

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Agenda Item : 4

SCHOOLS' FORUM

At a meeting of the **Schools' Forum** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday,
12 July 2017 at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT

Mr. M. Brown

Chairman in the Chair

(Governor, Richard Coates CE Middle School, Ponteland)

Headteacher Representatives

Mr. C. Bradshaw
Mr. M. Deane-Hall
Mr. M. Hall

Mrs. J. Kennedy
Mr. K. McGrane

Governor Representatives

Ms. L. Elliott
Mr. M. Hodgson

Mr I Walker

Roman Catholic Diocese Representative

Mrs. F.A. Penny

Church of England Diocese Representative

Mrs. E. Bell

Academies Representatives

Mr. G. Atkins
Mr. C. Pearson

Mrs. D. Wylie

16-19 Provider of Education Representative

Ms. S. Morgan-Evans (Sub)

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Early Years Representative

Mrs. K. Morrison

Trades Union Representatives

Mrs. J. Guthrie

Mr. J. Sanderson

Northumberland County Council Elected Members (Observers)

Councillor W. Daley

Councillor N. Oliver

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs. S. Aviston	Head of School Organisation and Resources
Mrs. A. Whitehead	School Funding & Business Relationship Manager
Dr. A. Johnson	Interim Director of Children's Services
Mr. D. Cookson	Commissioner, Secondary Education
Mr. B. Parvin	Education and Skills Business Manager
Mr. D. Street	Commissioner for Early Years and Primary
Mr. S. Nicholson	Scrutiny Co-ordinator

1. MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Chairman reported that this would be his final meeting as chairperson. He was pleased to welcome the new lead member for Children's Services, Councillor Wayne Daley. He also introduced Councillor Nick Oliver, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Services and Cabinet Secretary who, together with Councillor Daley, would attend future meetings as observers. He further welcomed Jane Kennedy, Head Teacher, Corbridge Middle School and Bruce Parvin, Education and Skills Business Manager to their first meeting.

The following vacancies remained on the Forum:

- 2 First/Primary school Head Teachers
- 1 First/Primary Governor
- 1 Middle school Governor from 31.8.17
- 2 Academy representatives

The following partnerships also did not have any representation on the Schools' Forum:

- Prudhoe

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- Coquet
- Seaton Valley

Members were advised that nominations for some of those vacancies had been received and it was anticipated that they would be confirmed at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Day, Mr Faulkner, Mrs. Norris, Mr Wilkins and Mr Woolhouse.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on Wednesday, 17 February 2017, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record, and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising from the minutes that were not covered on agenda.

4. COMMUNICATION

(a) Communication with Schools Forum

The Chairman reported that two letters had been tabled at the meeting in response to issues previously raised by the Forum:

- (i) Mr J. Lee, Headmaster, Longridge Towers School regarding the education of children from Holy Island, and
- (ii) Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for School Standards regarding the National Funding Formula.

RESOLVED that the letters be noted and filed with the signed minutes.

(b) Communication from the following Committee meetings (copied with the signed minutes):

- Formula Funding Committee – (7 March 2017 – NFF response only) Ian Walker
- Additional Needs Committee – (8 March 2017 – NFF response only and 25 April 2017) Felicity Penny

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RESOLVED that the information be noted.

5. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT OUTTURN 2016-17

The Forum considered a report which provided members with a breakdown of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn position for 2016/17, together with the implications of the outturn and other cost pressures on the 2017/18 DSG budget. (Report copied with the signed minutes).

Members were advised that officers would continue to examine in detail the impact the £1.727m deficit would have on schools in 2017/18. A further report would be presented to the Forum in September 2017 outlining the options proposed to deal with the impact of the deficit. It appeared inevitable that the deficit would have to be recouped by reducing funds available to schools for the following year. Members noted the position and asked officers to examine whether a proposed strategy document could cover the period up to 2020.

RESOLVED/AGREED that

- (a) recouping the overspend on the DSG for 2016/17 will have the first call on the DSG settlement for 2017/18;
- (b) a further review of High Needs funding policies for implementation up to 2020 was necessary;
- (c) a further report on how deficit reduction would be presented to the next meeting in the context of the new funding formula;
- (d) the new Education and Skills Business Manager, Bruce Parvin, would continue to communicate with schools forum if there were any early announcements on schools finance before the next forum;
- (e) Forum members agreed to raise awareness amongst schools they represented of the role of forum and the financial issues and how vital its role was in terms of decision making and the impact it had on them.

6. SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

The Forum considered two proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools document highlighted in paragraphs 4.1 (c) and 6.3 (v) and filed with the signed minutes.

Members were advised that they had previously been consulted on the changes and the purpose of this item was to confirm those amendments.

RESOLVED that the changes be approved.

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7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Challenges Associated with Delivering Special Education Needs (SEN)

Dr Andy Johnson, Interim Director of Children's Services reported on a recent visit he had made to Ellington Primary School to discuss SEND and finance. He was made aware of a number of significant challenges that the school was facing in respect of SEN funding and had undertaken to examine whether the Council/Schools Forum could provide additional resources or flexibility in the way the service was funded.

The school had become very successful in providing SEN and, as a consequence, had attracted a higher proportion of applications from parents of children with, in some cases, acute needs.

Mr Kevin Vardy, Head Teacher of Ellington Primary School gave members a presentation on the wide and varied challenges he, together with his staff and governors, faced in providing SEN. A copy of his presentation is copied with the signed minutes.

Dr Johnson thanked Mr Vardy for his presentation and advised members that this highlighted the issues faced by many schools.

He was particularly concerned that there were not enough places in Special Schools in the county or mainstream resource bases to deal with the needs of children.

A wide ranging review of places had been commissioned and Sue Aviston would be providing an outline consultation document in the Autumn term, this examine ways in which capacity could be matched to need.

Members welcomed the presentation from Mr Vardy and supported the comments from the Interim Director. They highlighted a number of issues that should also be further examined, such as "in year" admissions and the impact on staff who are undertaking additional duties that they may not be trained for.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the presentation be noted, and
- (b) the issues raised in the presentation and subsequent discussion, be examined in preparing a further report to the Schools' Forum in the Autumn term.

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(2) Current Leadership Arrangements

Dr Andy Johnson, Interim Director of Children's Services reported that his new designation followed the appointment of Daljit Lally as Interim Chief Executive. He then presented a PowerPoint presentation on the challenges and issues facing Education and Skills over the coming year and beyond. (A copy of the presentation is filed with the signed minutes).

Councillor Nick Oliver, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Cabinet Secretary gave members an overview of the challenges and priorities of the New Administration, including a review of the Council's financial position and reviews of ARCH and Active Northumberland. Further priorities will be included in the revised draft Corporate Plan, which he hoped would be published in the Autumn. He confirmed however, that proposed changes to the Ponteland Partnership would go ahead as planned and operational decisions were still being taken to ensure the smooth running of services.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

(3) Haydon Bridge

Dr Andy Johnson, Interim Director of Children's Services briefly updated members on the current position regarding the Haydon Bridge Partnership. An Interim Executive Board was in place to run Haydon Bridge High School and consultations with the Education Commissioner were ongoing, Bright Tribe remained the Department for Education's preferred sponsor.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

(4) Nunnykirk School

There was a brief discussion regarding the financial position of this independent special school and whether the Council could work with it's leadership in examining how it may assist to alleviate that position. Dr. Johnson reported that he had met the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors, but he felt that it was not appropriate at this stage to discuss this issue at a meeting of the Schools' Forum. It may well be that this issue would be part of the wider consultation and review of special needs places that had already been mentioned above.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Schools' Forum be held on **Wednesday, 27 September 2017** at 1.30 pm in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth.

Ch.'s Initials.....

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____

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