

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**SCHOOLS' FORUM**

At a meeting of the Schools' Forum held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 26 September 2018 at 9:30am.

**PRESENT**

C Pearson (Chair)  
Director, Three Rivers Learning Trust

**Headteacher Representatives**

M Allan  
C Bradshaw  
C Davison

M Hall  
F G Hartland  
J Kennedy

**Governor Representatives**

K Faulkner  
S Harker  
S Heminsley (substitute for  
M Pedley)

I Walker  
B Watson  
G Wilkins

**Academies Representatives**

G Atkins

D Wylie

**Early Years' Representative**

K Morrison

**Trades Union Representatives**

R E Woolhouse

**16 - 19 Provider of Education Representative**

J Cooper

**Northumberland County Council Elected Members (Observers)**

W Daley

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## OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

S Aviston	Head of School Organisation and Resources
M Bird	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Z Parkin	School funding and Business Relationship Manager
B Parvin	Education and Skills Business Manager
D Street	Commissioner to Early Years and Primary

### 11. MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

- 11.1 The Education and Skills Business Manager reminded everybody about the recent request for additional academy representatives to become members of the forum. Any expressions of interest could be made through J Roberts.
- 11.2 Forum members were also introduced to the new School Funding and Business Relationship Manager, Zephania Parkin, who had replaced Angela Whitehead.

### 12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S. Connolly, Mrs F.G. Hartland, Councillor N.Oliver, Sam Barron, Dean Jackson and Dave Cookson.

### 13. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

- 13.1 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on Wednesday, 4 July 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### **Matters Arising:**

- 13.2 Minute 3.3: Councillor Daley explained that the education in the west of Northumberland report had since been agreed by Cabinet on 10 July 2018. The Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised and supported the proposals before Cabinet decided it. As a result of the decision, the governing body of Bellingham Middle School had appealed to the schools adjudicator; a decision purely on Bellingham Middle School was now awaited but did not affect the conversion of first schools becoming primary schools. A meeting with the schools adjudicator had been organised for 12 October. The closure of Bellingham Middle School was due to take effect from 31 August 2019.
- 13.3 Minute 3.4: regarding debt accrued at Haydon Bridge High School, Councillor

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Daley explained that Cabinet had supported maintaining the school and work was being undertaken to allocate more capital investment. Consideration was being given to identifying improvements required. It was positive news that more students were now choosing to attend the school and improvements were showing. A letter had been sent to Bright Tribe, and reassurance had been received that the Northern Hub funding had been used appropriately. The letter sent to Bright Tribe would be circulated to members of the forum; information had been requested about the funding and reassurance was being sought on how to recover the £250,000 share due for Northumberland. Forum members were also advised that school capital investment money was received directly from the Medium Term Financial Plan and grants were being used to address the backlog in maintenance issues. Clarification was awaited on the allocations due for schools in the next round.

- 13.2 Minute 3.5: Regarding the forum being kept informed of North of Tyne developments, Councillor Daley advised that the last of the key stakeholder meetings were taking place to consider educational challenges. Directors of Education from Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside would be meeting on 16 October to discuss the bid, which was expected to be submitted to the government by the end of the year.
- 13.3 Minute 8.1: The Chair would be meeting with the Chairs of the Additional Needs Subcommittee and the Formula Funding Subcommittee to discuss the self assessment toolkit, forum members could let the Chair know if they were interested in further details.

## **14. COMMUNICATION**

### **(a) F40 Funding Update and request for Academy Contacts**

- 14.1 The Education and Skills Business Manager introduced the report (attached to the filed papers of the meeting). The importance of this item was reflected in the work programme and decisions would be needed at November's Schools' Forum meeting. In addition, the F40 group had requested one or two academy contacts for consultation on school finance; anybody interested should inform Mr Parvin.
- 14.2 In response to questions, Mr Parvin advised that all details were circulated electronically and might require attendance at two or three meetings per year to discuss specific aspects of the National Funding Formula. There were many developments with the Dedicated Schools Grant, which could impact reflect on Special Educational Needs financial pressures. Volunteers were initially sought from the forum's membership; it was suggested that the representative might come from the Hadrian Learning Trust which would be confirmed in due course. It would also be queried whether the Three Rivers Learning Trust might also be interested in participating.

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## **(b) Additional Educational Needs (AEN) Subcommittee Minutes - 12 September 2018**

- 14.2 A copy of the draft minutes from the Additional Educational Needs Subcommittee meeting held on 12 September 2018 were circulated at the meeting (copy filed with papers for the meeting). The Chair of the subcommittee explained how due to an increase in AEN students, a new system for allocating places was being implemented, and a number of assessments needed to be organised. The subcommittee had discussed funding for AEN and were disappointed with the current financial offer.
- 14.3 Forum members were advised that this element of the funding block was £29.8m, exactly the same as the previous year. It was not an indicator of pressure, as numbers of pupils on plans were increasing, 7% between January and May school census dates, 13% annual increase, nationally figures were also increasing but not as rapidly. also A request was made for regular updates on the funding; forum members were advised that as of the meeting on 12 September the latest figure was continuing to be finalised, so an update would be provided to the next meeting.
- 14.4 The Chair of the subcommittee added that an application for a free school was being made for the south of the county to address the shortfall in special school places; it was hoped that the Department for Education (DfE) would support the bid.
- 14.5 The subcommittee had also discussed its terms of reference, with reference to preference to allocating support using more of a banding system to the need and level of support required. A report on this would be produced for the next meeting.

## **(c) Formula Funding Committee Minutes - 18 September 2018**

- 14.6 A copy of the terms of the reference of the Formula Funding Committee were circulated at the meeting (copy filed with papers for the meeting). The subcommittee had been concerned about the DfE's arrangements and the formula being put back a year. Adjustments would be made based on values when further information and figures were received. It would be helpful to see the overall values so see Northumberland's position and what was being allocated through the lump sum.

**RESOLVED** that further information be provided at the next meeting as indicated.

## **15. SCHOOLS' FORUM AND SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

- 15.1 The Education and Skills Business Manager raised how there was an academy vacancy on the Schools' Forum following the decisions on school reorganisations. The DfE's School Forum guidance specified special academy representation, where such a school operated within an local authority area; Given the demerger of the Northumberland Church of England Academy involved the creation of a special

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academy, and Hexham Priory joining the Eden Academy Trust, we now needed a special academy representative on the Schools' Forum; a report about this would be presented to the forum's next meeting in November.

## **16. SCHOOLS' FORUM SELF ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT**

- 16.1 The Chair confirmed that he would take this work forward and seek some assistance from other Schools' Forum members.

## **17. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE**

- 17.1 The Education and Skills Business Manager introduced the report (attached to the filed papers for the meeting). The introduction of the new "hard2 National Funding Formula (NFF) was now expected to be introduced during 2012/22 at the earliest. The DfE was "pleased" with the approach taken by County Councils in working towards NFF values when setting its budgets for 2018/19. Key points in the report included: the County Council had exceeded NFF rates for Primary and Key Stage 4 values; Key Stage 3 NFF rate was in excess of the previous Northumberland rate and so was used for 2018/19. 2019/20 distribution would be based on the October 2018 school census, with a minimum increase of 0.5% per pupil for schools. No school would receive more than a 3% increase per year.
- 17.2 Mr Parvin also provided a presentation with details of both Northumberland's figures in comparison to other north eastern Local Education Authorities, with comparative details about deprivation levels, prior attainment levels, lump sums and basic entitlement.
- 17.3 In response to a question it was confirmed that funding for deprivation was based on postcode, and mirror the DfE's guidance, and was set at a level in line with DfE figures Free School Meals and Free School Meals 6 funding was based on the individual applications, as is the case with pupil premium funding. Information had been presented to the Formula Funding Committee and would be presented to the forum's next meeting with proposals for the 2019/20 school year. Published figures referring to growth were typically calculated in small cash terms, not reflecting inflation.
- 17.4 Replying to a query, it was a misconception that Northumberland's population was declining. Provisional Schools Block figures reflected over £0.5 million growth funding, but this should be seen in the context of a total Schools Block value of £178m. Councillor Daley added that since January 2018, a dedicated education element had been required for planning applications, which had raised £11.8m to grow capacity within schools. For example, given its position in an area of expected large population increase, Beacon Hill Primary would be getting a new form class to deal with capacity. Mrs Aviston also advised that funding had also been put into

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Whytrigg Middle School and Chantry Middle School to ensure that places were funded, and also responded to a question by confirming that £150,000 was waiting to be allocated to address requirements at Stannington.

- 17.5 It was queried whether there was likely to be a further delay with the National Funding Formula. Forum members were advised that last year had provided flexibility to transfer funding from the schools block to the the high needs block, which would not be possible under future hard NFF arrangements. Members were advised that historically, high schools had often been hit more by budget pressures, but this was now being felt across the board, as evidenced by the following paper around School Balances. The DfE had been lobbied to influence the adverse impact felt by high schools, compared to secondary schools in respect of Minimum per Pupil values, .and a local MP was supportive. The forum discussed their concerns about the fairness of the situation; the forum would continue to discuss with the County Council. Years 10 & 11 were more expensive to run; an average was received of £4800, whereas £5100 would be required for High Schools to be on an equivalent basis with secondary schools. could make the difference. This issue would be raised with Anne-Marie Trevelyan, who was now a DfE minister. It was agreed that the letter from the 20 Group could be amended to also be sent out in the Schools' Forum's name.
- 17.6 It was also requested that in future spreadsheets be circulated in Excel format rather than PDF.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the information be noted; and
- (2) The forum's queries be followed up after the meeting.

**18. SCHOOL BALANCES AS AT 31 MARCH 2018**

- 18.1 The report (filed with the filed papers of the meeting) was introduced; forum members were advised that it provided information on the overall pressures on school balances. The 24% fall in balances indicated the pressures on school budgets. The second page of the report provided an analysis of the opening and closing balances for the year; the average balance held by Northumberland schools had been £41,000 in March 2017 and was down to £31,000 in March 2018. There had both been a decline in the balance held by schools in surplus, and for those 28 schools that had a deficit.
- 18.2 In response to questions, it was confirmed that schools in deficit needed a recovery plan signed off by the Corporate Finance department, which had to be addressed within three years. If such schools did continue to struggle financially, they did have the option of being able to make an urgent call for help. Corporate Finance visited schools with a recovery plan twice per annum, and these visits would increase in frequency if schools stayed in deficit.

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- 18.3 The Chair queried whether some smaller first and primary schools would remain viable once in deficit over time? The forum were advised that 21 schools were in deficit, but 87 were in surplus. There was targeting undertaken of the schools in higher debt. The DfE had a risk assessment tool to rate schools from A - G on fundamental risk criteria, which fundamentally concerned financial balances. It was commented that it would be helpful for headteachers to be aware of this process and assessment, but this was not in general usage yet. The assessment of academies was subcontracted to Deloittes.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **19. TEACHERS' PAY GRANT**

- 19.1 A copy of DfE guidance had been circulated with the agenda (filed with the papers of the meeting). It had been published on 14 September; further information was due to follow. There would be additional support for schools above the 1% that schools should have budgeted for. The figures for years were different as for 2018/19 it only included the seven months from September 2018 to March 2019, whereas it would be for the full 12 months for the following year. In 2018/19 it would be £16.40 per primary school pupil, £28.29 per secondary pupil and £45.56 per. For special schools it would be £65.65 and £113.46 respectively. Further guidance would follow in October 2018. The DfE operated on a presumption of a minimum of 100 pupils per school, so the lowest allocation would be £1640.
- 19.2 It was pointed out that there was an anomaly regarding reference on page two about the inclusion of sixth forms; clarification would be provided about this at the next meeting once further information had been received in October 2018. It was agreed that the table should refer to secondary/high. The first column needed to refer to 'estimated level for 2019/20'.
- 19.3 This information would be useful for schools planning for the next year and the setting of National Funding Formula values.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the information be noted; and
- (2) further information be provided at the next meeting about the forum's queries.

## **20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Schools' Forum would take place on Wednesday, 21 November 2018 at 9.30am in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth. Dates for the next three meetings had been circulated, as had the forum's

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work programme; forthcoming meetings were crucial about approval and consultation about schools funding.

CHAIR \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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