



Northumberland County Council

Wellbeing and Community Health Services Group
Education and Skills Service

DRAFT MINUTES
FORMULA FUNDING COMMITTEE
Wednesday 15 September 2021 (Held via Teams)

<p>Present: Colin Pearson (<i>Acting Chair, Director 3 Rivers Trust</i>)</p> <p>Mike Deane-Hall (<i>HT Wooler First and Glendale Middle</i>)</p> <p>Darren Warburton (<i>Finance Director, Bede Academy</i>)</p> <p>Bruce Parvin (<i>Education & Skills Business Manager</i>)</p>	<p>Ben Watson (<i>Governor, St Roberts RC First School</i>)</p> <p>Graham Wilkins (<i>Governor, St Wilfrid's RC Primary</i>)</p>
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1.	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:	
2.	IN ATTENDANCE: See above	
3.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies were received from Graeme Atkins, Ben Ryder and Sue Aviston	
4.	MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: No new expression of interest in joining the Committee had been received following the circulation of the consultation paper to Schools Forum members. Member were reminded that we had lost both Ian Walker and Maurice Hall, while Mike Hodgson had confirmed his resignation from Schools Forum and FFC.	
5.	DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS: None were declared.	
6.	MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (attached)	I

	<p>The minutes of the previous FFC meeting held on Wednesday 04 November 2020, were accepted, having previously been circulated and shared with Schools Forum.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>FAIR SCHOOL FUNDING FOR ALL: Consultation Paper (Deadline 30 September 2021 – Consultation Paper; Questions) Due to Ben Watson’s limited availability, it was agreed to take the consultation paper first.</p> <p>FFC were reminded that a 2 stage strategy had been agreed last year, with the “gap” between NFF and NCC values being “halved” in respect of Primary and Key Stage 4 AWPU, with a view to becoming aligned in 2022/23. NCC FSM values at primary and secondary remained over NFF, this was to assist schools who had lost out following the change in the applicable date for pupil premium from January to October School Census.</p> <p>CP asked which Schools would “lose out” from any delay to move to NFF. In practice it was those schools who receive significant funding from the value(s) current lower than NFF in Northumberland, i.e. Primary Low Prior Attainment. We had increased this significantly for 2022/23 but there remained some way to go.</p> <p>Following an update to Schools Forum in September, there would be formal consultation at the November meeting prior to the final settlement being received in December and a report to Cabinet in January.</p> <p>FFC then consider the current consultation paper “Fair Funding for All”.</p> <p>BP drew the Committee’s attention to on potential implication arising, in terms of timescales for implementation. Given that Q7a refers to moving by 10% towards NFF values, this inferred full implementation could be 10 years away.</p> <p>In relation to the specific consultation questions, in relation to 1 and 2 it was felt that some of the exceptional premises funding could not be covered by a prescriptive national formula.</p> <p>Questions 3 and 4 dealt with the ESFA proposals around growth and falling rolls funding. With regard to growth funding. BP pointed out that there was a significant inconsistency in that only academies could access popular growth funding, and this was felt to be unfair – There remained a key role for LAs re place planning.</p> <p>CP and MDH pointed out that this could promote unhealthy levels of competition between schools which was a model that did not always fit, particularly in rural areas. The EFSA should instead consider promoting collaboration not competition to improve standards.</p> <p>It was considered the establishment of a Growth Fund was worth exploring for Northumberland and this should be explored as part of the 2022/23 funding discussions.</p>	<p>BP</p>

	<p>It was felt that questions 5 to 8 seemed to go back over old ground in relation to the NFF, it was felt that given the ESFA's commitment to the NFF it was preferable to implement it without unnecessary delay. There remains no definitive timescale from the ESFA re this. The only issue for Northumberland was the need to introduce a mobility value for primary and secondary into the formula, but it was understood this would have a marginal impact on Northumberland. Using the full current NFF Values of £925 (primary) and £1330 (secondary), this would account for £57,000 from Northumberland's allocation.</p> <p>NCC was now allocating sparsity in line with NFF, for both amounts and methodology. Given the national increase it was felt there was some merit in retaining some flexibilities (question 10), while BP expressed some concerns that the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) could simply be lost as part of the overall Local Government Finance Settlement (questions 11 and 12).</p> <p>There were significant reservations expressed by BP in respect of the possibility of moving maintained schools to an academic funding year, like their academy colleagues, the main issue being the implications for the production of LA accounts. It would also extend the funding lag from maintained schools between the key point when data is measured (October School Census) and when it is used to distribute funding. DW pointed out that this did give academies additional planning time when setting budgets.</p> <p>The final point raised by GW was not a question in the consultation but made the excellent point that the additional Employers NI contributions recently announced by the PM should not fall as an additional cost to Schools, and this needed to be reflected in the "any other comments" section of the consultation.</p>	BP
8.	<p>LA SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FORMULA 2021-22 (ESFA Report; Appendix and Data)</p> <p>MDH asked if it was possible to establish how NCC compared with other LAs in relation to the adoption of NCC values. BP highlighted the ESFA Schools Block Formula 2021-22 report in relation to this. BP highlighted comparative values using other North East authorities and Cumbria.</p> <p>Generally NCC was on a strong position to complete the transition but it was suggested a presentation be prepared for the November meeting of the full Forum.</p>	BP
9.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS : None</p>	Discussion
10.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING: confirmed as 03 November 2021 (two weeks before the 17 November Schools Forum meeting)</p>	Discussion