

Lancashire Schools Forum meeting of 18 March 2021 via Zoom

Executive Summary

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence and 2. Substitute Members

To note attendance and apologies for absence and welcome any substitute members.

3. Forum Membership

To note the Forum membership changes since the last meeting.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting and 5. Matters Arising

To agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 12 January 2021 and any matters arising.

6. Recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group held on 4 March 2021.

i. New School Proposals

Lynn MacDonald, School Planning Manager, attended working group for this item.

This report provided additional information about the policy and data around considerations relating to the possible commissioning of a new primary school in the Ribble Valley

The Working Group:

a) Noted the information provided.

b) Thanked Lynn for the useful background information to help shape the necessary amendments to the Forum growth fund policy.

ii. Growth Fund Policy Update – New Schools

This report was linked to the previous item and provided an update on the School Growth Fund policy proposing amendments related to support for new schools. A copy of the new policy is provided with the report.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the report.

b) Supported the new school addition to the Lancashire Growth Fund policy.

iii. School Block Funding 2021/22

An update was provided about the finalisation of the Schools Budget setting process for 2021/22, culminating in the issuing of individual school budget in February 2021. Information was also included on other matters relating to 2021/22 school funding.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the report.

iv. Inclusion Hub Funding

This report dealt with proposals for Inclusion Hub allocations in 2021/22 and provided an update on key developments and challenges in 2020/21.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Supported the methodology for allocating 2021/22 Inclusion Hub funding to districts.*
- c) *Asked that feedback be provided to the Inclusion Hub Steering Group to help inform future reports.*

v. *Schools national funding formula: changes to the sparsity factor in 2022-23*

The DfE issued a consultation on Schools national funding formula: changes to the sparsity factor in 2022-23. Information and analysis of the implications for Lancashire were provided, together with an opportunity for members to express initial views. A draft Forum consultation response is included in the papers for approval.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Noted that a draft Forum consultation response would be presented to the 18 March 2021 meeting, incorporating views expressed to date.*
- c) *Requested that diocesan authorities and primary and secondary schools should be alerted to the consultation.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working Group's recommendations.

7. Recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group meeting held on 2 March 2021.

i. *High Needs Block Funding*

An update was provided about the finalisation of the HNB budget setting process for 2021/22, culminating in the issuing of individual school budget in February 2021. Information was also included on other matters relating to 2021/22 school funding and future consultations

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

ii. *High Needs Block Termly Redetermination Process*

During the summer and autumn terms 2020, the Forum has supported the application of protections for special schools and pupil referral units in the termly budget redeterminations, to provide some mitigation against NOR reductions caused by COVID-19. This report set out information on support provided and sought views on the arrangements for the spring term 2021

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report and the further information.*
- b) *Recommended that protections are applied to the HNB spring term 2021 redetermination process to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for any special schools or PRUs with a reduced NOR in the January 2021 count.*
- c) *Supported the issuing of an eform to special schools to collected January census data to enable spring term redeterminations to be actioned on time.*
- d) *Supported further investigation into possible funding implications around the teachers pay and pensions methodology for PRUs and any possible protection that could be provided for 2021/22.*

- e) *Requested that the involvement of maintained nursery schools in Inclusion Hub discussions be raised with relevant Directors.*
- f) *Noted that wider strategic considerations around PRUs was being taken forward by the Alternative Provision Steering Group.*

The report includes proposals around PRU Pay and Pensions.

iii. Review of national funding formula for allocations of high needs funding to local authorities: changes for 2022-23

On 10th February 2021, the DfE launched a consultation on the 'Review of national funding formula for allocations of high needs funding to local authorities: changes for 2022-23'. This report provided information on the proposals are offered an opportunity for members to shape a Forum response. A draft Forum consultation response is provided in the report.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Expressed some initial views on the consultation.*

Individual members were asked to consider any further comments on the consultation and inform the LA.

iv. Alternative Provision Strategy Group Update

A brief verbal update was provided for members on the work of the Alternative Provision Strategy Group.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working Group's recommendations.

8. Recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group meeting held on 9 March 2021.

i. SEN Inclusion Fund

Dr Sally Richardson, Head of Service for the Inclusion Service, attended the Working Group meeting for this item, and the SEND Partnership: Ofsted Revisit report.

A number of issues have previously been raised with the Inclusion Service in connection with support for SEN children in early years. In response to this, an SEN working group had been established with the service consider some of the key issues, and this meeting provided an opportunity to discuss progress with the Head of Service.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report*
- b) *Asked that officers consider the views expressed at the meeting.*

ii. *SEND Partnership: Ofsted Revisit*

At the last working group meeting, members asked if there was any feedback from the OfSTED SEND inspection of the Authority, to which some colleagues had contributed. An update from the Inclusion Service was provided.

The Working Group is asked to:

- a) *Note the report.*

iii. *Early Years Block Funding*

At the last working group meeting, members supported a letter being sent to the Schools Forum to highlight the significant pressures being faced by the sector and asking for consideration of three measures:

- Funding for the 2021 spring term, with at least a similar measure as applied this term in comparing it with spring 2020;
- A one off Covid support payment for each setting;
- Additional funding for the whole of the next financial year.

An update on the three key areas is provided.

The Working Group:

- a) *Note the report.*

iv. *Interim EEF Payments*

In order to support the sustainability and cash flow of early years providers during the pandemic, instead of 3 payments each term, the local authority has made 2 payments instead. The changes to interim payments during the course of the pandemic have been very positively received and appreciated by the sector. A decision needs to be taken on the future basis for calculation of interim payments from autumn 2020-21 onwards.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report:*
- b) *Recommended that the sector be consulted on the future options for interim payments.*

v. *Executive Recovery Board*

The Working Group chair fed back from recent Executive Recovery Board meetings, emphasising that awareness about the important role played by the early years sector had been enhanced through this process

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working Group's recommendations.

9. Recommendations from the Chairs' Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Chairs' Block Working Group meeting held on 2 March 2021.

i. DSG Historic Commitments

A report was presented that considered the options for a possible continued DSG funding contribution towards services that were previously funded for the 'historic commitments' element, which DfE are reducing/ceasing

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.*
- b) Asked that services be invited to present information to the July 2021 Schools Forum meeting.*

ii. Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) –Categorisations

Regular reports have been presented to the Chairs' Group/Forum around Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) categorisations, and an updated analysis was provided for the group, which was based on the county council's forecasts of the outturn position for schools at 31 March 2021, taken from data in the LCC accounts at 31 December 2020.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report and information provided.*
- b) Welcomed the proposal to link in with Schools Forum to align with strategic priorities.*
- c) Noted that the SIFD categorisation would be rerun when the actual outturn data*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working Group's recommendations.

10. Recommendations from the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group

To consider the recommendations from the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group meeting held on 8 February 2021.

i. Urgent Business Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Protocol

It was noted that responses were obtained from the Steering Group in February 2020 using the urgent business procedure, in connection with the protocol to be used to in connection with the transfer of 'schools' monies, to non-levy paying settings rather than returning funding to central government.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.*

ii. School Apprenticeship Levy Update

Colleagues from the Apprenticeship Levy team delivered a presentation to members providing an update on the latest school related developments.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the information.*
- b) Requested that the transfer opportunity be promoted with early years providers.*
- c) Welcomed the possibility of pooled payroll issue being resolved for April 2021.*
- d) Thanked the Apprenticeship Levy Team for their continued hard work and dedication during difficult circumstances.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working Group's recommendations.

11. Urgent Business

No items have been considered using the Forum's Urgent Business procedure since the last Forum meeting.

12. Forum Correspondence

No items of correspondence have been received since the last meeting.

13. Any Other Business

DfE Consultation Changes to the payment process of schools' business rates

On 10 March 2021, the DfE issued a consultation on Changes to the payment process of schools' business rates. A copy of the consultation is provided with the papers/ The Forum meeting will provide an initial opportunity to express views on the DfE proposals.

14. Date of Future Meetings

To note that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 6 July 2021. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course, which is likely to be a Microsoft Teams meeting.