

## SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Schools Forum held on Wednesday, 12 February 2020 at 4.30 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

### Present

Jackie Collins	Head Teacher	Primary Phase
Dave Jones	Head Teacher	Primary Phase
Share D'all	Governor	Primary Phase
Sean Preston	Academies	Primary Phase
Nys Hardingham	Academies	Secondary Phase
Nathan Waites	Academies	Secondary Phase
Alison Beane	Academies	Special Schools
Mike Gaston	Representative	16 - 19 Education
Kara Jewell	Representative	Early Years
Terry Norton	Councillor	Conservative Party

### 45. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from David Jeapes (David Jones chaired the meeting), Jason Crouch, Jo Cooper, Steve Labeledz, Natalie Sheppard, Simon Barrable (Mike Gaston was attending as his named substitute). Apologies were also received from Councillors Stagg and Smyth.

### 46. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

Alison Egerton, Group Accountant informed the forum that there were two outstanding declaration of interests from Nys Hardingham and Councillor Udy. Nys Hardingham advised she had her completed form to hand to Alison at the end of the meeting.

Kara Jewell asked if it would be possible for her to nominate an Early Years deputy for when she was unable to get to meetings. Alison Egerton confirmed she could and asked Mrs Jewell to send her details of the named substitute so she could update the membership list.

### 47. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2020 and matters arising

Update from the previous minutes:

Alison Egerton advised she had sent an email to all secondary headteachers about a briefing on school funding arrangements and was still awaiting a response.

There was one correction needed: Kara Jewell advised that her title was Mrs and not Ms.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the above correction.**

#### **48. Membership Changes**

Alison Egerton gave an update on membership. Since the last meeting she had been able to confirm:

- Jackie Collins' tenure as the primary maintained headteacher representative.
- Jason Crouch's tenure as the secondary maintained governor representative.
- Nys Hardingham's tenure as the secondary academy representative.

Alison also advised that:

- There is one membership vacancy for a secondary academy representative. She had sent an email but had not yet had a response so she would send a reminder shortly.
- There are two tenures that are close to ending. Alison Beane's tenure as special academy representative was due to end on 28 February. Ian Hunkin's tenure was due to end when Harbour School become an academy school. This was expected to be on 1 April. In the new financial year Alison explained she would write to all special academy representatives asking for nominees.

#### **49. Dedicated Schools Grant 2020-21.**

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager. She explained that a revised appendix 3 to the report had been circulated relating to the Element 3 top-up rates.

In response to questions Angela Mann, Alison Egerton and Julie Katherine (Head of Inclusion) clarified the following:

With regard to inclusion centres, the Council did look at a banded funding methodology for all maintained schools and inclusion centres over a year ago and decided to postpone the introduction due to additional funding in 2019-20. It was felt that there were a lot advantages to introducing banded funding but to introduce that across the board needed a lot of lead in time. Officers said that the Council are not proposing to introduce banded funding across all schools in 2020-21 due to the lead-in time required to consult and then move to a new funding methodology. Alison Egerton said it would make sense to combine the banding for mainstream and inclusion centres together with a view to introducing from April 2021 as part of the 2021-22 Budget. Officers would need to look at the financial modelling and then can consult with all

schools in preparation for the 2021-22 budget setting process. There was a discrepancy with one of the inclusion centres, Milton Park that historically had been paid at a higher rate. Milton Park were aware that a banded funding methodology was being considered and that arrangements to support the school through the transfer to a new funding methodology. Forum members agreed that this needed to be looked at across the city to ensure the Council is getting the right funding for children at the right levels at the right time.

With regard to the SEND monitoring and review hub, officers explained that they would be used to review Out of City, special school and mainstream placements to ensure that where any changes in the support required are identified through the annual review process, these are reflected in changes in the resources attached to the EHCP. Currently, any requests for additional funding or changes in placement are prioritised so that no child has been disadvantaged where there is a need for additional support, however the Council have not had the capacity to proactively review placements where there may be a reduction in the support required, due to the increase in EHCP numbers.

The council need to ensure the funding level is accurate according to the child's needs. When an EHCP is originally carried out the funding level is set quite precisely so it is about having the capacity to proactively monitor this.

With regard to bullet point 4 in paragraph 6.36 officers are using the annual review process to make sure that if the child needs to remain in the out of city placement that there is a plan for when they can return to the city.

Officers confirmed that Post 16 is up to the age of 25. Officers have used census data along with the year groups of pupils with EHCPs and track this to predict the number of pupils. The council have pupils going out of the city and the place funding is being paid by those authorities where PCC pay the top up and vice versa. Despite the difficulties of projecting the costs, it was pointed out that the current financial position was only different by 6 students.

At the moment the EHCP mainstream funding is attached to the EHCP plan and so it is not possible to uplift payments by 1.84%. If this went on to a banded system, it would be possible to look at annual uplifts.

In the last two financial years two year olds have overspent as there have been more children coming in than the council had received funding for and the council have used the whole amount of the contingency. Whilst the Council's funding is adjusted in the following financial year based on the January census, this will not always match the funding that is paid to providers. For example last year the council overspent on two year olds by £80,000, having used the contingency. The lagged extra funding received for two year olds for 2018-19 in this financial year was £29,000, leaving a gap between funding received by the Council and that paid to the providers. If the number of pupils reduce then the funding adjustment will be smaller and the size of any contingency will reduce.

The centrally retained rate for early years was outlined in appendix 8. For 3 and 4 year olds and 2 year olds 22p out of the total funding. As a percentage this was 4.6% for 3 and 4 year olds and 4% for 2 year olds.

Alison Beane, of Solent Academies Trust then went on to introduce her section of the report and the recommendations. She explained that the biggest issue for the Academy Trust was pressures in finance over some time alongside complexity of needs of the children, mostly due to increasingly complex medical as well as and behavioural and sensory regulation needs. 80% or more of special schools budgets are spent on staffing. As part of the process they have proactively been through their budgets and calculated the actual costs and they are hugely concerned.

In response to questions Alison Beane and Angela Mann clarified the following:

- There is a push coming from different places including the Regional Schools Commissioner and challenge partners. Local authorities have been writing to the DfE but it is a national issue. Portsmouth does not get funded based on what it pays out. Potentially banding rates for Portsmouth schools could be reviewed.
- The 5.25% on the Element 3 is the gap between funding that the 1.84% was providing on the place and Element 3 Top-up funding and the funding that the Trust needs which is approximately £160,000. This would be an ongoing commitment and pressure on the high needs block. In appendix 1 a 5.25% increase has been built into the overall High Needs budgets, but what it would mean is that there is less capacity to absorb pressures such as banding changes.
- It was the Academies Chief Finance Officer's view that they are getting into a more difficult situation and the deficit would increase. Alison Beane was unsure of the exact details. Angela Mann added that the future year's budget assumed a 5.25% increase would happen so had built this into the calculations. The request from Solent Academies Trust was for an additional £350,000. This was translated into the top up rates so members could see the difference which was £160,000.
- The senior leadership costs were marginally higher.
- Alison Beane added that they do comparative work with other special schools but it is very hard as all special schools are different.

Some members of the Forum had concerns with the figures provided in the report as in the latest published final accounts (2018/19), they state that the reserves were £561,000 at the end of the year. It was clarified that the £561,000 includes the Teaching School Alliance (TSA) which are restricted funds so there is a question as to whether the forum include the TSA in their considerations.

This is a national issue and Portsmouth seems to be in a better position than many other local authorities. Strategies are working very well and there is no quick solution from government. Schools Forum members felt it was important when considering these recommendations not to set a future historical precedent and this needs to be continually reviewed. It was felt going forward it would be useful to have a comparator.

(Alison Beane left the meeting prior to the Schools Forum vote on the recommendation relating to Solent Academies Trust)

**DECISIONS: Members of the Schools Forum**

- a. **Endorsed the initial determination of the Schools Budget for 2020-21 as set out in Appendix 1.**
- b. **Endorsed the 2020-21 Special School, Inclusion Centre and Alternative Provision places as set out in Appendix 2.**
- c. **Endorsed the 2020-21 Element 3 Top-Up rates for The Harbour Special School, Inclusion Centres (including the addition of an Element 3 top-up at Trafalgar Inclusion Centre), and Alternative Provision settings as set out in Appendix 3.**
- d. **Endorsed the Solent Academies Trust proposal to increase the 2020-21 Element 3 top-up rates for Solent Academies Trust to include an increase of 1.84% as set out in Table A in Appendix 7.**
- e. **Endorsed the proposal that any carry forward balances from 2019-20 be used to assist with the continued introduction of the funding reform changes and fund any potential financial pressures arising during 2020-21.**
- f. **Endorsed the local funding arrangements in respect of the 2, 3 and 4 year old early years provision for 2020-21 as set out in section 8 and Appendix 8.**

The meeting concluded at 5.55 pm.

.....  
Chair