Head teacher representatives will then engage with heads in the process. Responses will be collated and the final model will be brought back to Schools' Forum in July.

3.3 Place Commissioning Process – Hugh asked questions regarding vacant special school places and places with prolonged non-attendance.

Action: There will be a paper in the autumn for Schools' Forum regarding vacant places and showing vacancies over three years at a County and Provider level. (Nathan Caine)

Action: To look at special schools and see if they are able to release resources for outreach when places are vacant and not being used. This could be on an ad-hoc basis or at the request of a set time i.e. 10 days. This will be taken forward and raised at the Special Schools Heads meeting being held on Monday 10 June. (Nathan Caine)

3.4 Hugh advised that the March meeting had been cancelled and noted that some information papers had been circulated to the members at the time.

3.5 Ref 6.3 of the January minutes: De-delegation – voting procedures. Hugh introduced Sarah who explained what has happened since then with regards to this action point. Sarah explained that the Schools' Forum regulations had been investigated and they specified that voting on de-delegation is limited to the specific primary and secondary phases of maintained schools members. Therefore it was not possible to change procedures to allow joint voting across phases. However, Sarah explained there was nothing to stop representatives and colleagues they represent discussing issues across phases and specifically where one decision may impact on another phase. Sarah confirmed that to facilitate discussions proposals regarding de-delegated items would be presented to the Schools Forum in July in advance of the September meeting when voting would take place.

4 FORMULA FUNDING UPDATE

4.1 Ed Beale provided an update to the members on the Funding Formula Working Group. He advised that the group had been working for a number of years and that the first meeting this year was being held after this Schools' Forum where they will be looking at the formula for

2020/21. There are three meetings planned, with a further meeting to be held in September if required. He made the members aware of the timeline as in Appendix A.

4.2 Ed highlighted that the majority of rates are now at the rates that they would be under the National Funding Formula (NFF). The Primary phase lump sum and the Minimum per pupil rates are the two factors that are different to the NFF and could be looked at for 2020/21. Ed went on to explain that the proposals for the 2020/21 Funding Formula will be brought to the July Schools' Forum with the final proposal being brought to the September Schools' Forum. This will then be put out to consultation for a month.

4.3 Ed advised that as and when FFWG meetings occur, information about the meetings will be communicated, like previous years, to ensure schools/academies are kept informed. This will be via the Virtual School Bag (VSB) and emails. The minutes from FFWG will be circulated to Schools' Forum members and he actively encouraged colleagues to read these.

4.4 Cllr Standley raised a question regarding the response received from consultation. Last year 38% responded with only 19% responding the year before. He wanted to know what could be done to increase this response. The members discussed that reminders were sent out encouraging them to respond. It was suggested that a simpler communication could be sent out as to receive a large amount of information can be daunting. It was also suggested that the Bursars are sent information encouraging them to attend the Bursars Forum. The members thought that it would be good to target those that did not attend.

Action: Members and Officers to use all available channels to encourage responses to the Funding Formula consultation.

5 REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Sarah Rice gave a quick update to explain the changes that are occurring. An opportunity has arisen to reduce the number of Maintained Secondary School representatives to keep the Forum in line with the current membership profile. Hugh Hennebry's membership was due to expire in June 2019. This coincides with Emily Beer requiring to step down temporarily from the Forum. The Maintained Secondary Heads have been consulted and have decided to allow Hugh to renew his membership. The number of Maintained Secondary Heads representatives will therefore reduce by 1.

6 RUNNING RURAL SCHOOLS EFFICIENTLY: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION REPORT

6.1 Sarah introduced the paper which is a document issued by DfE. She advised that the paper has been included for information for members to look at as the content was relevant to East Sussex.

6.2 Andrew Ferguson advised the members that the document showed a Trust saving £800k but that it was disappointing that the major source of savings were not identified.

6.3 Phil Clarke advised the members that he found the report to be poor and all agreed. He said that funding cuts were causing the problems and that the report gave no actual benefit.

6.4 Lizzie Field felt that the title of the document was incorrect and that options were not fully explored. Hugh asked the members that if they had any other models or proposals to bring them back to the Forum. Jane Johnson advised that everyone should give other schools ideas and to get feedback on how they are managing. One idea that Jane has is that TA's are training for

higher qualifications. This would mean that if there was a teacher off the TA could carry on with teaching the planned lesson. This helps with the budget as supply teachers didn't need to be brought in.

Action: Primary Head Teachers and Bursar to liaise re any models or proposals. ESCC Officers to continue to facilitate sharing of good practice.

6.5 Mandy Watson advised that the Diocese had put out a paper on supporting small schools.

6.6 Jane advised that the report stated that there may be circumstances where small schools closure may be considered in order to strategically support all schools in an area.

6.7 Fiona suggested that more information could be captured at Head Teacher meetings. Everyone should use these meetings to collect good ideas and to share good practice.

6.8 Lizzie felt that the report was very one sided and that it suggested that MATs was the only way, but that this is not true.

6.9 Monica Whitehead felt that the report was 10 years out of date.

Action: Draft letter from Schools' Forum (to be raised by Andrew Ferguson) to be sent to DfE to show their disagreement with the report.

6.10 There was a general discussion on how to share good practice between Primary and Secondary schools as practice could be shared across phases.

6.11 Debbie Gilbert raised a question as to whether the LA analysed and compared practices in educationally successful schools with good financial management in order that good practice could be shared and role modelled. Sarah went on to advise that in general East Sussex schools were managing finances well and there was lots of evidence of good practice, schools were planning well and making decisions in a timely way in response to the challenging financial circumstances and this was supported by various departments in ESCC. She said that HR / School Improvement / Finance came together as a group regularly to discuss schools at risk in order that any difficulties in specific schools could be put in full context and appropriate support provided with good practice from other schools shared. Fiona and Sarah both acknowledged Debbie's point that focusing in on successful schools in order to share good practice as well as troubleshooting when there were issues would be beneficial.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 Maria Caulfield MP. Recent communication has been circulated in relation to Schools funding and the suggestion that the LA is retaining funds that are due to schools. Ed reiterated that all funding is going out to schools. A briefing had been put together for Cllr Glazier who has met with Maria to explain and to advise her that her figures are incorrect. Phil Clarke was pleased that this issue had been raised.

7.2 Cllr Standley will convene a meeting with Maria to go through the figures. He advised that, if needed, a press release would be made.

7.3 Jane advised that Schools' Forum and the Funding Formula Working Group work very hard in determining how money is distributed to schools and she was not at all happy with Maria's statement. James Freeston suggested that as the information raised in the House of Commons, and included in several communications, gave a misleading representation of both

the work of Schools' Forum and the distribution of schools funding in East Sussex, Schools' Forum should prepare a letter in response. Hugh advised that he was happy to draft a letter.

Action: Cllr Standley to meet with Maria Caulfield MP

Action: Hugh Hennebry to draft a letter from Schools' Forum setting out the two key issues that funding is not retained by the Council and Schools' Forum is not controlled by the LA.

The meeting ended at 9.30 am.

Next meeting - Friday, 12 July 2019, at 0830 hours at Wellshurst Golf Club