

SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Schools Forum held on Wednesday, 9 February 2022 at 4.30 pm as a virtual meeting.

Present

Jackie Collins	Head Teacher (Devonshire Infant)	Primary Phase
Dave Jones	Head Teacher Craneswater	Primary Phase
Share D'All	Governor (Bramble Infant & Nursery)	Primary Phase
Sean Preston	Academies Hamwic Academy Trust	Primary Phase
Jo Cooper	Academies Stamshaw Infant	Primary Phase
Nathan Waites	Springfield School	Secondary Phase
Kara Jewell	Representative	Early Years
Judith Smyth	Councillor	Labour Group
Terry Norton	Councillor	Conservative Group

Also in attendance:

Councillor Suzy Horton, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education (left at 5.09pm).

7. Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from:

- Laura Flitton (Academies University of Chichester Academy Trust - Primary Phase)
- Caroline Corcoran (Academies Salterns Academy Trust - Secondary Phase)
- Nys Hardingham (Academies Salterns Academy Trust - Secondary Phase)
- Sharon Burt (Academies (Solent Academies Trust) - Special Schools)
- David Jeapes (Head Teacher, Mayfield School - Secondary Phase)
- Councillor Lynne Stagg (Conservative Group).

The meeting was quorate.

8. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interests from Forum members.

Alison Egerton, Group Accountant, advised that there were outstanding declarations from Victoria Page, Anne Chapman and Chris Purnell. Ms Edgerton to action.

9. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 January 2022 and matters arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

10. Election of Chair and Membership Changes

Alison Egerton, Group Accountant informed the Schools Forum of the following membership changes:

- Simon Graham, Headteacher, Maintained secondary representative - effective from 10 February 2022.
- There is one secondary academy representative vacancy and nominations had been sought.
- A permanent post-16 representative (currently Mike Gaston as an interim appointment) is being sought.

Alison Egerton reminded Schools Forum representatives that at the meeting on 19 January 2022, David Jeapes had indicated his intention to stand down as a member of the Forum and the position of Chair following the meeting on 9 February 2022. Members of the Forum had been invited to submit nominations in advance of the meeting and had been provided with information about the role and its responsibilities.

Alison Egerton informed the Schools Forum that although nominations had been sought, none had been received. She invited any members of the Schools Forum who would be interested in taking on this important role, to stay on at the end of the meeting.

Councillor Terry Norton proposed that thanks to David Jeapes for his many years of support and work for the Schools Forum be noted. Councillor Judith Smyth added her thanks to Mr Jeapes for his work and this was endorsed by the Schools Forum.

11. Dedicated Schools Grant Budget (DSG) 2022-23

Angela Mann, Finance Manager, introduced the report stating that it set out the initial determination of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget (including individual schools budgets) for 2022-23 and sought the necessary approvals and endorsements required to make an initial determination of schools budgets and give notice of that determination to the governing bodies of the schools which it maintains by 28 February 2022.

On a point of accuracy, it was noted that in Appendix 2 - Devonshire Infant School has 10 inclusion places not 11 as stated.

In response to questions the following information was provided:

- The COVID-19 pandemic will have had an impact on place numbers and the January 2022 census will provide additional information.
- The apparent drop in funding, particularly for special schools in 2024-25 (paragraph 7.2 of the report) was due to the large increases seen in 2023-24 and a part year effect.
- As far as officers were aware, there was no supplementary guidance relating to the increase in fuel costs on settings.

Mindy Butler, Early Years and Childcare Manager, commented that parents had been nervous about sending children back into settings and there had been a slow start back at the beginning of the academic year. However, overall numbers are up over 2021-22 academic year.

Kara Jewell, Early Years representative, commented that many early years providers had seen a drop in numbers.

School Forum representatives were concerned about the impact of increases in fuel costs. Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families and Education, agreed to raise this as a concern with the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Kara Jewell (referring to paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 in the report) informed the Forum that early years providers were facing significant additional costs and that the proposed per hour increases for 2-year olds would result in an estimated loss of 3p per hour, which the increases to the 3-4-year old funding could only partially offset. She commented that the timing of the consultation over the Christmas period had made it difficult to respond to and several settings had reported to her that they did not feel it would make a difference.

Mindy Butler commented that this is a national problem and providers are facing considerable challenges in funding including in relation to staff and fuel costs and this is a great concern. She confirmed that the team had reminded settings about need to respond to the consultation.

In response to questions about decision-making and the impact of increasing early years funding, it was confirmed that:

- The consultation period always takes place over the Christmas period which is unfortunate and is determined by the DfE funding announcements.
- Had officers received feedback on the consultation, options for consideration by the Forum would have been presented; as no feedback had been received, the proposals as consulted on have been presented to Schools Forum for endorsement.

- Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education will make the decisions relating to the recommendations (set out at paragraphs 2.1-2.6 of the report) following consultation with the Schools Forum by way of this meeting.
- There is a statutory requirement to set the budget at inform schools about their allocations by 28 February 2022.
- The impact of any changes to hourly rates going forward would need to be considered.
- The DSG carry forward is used to help smooth out any bid issues throughout the year including increases in early years pupil numbers which tend to increase throughout the academic year.

Councillor Judith Smyth commented that early years settings are very important, especially for families where the home learning environment is not good, and she noted that the 6.6% increase to the minimum wage would be significant to settings.

Alison Egerton informed the Forum that officers had recently received an allocation adjustment following the October census which removed £1.1m of funding. The impact of the January census will not be seen until July and if hourly rates were to be increased now, a growth in pupil numbers could result in a future cut in the hourly rate.

Members of the Schools Forum expressed concern about the impact on young children and on schools in the future if early years providers were forced to close due to rising costs.

Kara Jewell proposed that an additional 1p per hour increase to 3-4-year old funding by reducing the contingency would help enormously. Angela Mann confirmed that although the mechanics would need work, it would be possible to increase 3-4-year old funding only by an additional 1p per hour from the 3-4-year old contingency. Alison Egerton confirmed this would not present a significant risk to the DSG.

After the discussion, Mike Stoneman agreed to raise Early Years funding concerns with the Regional Schools Commissioner, including that:

- Early Years settings are not able to access Supplementary Grant funding.
- The announced minimum wage increases came after the allocation of funding and may not therefore have been considered.

Kara Jewell thanked officers for all their hard work in the background.

RESOLVED - the Schools Forum:

- 1) Endorsed the initial determination of the Schools Budget for 2022- 23 as set out in Appendix 1.**
- 2) Endorsed the 2022-23 Special School, Inclusion Centre and Alternative Provision Places as set out in Appendix 2.**

- 3) **Endorsed the 2022-23 Element 3 Top-up values for Special Schools, Inclusion Centres, Alternative Provision settings and Mainstream schools, as set out in Appendix 3.**
- 4) **Endorsed the Early Years budget as set out in Table 1 and Appendix 1 and asked for consideration to be given to adding £0.01 to the Hourly rate for 3-4 year olds and to reduce the contingency on 3-4-year olds only.**
- 5) **Endorsed the proposal that any carry forward of balances from 2021-22 to be used to assist with the revenue costs associated with the planned increase in high needs places, the continued introduction of the funding reform changes and fund any potential financial pressures arising during 2022-23.**
- 6) **Endorsed the approach to distribute the supplementary funding through agreement with special schools and alternative provision settings as set out in Section 9.**

12. Dates of future meetings

Schools Forum representatives noted that the next meeting will take place on 25 May 2022 (confirmed).

POST MEETING NOTE:

Future meeting dates, to be confirmed at the next meeting, are as follows:

13 July 2022
5 October 2022
7 December 2022
11 January 2023
9 February 2023

The meeting concluded at 5.41pm.