

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

GATESHEAD SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Thursday, 2 November 2017

PRESENT:

Ken Childs (Chair)	Special School Governors
Councillor Chris McHugh	Elected Member Representative
Sarah Diggle	Primary Governors
Steve Haigh	Secondary Academy Headteachers
Peter Lague	Trade Union Representative
Mustafaa Malik	Primary Headteachers
Elaine Pickering	Secondary Governors
Andrew Ramanandi	Primary Headteachers
Michelle Richards	Special School Headteachers
Chris Richardson	Secondary Headteachers
Matthew Younger	Primary Headteachers

IN ATTENDANCE:

Alan Foster	Corporate Resources
Carole Smith	Corporate Resources
Rosalyn Patterson	Corporate Services and Governance

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Allan Symons, Julie Goodfellow, Christine Ingle and Clive Wisby.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

3 USE OF DSG RESERVES

The Forum received a report on the use of DSG Reserves. It was reported that Ravensworth Terrace Primary School moved to its new site from September 2017 and Cabinet has approved the use of the old site on a temporary basis for an extended Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) from January 2018.

It was noted that while the site is unoccupied work needs to be undertaken to ensure it is safe. It is not possible to charge Ravensworth Terrace Primary School for this work as they are not occupying the site, the PRU cannot be charged as they have not yet taken over the site. It was also noted that the site cannot be declared as surplus as it has an intended education use in the near future. It was confirmed therefore that £5,000 of DSG reserves will be used to fund security charges.

The point was made that at the last meeting the Forum was advised that DSG

reserves were being used to address safety issues at Eslington School. Concerns were raised that the Forum did not want the DSG used as a pot to dip into. It was acknowledged that this is still an education property and as such is not a surplus property. To be declared surplus a property must be empty for a certain length of time at which point the cost would be picked up centrally.

It was questioned whether there was anything stopping central funds picking up this cost. It was reiterated that this is an education provision and therefore the cost should be picked up using education money, and that it would need to be declared surplus before it was paid centrally.

It was also suggested that as the PRU is to be academised the Trust should pick up the cost. It was confirmed however that the Trust did not have control of the building yet.

RESOLVED - That the Schools Forum noted the funding provided for interim security at the old Ravensworth Terrace site.

4 SCHOOL FUNDING UPDATE

The Forum received an update report on the proposals made by the Mainstream Schools Funding Sub Group, which met on 19th October.

The main developments were highlighted; children with SEN in ARMS will now receive mainstream funding plus £6,000 place allocation, empty places will continue to be funded at £10,000. It was questioned how it will work where pupils are on site but enrolled at a special school. It was confirmed that there would be a service level agreement or memorandum of understanding between the special school and the mainstream school because funding would go to the special school as that is where the pupil is on roll. It was noted that the host school would not lose out and there would be a commitment as to how these pupils would be integrated into the school.

The DfE has provided an APT that allows positive MFG up to 0.5% so modelling can commence. New funding arrangements for the high needs block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) has been set out, for every child in special school the authority will receive £4,000 in HNB, further details from the DfE are being awaited.

The factor comparisons between Gateshead's current funding formula and the published national funding formula (NFF) were reviewed, this includes changes to AWPU's, FSM, ever6 are lower, flattened IDACI funding. There will be no LAC factor, EAL and low prior attainment are substantially higher.

The sub group agreed the following principles;

- An affordable equitable and transparent mainstream school funding formula
- A formula that will focus only on mainstream school age range – not taking other age ranges into account (e.g. post 16 or 2,3 and 4 year olds)
- A formula that where possible prepares schools for the National Funding Formula (NFF) and moves Gateshead's formula in the direction of travel

towards the NFF

The funding aims are to;

- Phase the changes over the next two funding periods
- 1:129 primary secondary ratios
- 3% funding gains cap
- Positive MFG if possible
- Minimise the value of MFG

It was noted that currently the DSG is top sliced for licences and it is expected this will go up, more should be known by mid December.

The sub group will next meet the week commencing 13 November, the proposals will go to Schools Forum on 7 December, consultation with schools will follow, the outcome of which will be reported to a special meeting of the Schools Forum on 19 December 2017. The final funding formula will be reported to Schools Forum on 11 January then Portfolio approval will be sought on 15 January 2018 with submission to the DfE on 19 January 2018.

Thanks were given to the work of the sub-group.

RESOLVED - That the Schools Forum approved the principles and funding Funding aims proposed.

5 DISAPPLICATION OF SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS FINANCE (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS

The Forum was requested to approve the application to the Secretary of State for Education to dis-apply the Schools and Early Years Finance Regulations to enable a positive minimum funding guarantee (MFG) to be set.

The DfE has announced the MFG can be set up to a value of 0.5% for mainstream schools, however regulations have MFG set at -0.5% - 0%. Therefore if an application is not made to dis-apply a positive MFG cannot be set. This will allow the possibility of having a positive MFG if needed.

RESOLVED - That Schools Forum approved the application to the Secretary of State to dis-apply the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations to widen the MFG range from -1.5% to 0% to -1.5% to 0.5%.

6 EARLY YEARS INCLUSION FUND

The Forum received the outcome of the consultation on the Early Years Inclusion Fund for 2017/18 and the rollout of the processes for settings to apply for funding for emerging, low level SEN.

It was noted that 27 responses were received and the responses were positive.

RESOLVED - That the Schools Forum noted the content of the report and accepted the proposals for the Early Years Inclusion Fund.

7 INTRODUCTION OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND FREE SCHOOL MEALS

It was reported that, following the discussion at July's Schools Forum, a Councillors Advisory Group was held to look at Universal Credit. Councillors asked that Caroline O'Neill write to all Headteachers to ask for free school meals (FSM) to be provided to those children whose family are going through the application process for Universal Credit.

It was noted that currently discussions are ongoing as to whether being on Universal Credit is enough to be eligible for FSM.

The point was made that the tension for schools is the audit around finances and the pressure to save money. Schools are potentially paying for meals when a child may not necessarily be entitled to a free meal and it was recognised that this is a moral dilemma that schools are facing. It was suggested that some guidance be provided so that a mechanism is in place for all schools to work in the same manner.

It was also suggested that DSG reserves could be used reimburse schools through contingency funding. It was confirmed that work is ongoing on a proposal, this is at an internal stage currently.

Forum was advised that the Council want to understand the impact of universal credit on schools and asked for any feedback they can provide.

It was noted that some schools unilaterally increased the cost of school meals therefore the cost of a meal to parents depends which school the child is attending. The point was made that this is a further disadvantage to those deprived children because less money is going back into the schools that have not increased their prices.

The point was made that it would be beneficial if the Council contacted schools asking them to do something or providing a plan of action rather than sending a plea out. This would provide some potential for reimbursement or recognition of how to deal with the situation.

It was agreed that an approach would be developed internally and provided to the Forum, however at this point timescales are not clear.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

8 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date and time of the next meeting is Thursday 7 December 2017 at 2.00pm.

