

**Leicester City Council
Schools Forum**

**DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting held at 1:00 pm on Thursday 20th September 2018 at
Soar Valley Training Centre**

Present:

Schools members:

Academies:	Jim Cook (Chair)
Special Academies:	Julie Aquilina
Special School Governors:	~
Special School Heads:	Sarah Osborne
Secondary School Governors:	~
Secondary School Head representatives:	Julie Robinson, Simon Catchpole
Primary School Governors:	Glenys Mulvany, Khalid Mahmood
Primary School Head representatives:	Liz Warren, Karl Stewart, Purminder Samaria, Jo Marshall
Pupil Referral Units:	Shaun Whittingham

Non-Schools Members:

Teaching Unions:	Jessica Edmonds
School support staff Unions:	~
14-19 Partnership:	Sandra Hamilton-Fox
Early Years PVI Providers:	~
Voluntary Sector:	~

In attendance:

Paul Tinsley	Director of Learning and Inclusion
Simon Walton	Senior Accountant, Finance
Ed Rowe	Clerk to the Forum
Jackie Difolco (Items 1-5 only)	Head of Service: Early Help (Children Centres, Youth & Family Support)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Maxine Clewlow, Steve Wilson, Yoke O'Brien and Martin Judson.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 2018 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

i) Update on re-pooling of landlord CMF monies for 2017/18

The clerk had asked the Customer Relationship Manager, Estates & Building for an update on the issue but no reply had yet been received.

It was agreed that the Director of Learning and Inclusion would follow up the matter with Sean Atterbury, and then circulate a response to all Forum members.

Action: Paul Tinsley

ii) Draft constitution

The Chair advised that a change to the constitution had been drafted to make it clear that consecutive terms were permissible. The intention was to bring an updated version to the November meeting for consideration by members.

iii) City Catering arrangements

The Director of Learning and Inclusion advised that it had been intended to change the charging arrangements to be based on the actual number of meals taken by pupils. However, under that model 15 schools were expected to make a heavy loss, so further work was ongoing. The local authority was keen to make the City Catering Service more competitive and was aware of the need to move quickly on the issue. A consultant had been brought in to progress matters.

School members confirmed that an early decision would be preferable and noted that it would help inform decisions as to whether or not they should continue to use City Catering as their supplier.

iv) Membership

The Chair welcomed Sandra Hamilton-Fox to the meeting, noting that she had recently been re-elected by the Tertiary Federation.

5. Children's Centre Teachers

The Annual Children's Centre Teacher progress report was received. The Head of Service: Early Help (Children Centres, Youth & Family Support), confirmed that the service was provided by twelve teachers and one lead professional. The annual cost was £775,800 of which £761,500 was funded from the Early Education Grant following the approval of Schools Forum.

The service focussed on four main areas:

- Supporting Early Years Settings
- Supporting transition into school based foundation stage provision
- Completing Personal Education Plans for all Looked After Children
- Targeted intervention for vulnerable families

These areas supported completion of the local authority's statutory duties regarding promoting the educational achievement of looked after children and the duty to support providers to deliver affordable and high quality childcare.

The report set out in detail the activities undertaken and the results that had been delivered, together with feedback from service users.

Members welcomed the report and noted that the valuable work that had been carried out by Children's Centre Teachers was delivering real benefits ahead of children starting school. However, it was noted that the existing arrangements only provided funding up to April 2019.

It was noted that the performance management of the lead professional had previously been carried out by Peter Flack, the former chair of Schools Forum. A replacement for this role was therefore required. It was agreed that Liz Warren would seek a volunteer from the primary school headteachers.

Action: Liz Warren

6. Outturn 2017/18 and High Needs Block budget 2018/19

The report of the Head of Finance, Education & Children's Services was received. It was noted that total DSG expenditure exceeded the in-year allocation by £2.3m. The gap had been funded as planned from DSG reserves. The overspend had been the result of ongoing pressures on the High Needs Block, the final year of £1.2m additional funding to primary schools and the increase in the Growth Fund to £3.8m.

The Department for Education had indicated that the methodology for growth funding may change in future, but no further details were yet available. Also, the full introduction of the National Funding Formula had been delayed by a year to 2021/22.

The Senior Accountant advised that the planned overspend in the High Needs Block for 2018/19 was £2.6m, and noted that the marginal increase in funding of £4000 per place only ever provided 20% of the lowest cost place. A breakdown of the allocation of the High Needs Block budget was provided in Appendix 2, and work was ongoing to try and reduce the total overspend. It was hoped that savings could be made within the council overheads expenditure, which currently totalled £913,000.

The Director of Learning and Inclusion noted that there were ongoing increases in SEN demand, creating pressures in special schools, PRUs and the Children's Hospital school. The reserves that the city council had in place meant we were better off than many local authorities, but steps still had to be taken to set out possible savings in the High Needs Block for the City Mayor to consider.

Total school revenue balances had increased by £0.78m a year ago to £15.25m. An additional £2.4m was held by the city council on behalf of schools as a reserve for building or other capital projects in the future. 64 schools had a surplus balance and 18 schools had a deficit.

After the allowed exemptions had been applied, net uncommitted balanced totalled £7.01m. Ten schools had net balances over the 10% threshold that allowed a total of £0.6m for potential clawback.

Members queried what process was in place to challenge schools with large surpluses or with deficits. It was confirmed that all schools with a deficit entered into a licensed deficit agreement with Finance, which aimed to clear the balance within three years.

Schools with surpluses were required to show how they intended to commit those funds in future years. However, no resources were available to validate those returns retrospectively, which potentially created a weakness in the monitoring process.

The Director of Learning and Inclusion advised that there was no wish to discourage appropriate prudence and planning, but there was a need to better understand why large balances were being carried forward. Members also suggested that work should be carried out to gain establish how some schools were able to arrive at that position, so that appropriate best practice could be shared.

It was suggested that any indication that clawback may be applied could potentially lead to panic buying in schools to avoid that happening. A proposal was made that a decision be taken either to confirm clawback would never happen, or to introduce a significantly higher threshold than was currently in place.

The Director of Learning and Inclusion expressed the view that it was valid for the local authority to look carefully at large amounts of public money that was being stockpiled by maintained schools, particularly in view of the fact that those balances would be acquired by the relevant MAT if a maintained school converted to academy status.

After further discussion, Forum members voted to support the following recommendations:

- To note the contents of the report
- That no clawback be made in the current financial year (supported by a 10 - 0 vote)
- That no clawback be made in the following financial year (supported by a 10 - 0 vote)
- That a mechanism be introduced to look more closely at schools with surplus balances

7. De-delegation 2019/20 draft consultation document

The draft consultation document re: de-delegation for 2019/20 was received. The Senior Accountant noted it was very similar in format and content to the document used in the previous year. It set out the services available via de-delegated funding and asked schools for their views, ahead of decisions being taken by relevant Forum members in the November meeting. He advised that slightly amended wording would be used for the Whatever it Takes section, to provide additional clarity.

Members noted that the "Staff costs including supply costs" section included the costs of trade union facilities time and paternity leave. However, no information was provided regarding the separate costs of these services, with the text only supplying details of the trade union representation. Furthermore, it was unclear whether the facilities time applied only to teachers or to support staff as well.

It was agreed that the Senior Accountant would seek revised wording from the HR Policy and Projects team, and agree the final text with Jo Marshall and Jessica Edmonds.

Action: Simon Walton

A query was raised regarding whether non-maintained schools received the benefits of services supported by de-delegation, and used the Traveller Education service as an example. The Director of Learning and Inclusion advised that academies were able to buy in through a traded services offer for most of the services included in the document.

It was agreed that the final version of the document would be released once the agreed amendments had been made, without further approval from all Forum members. The aim was to have consultation responses in by 15th October 2018.

8. Any other business

i) Membership of Schools Forum

The Chair noted that Forum had last considered membership issues in June. Since then, a number of schools had converted to academy status and further conversions were planned. He proposed that both membership and the constitution be subject to an annual review, in November of each year.

For the next meeting, revised membership proposals based on the current split of maintained schools and academies, and primary and secondary phases, would be developed.

In the meantime, it was intended that one of the existing maintained secondary governor representative vacancies be filled through the usual election process.

ii) COLGA

A query had been raised regarding what had happened to the funds held by COLGA when the organisation was wound up. None of the members present was able to confirm the position, so it was agreed that Governor Services would be asked to investigate.

Action: Clerk

iii) Department for Education good practice guide

The Education & Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) had just issued a new operational and good practice guide regarding the running of Schools Forum. The Chair advised that a copy would be circulated to all Forum members for information.

Action: Clerk

iv) Self-assessment toolkit

The EFSA also published a Schools Forum self-assessment toolkit, to help assess compliance with the relevant regulations and good practice guide. This had been completed jointly by the Chair and the clerk, and a copy would also be circulated for information.

Action: Clerk

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2.30 p.m.