

Stoke on Trent Council Schools' Forum



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Date: Monday 18th September 17
Time: 08:30 a.m.
Venue: Watermill Special School
Chair: Jonathan May

In Attendance: Mrs L Sarikaya (**Nursery Representative**), Mrs S Thursfield, Mrs R Lee, Mrs E Gater (**Primary Maintained Representatives**) Mr I Beardmore, Mr D Alston, Mr J Baddeley (**Primary Academy Representatives**), Mr C Smith (**Secondary Academy Representative**), Mrs L Hughes (**Special Schools Representative**), Mr D Gray (Primary Governor), Mr H Gurden, Mr B Tomkinson (**Union Representatives**)

Mr R Johnstone, Miss H Meigh, Mrs J Lomas, and Mr A Brindley attended on behalf of the Local Authority.

Cabinet Member: Councillor Janine Bridges – Cabinet Member for Education and Economy

Observers: Mrs S Moran, Mr G Colclough

Minutes: Samantha Morris/Aneeqa Tariq

MINUTES

		Action
1.	Apologies	
	Apologies received from: Mr J Lovatt, Mr M Rayner and Mrs H Emery.	
2.	Minutes of the last meeting	
	No minutes found by team due to staff member on long term sick.	
	Miss H Meigh informed the members that the DfE have released a document on Friday regarding the National Funding Formula.	
	Mr R Johnstone suggested looking at the three formula working groups.	
	Mr J May requested that the forum members received a copy of the minutes, urgently.	

3.	DSG Financial Monitoring Report 2017/18	
	<p>Miss H Meigh presented the report.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh confirmed that the forecast overspend on the High Needs Block was currently £2,3m for 2017/18. She continued by saying that every attempt was being made to mitigate the pressure on the High Needs Block.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh said that Appendix A identified where the main pressures were:</p> <p>1.2.3 Outer city places approximately £1.5m overspent.</p> <p>1.2.7 Other alternative provision approximately £1.3m overspent.</p> <p>Mrs J Lomas said alternative provision is split into two types. One is the general side which is on target and the other is specialist which is overspent. Children need specialist education and are legally entitled to it. It is felt that there are insufficient funds to find the right provision for each child.</p> <p>Mrs J Lomas also said that the number of children is increasing.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone expressed concerns that some youngsters hold complex needs. He also confirmed that there are insufficient funds to cover costs.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone went onto to say the group needs clarity on the high needs overspend.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone continued by saying he could not see the EHC reducing. He suggested planning three to five years ahead to look at any pressure points that may emerge and find a better strategy.</p> <p>Mrs J Lomas stated that children need special education and are legally entitled to it.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone also replied by saying you must also consider the cost of exclusions.</p> <p>Mrs J Lomas said that it is about finding the right provision but we do not have sufficient provision in the City.</p> <p>Mr J May said they had looked at Portland and compared the cost with other providers and in comparison it was more expensive for the places with other providers.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone said he felt that they were been held to ransom by the providers. He also said that the youngsters had to be in provision.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley asked what the current position was.</p> <p>Mrs J Lomas replied by saying that the majority of children are in mainstream and within the City. A lot of children are involved with Staffordshire County Council.</p>	

<p>Mr R Johnstone said he had requested a pot of money to invest in creating provision which in turn would save money. Basically invest to save.</p> <p>Mr J May asked about the action plan.</p> <p>Mrs J Lomas replied by saying they are doing some small things. There is a meeting with St Margaret Ward in September. They will be piloting with small notions.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone stated that the overspend needs to be dealt with as best as we can, whilst getting a better strategy for the youngsters within the city. It makes sense that if there was a £4m overspend this year, it will carry over into next year.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone explained that there are more cases being taken to tribunal. The LA and schools need to be putting proficient provision in place. There are children with quite challenging needs and Stoke-on-Trent needs proficient support which there currently is not.</p> <p>Mr J May replied by saying that every child that is accessed is taking three times longer than what it would usually take.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone replied by saying that we have to place the student. If we do not place the student in the City, then we have to find a place outside the City.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone suggested reducing costs as some of the high cost provisions the youngsters are going to is not impressive.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley said that if we can see the action plan then it would make it easier when talking to colleagues about such matters and being asked to provide votes, it's hard to do so without providing answers to questions. There are potential successes so that needs to be known.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley asked will there be a developed strategy by Christmas which will take effect over the next 2-3 years.</p> <p>Mr H Gurden then asked about the out of city provision and were we using Sure Trust.</p> <p>Mrs J Lomas responded by saying yes.</p> <p>Mr D Gray expressed his concern that the same issues have been discussed at Forum for a number of years. The issue has always been the cost of sending the children out of the City. He urged that a solution is found soon due to it being on the agenda for so long.</p>	<p>Meet with St Margaret Ward's in Sept.</p>
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Mr D Alston asked if we could create a system where we were an importer of provision and not an exporter.

Mr R Johnstone responded by saying yes. It is part of the larger plan.

Mr C Smith said that strategically we should be looking at City Council funds which may be difficult. There are government funding schemes e.g. Stoke opportunities area. Should we be looking at that fund?

Mr C Smith also mentioned the opening of two free schools for alternative provision from Sept 18'. He also felt that if there is a larger plan, then he feels it may be ideal to join them together in the long term. Somebody should be looking at how to pull together Central Government funding schemes to create a sustainable plan for the future.

Mr R Johnstone agreed that there was an opportunity there, whether it is Specialist or Mainstream etc. A co-ordinated approach is vital and will be discussed at CIG.

Mr C Smith responded by saying that he had attended a meeting with the RSC who would welcome bold and innovative bids. We need to produce something that will wow the RSC.

Mr R Johnstone replied that we can go back in round three or four in further bids. Opportunity areas are an interesting one, so we have to be careful. Early years and readiness; speech and language; primary; secondary school; information advice and guidance and parental support are all important and massive issues that have been risen. Also, the other is mental health and wellbeing. In his view, these are not separate but in fact inter-related.

Mr C Smith said that he would like to add one last comment. He said we need to be mindful of the vast majority of people in mainstream schools which are improving all the time. We have to speak for the majority who need mainstream quality education. If we lose sight of them and their funding needs then there will be issues. E.g. standards dropping etc.

Mr R Johnstone said that there will be some challenging conversations regarding Health. The debate will go on as they feel they have less funding than education.

Mr R Johnstone informed the group that this will be taken further legally. Realistically there won't be a huge amount received.

The Council are taking this seriously, now more than ever.

	<p>They are addressing Health and asking them to pay their part.</p> <p>Mrs E Gater asked if other local authorities have challenged Health.</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone replied by saying yes. As no one is having any joy from getting help from Health. People have seen a level of decrease especially from what they were already funding, so this will be minimal.</p>	
4.	<p>Movement of funding from the delegated schools budgets to the DSG High Needs block in 2018/19 and feedback from recent consultation with schools</p>	
	<p>Miss H Meigh introduced the report on transferring £1m from the School Block to the High Needs Block.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh went on to say that a consultation was sent out to all schools with a deadline of last Thursday. She went onto say that there was not a large amount of responses from schools. Only 15 out of 99 schools responded.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley asked if the CLT had responded.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh replied by saying responses had been written down according to area.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley said he had phoned every school, with only one not yet responding. He believed colleagues had done similar.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley informed members that from his group the response was a no as school budgets cannot cope with more cuts and hits. The group feels that this could potentially worsen the problem rather than solve and feels it is a Council issue.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley went onto say that people recognise that there is an issue but if it is put forward, it's potentially opening flood gates.</p> <p>Mr C Smith then said that there is a strong feeling from secondary schools and it's a universal objection.</p> <p>Mrs R Lee said that they haven't had a response from everyone but those who have responded have said no. The heads have said it feels like a rushed decision.</p> <p>Mrs L Sarikaya stated a strong no. This being due to already funding High Needs which will impact the children's support.</p> <p>Mr I Beardmore also said it was a no.</p>	

	<p>Mr J May asked members to vote on transferring funding from the School Block to the High Needs Block.</p> <p>The outcome of the vote was a unanimous no.</p>	
5.	Working groups memberships and meetings	
	<p>Miss H Meigh said that regarding the School's Funding Formula we have now received guidance from the DfE and it is a soft formula for 2 years and the LA has the final decision on the School Funding Formula for this period.</p> <p>Mr D Alston asked how will it be distributed.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh replied that the forum through consultation will decide in the first instance. She also went onto say that we need to reconstitute the Formula Working Group with volunteers as others are struggling with time.</p> <p>Mr C Smith, Mr J Baddeley and Mr I Beardmore volunteered.</p> <p>Mr C Smith said the person replacing him on the forum will be discussed at SASCAL on Friday.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh stated we would probably need 2-3 meetings before we could come up with a formula recommendation.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh then said that the submission deadline for the Formula is in January but it also needs to be approved by the City Council and the deadline for this is the end of November.</p> <p>Mr D Alston suggested remodelling on the National Formula.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh said that like Wednesday she would like to hold an open session for all heads to explain and consult on the Funding Formula.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley expressed that this needs to be timely. He suggests having the dates in the diary now otherwise it may be hard otherwise. Last year no one understood until the Formula was distributed.</p> <p>Councillor Janine Bridges said that we need to ensure that this is consulted on. It is a large job and also if open sessions are held and people do not attend, then not much can be done after if they are not happy.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh asked the attendees to encourage their schools to attend the open session.</p> <p>Mr D Gray asked if there is a thin-ness in Governor</p>	

representation, generally and on the Formula Working Group.

Miss H Meigh responded that there are currently two Governor representations. There is the availability to have more as it isn't stipulated how many you can have. There is the potential for another one or two on the forum.

Mr D Gray volunteered to be part of the Formula Working Group.

Councillor Janine Bridges advised the group that it may be helpful to have a discussion with colleagues to alert them about the open session.

Miss H Meigh raised the issue that the Primary Maintain North and Primary Academy Central forum roles are currently vacant.

Mrs S Moran volunteered to be the forum representative for Primary Academy Central.

Miss H Meigh also said that secondary's need reviewing as Academy North is Chris and Carl Ward who has not attended for 3 sessions now. Also the 16-19 role is still vacant.

Mrs R Lee asked "does it have to be a head?"

HM replies yes.

Mrs R Lee said she would stay on as Primary Maintained North until conversion.

Miss H Meigh said a PVI rep is also required.

Mr J Baddeley said that to give people a correct understanding there needs to be a structure of 'this is what it is' and 'this is how it works'. It needs to have the level of knowledge and clarity. He then asked if the head teachers meetings are a good opportunity to discuss.

It was suggested to possibly add an half an hour's session.

Mr J Baddeley suggested possibly using the context of last year. Reps will be consulting but it is on the group to feedback.

Miss H Meigh informed the group that she will send a reminder out for next week with the added agenda.

Mr C Smith asked if it is required to be a member of forum to be a member of the Working Group.

	<p>Miss H Meigh replied "I don't think so".</p> <p>Mrs R Lee expressed concern about duplication. It wants to be avoided of it turning into a strategy group. Rowena has excelled due to having the background.</p> <p>Mr C Smith asked if Mrs R Lee was suggesting adding a working group called strategy.</p> <p>Mrs R Lee clarified by saying no. It would be High Needs.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh said that she will write to Penny to see if she's happy to continue on the Early Years Working Group.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh also suggested asking Penny if she would like to be on the Schools' Forum as there was vacancy for a PVI rep.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh also asked the attendees how they feel about members who do not attend. Is there a three strike rule before you cannot attend?</p> <p>Mr J May agreed.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh brings to their attention that they do not offer apologies or offer a representative.</p> <p>Mr J May suggests no more attendance if the member does not attend twice as well as not offering a representative.</p> <p>Mr C Smith expresses uncertainty about having a representative attend. Through experiences he has seen representatives attend that affected the meeting negatively as they were not aware of the matters. He feels the head should attend and represent themselves. For example, If he did not attend then it should be another head from Secondary Academy North in his place. There needs to be clarity.</p> <p>Mr J May queries if it's the representation on the list that was sent around the forum earlier.</p> <p>Mr J May then asks are we changing the constitution.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh replies that this will be addressed next time as it needs changing.</p> <p>Mr J May clarifies that the position is two strikes with no representatives of similar stature in place, before you are disallowed to attend the forum.</p> <p>All voted unanimously starting from today.</p>	<p>HM</p>
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6.	Training requirements discussion - MFG and DSG Allocation	
	<p>Miss H Meigh expresses that she feels this is covered already, especially as it is being addressed the following Tuesday also. Unless the heads attending feel that there is something to be covered.</p> <p>Mr J May says that most were lost by line three. Stating that the principal was understood, but how it works was not.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley agrees and says it needs to be explained in the presentation.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh expresses that they were trying show why some schools weren't impacted. She also says that if anyone does not understand, she is happy to go over it again.</p> <p>Mr H Gurden asks if the trade unions can attend to help understand.</p> <p>Mr D Gray asks "Why is this training taking place at head meetings? How does that fit in with governors? We used to have meetings where everybody was involved".</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley adds that this could be an added agenda item.</p>	
7.	Any other business	
	<p>Miss H Meigh passed a paper round regarding the exclusions policy.</p> <p>She said based on DfE guidance that when a pupil is excluded the budget shell will be adjusted based on the pupil itself. This will be done on a pro rata basis.</p> <p>Mrs R Lee asked that if a pupil was school support, would this be a notional SEN. Personally she thinks that this is difficult to judge.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh confirmed that it would not include the notional SEN but would be pupil factors only.</p>	
8.	Date of the Next Meeting	
	10th October – 8.30am Watermill Special School	