

**MINUTES OF THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING  
TUESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2020, 2.00PM**

**Present:**

**School Members:**

Sandra Appleby*	David Ross Education Trust (Academy, North & West)
Lyndsey Barnett*	Croyland Nursery School + others (Maintained Nursery, West)
James Birkett, Chair (JB)*	Wollaston School (Academy, North)
Vanessa Bradley (VB)*	Chiltern Primary School (Maintained Primary, West)
Rob Hardcastle (RH)*	Hatton Academies Trust (Academy, North)
Siobhan Hearne (SH)*	Latimer Arts College (Maintained Secondary, North)
Lee Hughes (LH)*	Peterborough Diocesan Education Trust (Academy, North and West)
Pat Kelly (PK)*	Millbrook Infant School (Maintained Primary, North)
Cath Kitchen (CK)*	Hospital and Outreach Education (Alternative Provision, North & West)
Kevin Latham (KL)*	Creating Tomorrow Multi Academy Trust (Academy Special, North)
Joanne Sanchez Thompson (JST, Chair)*	Learning for Life Education Trust (Academy, North)
Paul Wheeler (PW)*	East Midlands Academy Trust (Academy, North & West)
Sandra Appleby*	David Ross Education Trust (Academy, North & West)
Lyndsey Barnett*	Croyland Nursery School + others (Maintained Nursery, West)
James Birkett, Chair (JB)*	Wollaston School (Academy, North)
Vanessa Bradley (VB)*	Chiltern Primary School (Maintained Primary, West)

\* also a shadow member

**Shadow Members:**

Peter Cantley	Diocesan of Peterborough Board of Education (Diocesan, North & West)
Laura Clarke	Rowan Gate School (Maintained Special, North)
Nikki Lamond	Greenwood Academy Trust (Academy, North & West)
Karen Lewis	Billing Brook School (Academy Special, West)
Peter Leaver	Pathfinder Schools Academy Trust (Academy, North)

**Non-school Members:**

Peter French (PF)	Diocesan of Peterborough Board of Education (Diocesan)
Jenny Thorpe (JT)*	Northampton College (Post-16, West)
Hayley Walker (HW)*	Blackthorn Good Neighbours Nursery (PVI, West)

**Observers:**

Muriel Rant (MR)	Education & Skills Funding Agency
------------------	-----------------------------------

## **NCC Officers:**

Beth Baines (BB)	Acting Group Accountant Schools Finance
Gwyn Botterill (GB)	Strategic Manager for SEND, Children, Families and Education
Cathi Hadley (CH)	Director of Children's Services
Paul Hanson (PH)	Democratic Services Manager (Secretary)
Nicole MacDonald (NM)	HR Business Partner
Raj Sohal (RS)	Democracy Officer
Carrie Trail (CT)	Strategic Manager for Northamptonshire Schools
Chris Wickens (CW)	Capital Programme Manager - Schools, Children, Families and Education

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE FORUM MEMBERSHIP CHANGES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mike Kendall, Jon Lake, Ian Massey, Ron Whittaker, Wendy Brackenbury and Fiona Baker.
- 1.2 Jenny Thorpe (Northampton College) had joined to represent post-sixteen providers, in place of Pat Brennan-Barnett.
- 1.3 North and West Shadow Forum members were in attendance, as per the process of local government reorganisation to take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. The Schools Forum were to discuss and vote on the items set out in the agenda for the meeting. Each Shadow Forum would then hold their own short meetings at the conclusion of the meeting, with each asked to vote to ratify the decisions taken at the sovereign forum.

## **2. MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD 20 OCTOBER 2020**

**RESOLVED that: The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October were agreed as an accurate record, subject to the correction of a number of descriptions of the groups various members represented.**

**Action: Paul Hanson**

## **3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW AND CHILDREN'S TRUST UPDATE**

- 3.1 NM introduced the item and highlighted the following points, regarding the TUPE transfer of employees in schools, where NCC was the employer:
  - Employment would transfer on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.
  - Employees would transfer on current terms and conditions and take continuous pensionable service.
  - There was a total of 96 schools in Northamptonshire, where NCC was the employer (63 in the West, 33 in the North).

- Consultation with staff regarding the TUPE transfer would run until 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021 – staff could submit questions/feedback through head teachers.
- NM provided the consultation timeline up to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

3.2 SM provided additional information regarding the TUPE transfer:

- Some services would be split between both authorities as locality-based services, whereas others would work across both new unitary authorities.
- NCC would implement necessary changes to allow for a smooth transition in April 2021. More information regarding the structure of services would be provided to the Schools Forum in January.

3.3 CH presented information regarding the Children’s Trust update and highlighted the following points:

- The Trust went live on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 and the transition was seamless.
- Ofsted concluded that tangible improvement was evident in Northamptonshire children’s services, following an assurance visit prior to the Trust going live.
- Two contractual operation and strategic management groups would be established to manage the contractual arrangement between the Trust and NCC.
- CH emphasised the significance of ensuring that strong links remained between the Trust and the Schools Forum.
- Support services data and HR were being looked at within the Trust, with this internal analysis planned to be completed by the end of March 2021.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum noted the report.**

**Action: Sharon Muldoon**

#### **4. 2020/21 DSG BUDGETS AND MONITORING**

4.1 BB introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- The forecast DSG outturn position for the year ending 31st March 2021 was an overspend of £4.1M against the budget of £233M, after academy recoupment (2.2%).
- This was due to High Needs Block pressures and the cost of ‘out of county’ placements (£2.8M overspend), increased demand for provision in mainstream settings (£1.2M overspend) and alternate provisions (£0.3M overspend). These costs were partly offset by an underspend on SEN unit provision (£0.4M underspend).
- All local authorities with DSG deficit positions of 1% or more were required to submit three-year recovery plans to the Department of Education by the end of the financial year. NCC had predicted a cumulative deficit of 0.63%, therefore a plan was not needed at this time. However, if High Needs pressures continued to escalate, a plan may be required for 2021/22.
- The Schools Block forecasted an underspend of £330K.
- The High Needs Block forecasted an overspend of £4.4M.

- The Early Years Block forecasted nil variance to budget.

4.2 RW questioned when movement between blocks would cease, prior to local government disaggregation. BB responded that the final budgets were to be brought to the Schools Forum at the forthcoming January meeting.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum noted the report.**

**Action: Beth Baines**

## **5. GROWTH FUND BUDGETS 2021/22**

5.1 BB introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- Within the DSG funding allocation for the Schools Block was an allocation for growth. In 2020/21 this was £4.4M. This fund was expected to amount to £3.8M for 2021/22.
- This would ensure that schools would have sufficient funding to open the required new classes needed in-year.
- The forecasted expenditure required for 2021/22 was:
  - £1.58M for the West
  - £1.09M for the North
- The net budgets for 2021/22 would be:
  - £0.99M for the West
  - £0.70M for the North
- There would be a 60%/40% split between growth of secondary and primary schools, in favour of secondary.

5.2 SA questioned whether the growth fund budget amounts to be voted on at the meeting could change in the future if the amount of academy recoupment could be adjusted for any reason. BB explained that they could change with adjustments to expenditure. However, if any expected expenditure did not occur the budgets would roll forward at the end of the financial year; these would form DSG underspends. The budget amounts to be voted on at the meeting were based on the number of new school places that each unitary local authority would be required to deliver. A small contingency had been built into the figures for the North and West, however 90% of the figures were based on actual required growth, for both authorities to meet their statutory obligations of providing the sufficiency of school places in their respective areas.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum voted to approve the budgets.**

**Action: Beth Baines/Chris Wickens**

## **5.3 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE AND 2021/22 PLANNING**

5.4 GB introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- Regarding the alternative provision budget, following return to school post-COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, exclusion figures showed a slight reduction from the previous year.
- Alternative providers had requested an increase in top-up rates, which had impacted the budget.
- In 2020/21, there was a £250,129 overspend against the alternative provision budget of £7.4M.
- Due to the impact of COVID-19 and local authority structural change, consultation on Northamptonshire special schools and SEN Units funding were not completed in 2020/21. This consultation would therefore take place in 2021/22.
- Regarding independent placements, the total spend in 2020/21 amounted to £12,723,896 for 262 placements (63 new placements).
- Concerning the High Needs reserve, the Mastodon contract initial data was expected to be received in December 2020.
- It was thought unlikely that there would be wider implementation of the SEMH project before April 2021 due to COVID-19.
- GB assured the Forum that NCC had performed well in dealing with High Needs pressures.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum noted the report.**

**Action: Gwynn Botterill**

## **6. DSG 2021/22 SCHOOLS BUDGETS AND CONSULTATION PROPOSAL**

6.1 BB introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- The final, settled upon figures for the DSG schools budgets had not yet been received, therefore the officers had been unable to complete the final modelling and bring the finished position to Forum.
- The budgets would have to be submitted by 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and the settlement would be expected later in December 2020, therefore a quick turnaround was anticipated for the modelling of each budget.
- The current figures had been modelled using the October 2019 census data – this indicated that within the financial settlement received in July 2020, as the provisional figures, NCC would be able to afford to place local schools on the national funding formula.
- However, this could not be guaranteed until the final figures were received.
- Final modelling would be closely aligned to the national funding formula.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum noted the report.**

**Action: Beth Baines**

## **7. COMBINED BUDGETS ANNUAL REPORT**

7.1 SM introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- The historical combined services budget amounted to £2.3M.
- Funding would support a range of activities that would be key to both schools, the local authority, pupils, parents and the safeguarding of children.
- DSG contribution to Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (NSCP) was £72K in 2020/21.
- A strategic decision was taken to consolidate safeguarding practices as a partnership in order to provide a coordinated approach – NSCP sat within safeguarding in education.
- DSG family support contribution amounted to £1M.
- SM outlined the field work outcomes of family support.
- The DSG contribution supported the role of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – the MASH supported all referrals into the safeguarding service.

7.2 JB questioned how much money from the budget was spent on school transport and, if this amount was substantial, whether this budget was the most appropriate source of funding for these costs. He also asked whether this funding was being used to supplement other budgets and cover shortfalls elsewhere. SM responded that the overall existing social care transport budget was significant, therefore little money from the combined services budget was used to cover these costs. SM explained that more data and discussion would be required at future Forum meetings, regarding the 20% decrease to the DSG budget.

7.3 CT presented information regarding School Effectiveness and highlighted the following points:

- The School Effectiveness budget (excluding SIG) was £838K, with no local authority funding – North Northamptonshire had 46 maintained schools and 96 academies, West Northamptonshire had 73 maintained schools and 111 academies.
- Regarding the additional use of DSG funding for salaries, the DSG met the costs of the School Effectiveness team.
- The School Effectiveness team were at the forefront of the local authority’s education response to COVID-19 – had successfully worked with cell to lead a multidisciplinary approach to wrap around support for schools during the difficult period.
- The School Effectiveness team had continued open and transparent dialogue on school improvement.
- £270K of funding supported a proportion of the Education Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT).
- The COVID-19 pandemic had affected the work of the EIPT – there had been a significant increase in requests to electively home educate children.
- The service manager post for EIPT was vacant.
- £69K had been allocated as dedicated funds through this budget for parent support coordinators.

**RESOLVED that: That Forum noted the report.**

**Action: Sharon Muldoon**

## **8. CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK 2021/22 AND BUDGETS**

8.1 BB introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- The Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) had existed since April 2018 and included ongoing responsibilities and historic commitments.
- The provisional grant allocation for 2021/22 was £8.48M - £1.15M less than 2020/21.
- The areas funded from this budget were reduced by £0.1M for 2020/21, reflecting a commitment to Forum to reduce the funding under combined services for children's family support.
- Indicative funding for ongoing responsibilities had increased by £95K for 2021/22.
- The CSSB forecasted an underspend of £440K for 2021/22.
- Total schools central block allocation – North - £3.94M and West - £4.54M.
- The indicative National Funding Formula primary and secondary schools individual schools budget in 2021/22 would be £541M – central expenditure of £4.98M equating to 0.9%.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum voted to approve the CSSB allocation on a line-by-line basis as follows (values will be dependent on confirmation of the CSSB allocation):**

- 1. £2.3m – Contribution to Combined Budgets**
- 2. £2.14m – Schools Budget Centrally Funded Termination of Employment Costs**
- 3. £0.96m – Admissions**
- 4. £0.02m – Schools Forums at £11,300 each**
- 5. £1.72m – Previous Education Services Grant Services**

**That headroom in the CSSB, currently estimated to be £0.44m (£0.22m, be used to offset the 2020-21 DSG high needs overspend**

**Action: Beth Baines**

## **9. SB1 FORM – SCHOOL BALANCES**

**RESOLVED: that Forum voted to agree the changes to the SB1 form.**

**Action: Beth Baines**

## **10. DSG RISK REGISTER**

10.1 BB introduced the item and explained that the DSG risk register was to be split into two separate risk registers and brought back to the two North and West Shadow Forums in March 2021.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum noted the report.**

**Action: Beth Baines**

## **11. SCHOOLS FORUM PLAN**

11.1 PH introduced the item and outlined the agenda for the next Schools Forum meeting, to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021, including the votes required by the Forum. The Shadow Forums would take on a greater role in ratifying decisions made moving forward.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum noted the report.**

**Action: Paul Hanson**

## **12. URGENT BUSINESS**

12.1 There was none.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.30pm