

Stoke on Trent Council Schools' Forum



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Date: Monday 19 June 2017
Time: 08:30 a.m.
Venue: The Bridge Centre
Chair: Jonathan May

In Attendance: Mr C Smith, Mr M Rayner (**Secondary Academy Representative**), Mrs L Sarikaya (**Nursery Representative**), Mr J Baddeley, Mr D Alston, Mr Ian Beardmore (**Primary Academy Representative**), Mrs S Thursfield, Mrs E Gater (**Primary Maintained Representative**), Dr R Blencowe (**Secondary Head Teacher**), Mr P Kidman (**Special Schools Representative**), Mr D Gray (**Primary Governor**), Mr H Gurden (**Union Representative**)

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

Observers: Mr M Stanier, Mrs L Addfield, Mrs A Fellon, Mrs L Hughes

Minutes: Anne Callaghan

MINUTES

		<i>Action</i>
1.	Apologies	
	Apologies received from: Mr C Ward	
2.	Minutes of the last meeting (16 January 2017) & Matters arising	
	<p><u>Agenda Item 4</u></p> <p>Miss H Meigh referred to the High Needs document that is not completed yet, page 5 DSG bid evaluation final for February.</p> <p><u>Agenda Item 5</u></p> <p>Mr R Johnston said that the interim was presented to SIG, following a meeting with Dianne Mason the interim will be available for January/February 2017. This will give time for the LA Link Officer to bring up any items for clarification.</p> <p><u>Agenda Item 6</u></p> <p>Miss H Meigh addressed the importance of funds for statutory duties.</p> <p>Mr D Perrett responded by stating that it required further investigation with consideration around information from the</p>	<p>RJ to bring to Sept meeting</p>

	<p>previous government and the new form of calculations to the LA for statutory duties that had been lean over the past few years and since the elections to look again at the considerable documents. He said that we are uncertain what this will mean for the next year's budget, we have another year with the present formula, however, no guarantee around the funding formula and we will need to wait until September before this will be known. We need to look at the National formula and how it applies to Stoke.</p> <p>Mr D Perrett proposed going forward on free school meals, mobility, etc. Concerns were raised up to the election around fair funding for every child which aims for every child to get the same, however, this is not known and we are unable to go any further at this time. We need to recognise that in September funds could become quite stringent. Look to have figures agreed by October to present the formula to the working group who will steer this once all the information is received.</p> <p>Mr H Gurden mentioned no meeting had been arranged for June, July or August for the STRB.</p> <p>Mr D Gray said that he had 2 issues;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Redistribution of funds 2. Actual size of the pot showing the significant reduction <p>Mr D Perrett responded that the concerns around school budgets will require significant changes that could include restructures.</p> <p>Mr D Gray said that this could only take place over a limited period.</p> <p><u>Agenda Item 7</u></p> <p>Mr J May mentioned training for example around terms and some on the job training</p>	
3.	Scheme for Financing Schools	
	<p>Miss H Meigh said that this was specifically for maintained schools and that the document required approval by the Schools Forum members representing maintained schools.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh went on to explain some points from the document content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1.7 Budget monitoring and contribution. • 2.3 Submission of budget plans on page 15. • 2.19 Notice of concern on page 23 and explained that the LA can issue a notice with reasons why the notice has been served, then we would work together to get a school's finance issues sorted out. • 2.20 School Financial Value Standard on page 24, to be completed. • 3.5 Bank accounts on page 26 	

	<p>Miss H Meigh urged all maintained schools to read the document and get back with any issues. Page 50 lists all the schools, (52) this will change as schools become academies.</p> <p>Mr A Brindley said that a copy of the document had been sent out in February with the budget packs for consultation.</p> <p>Mr R Johnston mentioned that the governing body are to be made aware and put on their brief around clarity and warning notices that could be issued. Also include the powers of who can issue a warning and to be aware of the shift in power.</p> <p>Mr J May asked about writing off debt and invoices that come out after a school has become an academy?</p> <p>Miss H Meigh answered that all schools are fully aware of their outstanding debts.</p> <p>Mr D Perrett said that at the point of conversion schools should be aware of issues that are going to be taken into account when converting to academy.</p> <p>Dr R Blencowe said they had never seen any information on outstanding debt.</p> <p>Mr A Brindley said that every school now gets a monthly report to inform them of any outstanding debts.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh proposed the forum vote for the document proposal and this was unanimously carried.</p>	<p>RJ & DP to send out letter with this information</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>High needs DSG – paper to be tabled</p>	
	<p>Mr D Perrett mentioned the vulnerability strategy and the need to ensure that schools are ready. High Needs funds can be accessed via a sum of money outside for support via vulnerable young people’s needs. Funds are not always based around learning needs but also care and family support to ensure that their needs are met. The number of young people accessing funding is rising. Nationally rising SEN Reforms 0 – 25 years which puts extra pressure on funding requirements. Higher needs no longer meeting young people needs and leading to overspending. DSG pay for CYP and LA do not have the funding for education as it was removed with the reforms, (there is not a requirement in law for the LA to pick up the deficit).</p> <p>In 2016/17 cost was £31.66M against £28.5M, therefore, over £3.2M overspend and if we continue to spend as we are there will be a much larger deficit. Therefore, we all need to work together to try and reduce the deficit and keep within budget.</p>	<p>DP will send DSG block</p>

Stated student's places is all but used up, therefore, independent providers are required, (where the individual cost is high from £50K and upwards, whereas LA schools are paying £17-18K). The aim should be to try and stop using independent providers, where possible, and bring this back into the city. As we don't have enough maintained specialised provision we need to build our own capacity within the schools as we are unable to sustain the present costs.

Miss Helen Meigh said to we need look at outer city, EHC plans, etc. to access funds.

Mrs J Lomas showed slides in relation to High Needs:

- Place value & top up (£10K + top up for needs)
- Provision for individuals & top up (15 hours + top up)
- Outreach and support for schools (SEND) prevention/interim
- Independent Special Providers for example Church Lawton for ASD, etc.
- Internal LA recruitment (SOT to Staffs recruitment)
- Fund out of school education (home or other provision)
- Individual children for example on EHC Plan
- Additional requirements for example hearing impaired via The Willows, speech and language via Sneyd Green
- Element 3 for 16 – 25 year olds on EHC Plan and get funding
- HN, under 5 year olds, (nursery/maintained provision), children from the age of 6 months can access funds via health provision, etc.

JL to send copy of slides to all

Mrs J Lomas stated that there was a rise in demand. Referrals have gone array for example some young people receive a new assessment and we may advise that the young person remains in main stream school, however, if their needs are not being met within the school facility, this could then change to a special provision, therefore, high needs transferring to special provision.

Following the annual review if schools are unable to meet needs they go to special provision for example Portland, who has capacity for 78 pupils. 30 ASD needs rose to 150 as a result of new assessments and we can't currently maintain this growth.

If the assessment shows a need for special provisions we need to look at as this is a huge concern. There are a number of pupils with MLD needs and more complex, MLD could remain in mainstream without the need to go across border for the provision that involves paying for expensive packages in some cases for example:

- £900K at Draycott and similar at High Grange

- £605K High Peak
- £800K Hope Dale

Not including transport or needs pricing with transport and sometimes escorts.

Mr C Smith asked if the limited companies are profit making?

Mrs J Lomas answered that a lot are some aren't. She said that she is aware that we need to place young people as safely as possible to meet their needs and that Health contributions are low.

Mr H Gurden asked about Cheshire placements?

Ms J Lomas responded that we mainly place young people in Staffordshire but sometimes we have to go outside. SEN go to schools and look at their present provision, schools and parents send in referrals via EHC plans. SEND are working behind the scenes around EHC plans, 14 weeks for assessment, etc. We can say no but the risk is parents can go to a tribunal. Legally we have to secure provision via EHC plans and talk to both schools and parents and look at their requirements around High Needs provisions for example using a more specialist provision. No change in funding, however, a need for young people to be placed if proved placement is required, therefore, look at keeping more young people in mainstream where possible.

An awareness of needs requirement in schools is necessary as in 2015/16 and this year has shown how high the costs are. It is key now, especially in Key Stages 1 & 2 to identify High/Special Needs numbers going into secondary schools and the need in secondary school to provide excluded young people with placements as well. (54 excluded young people against less last year for example 20+).

Mrs J Lomas said she will be having a meeting around provision and satellite provision in mainstream schools for added capacity around needs. Bring young people back into the city, take young people through a review and look at what has essentially been fought for.

Mr C Smith said not to state the obvious, the need is there and sometimes more complex from parents around young people needing additional support, expectations have risen, funding cut and provision cut. He agrees that the situation is getting worse, funding, and what is required is getting wider, it is unsustainable as young people are being disrupted on a daily basis.

Mrs J Lomas agreed that, the number of complexity needs is growing.

Mr J May mentioned that a fund for provision has been frozen since 2013 at £29M.

Mr C Smith said that good teachers are making the point and saying that they are struggling to cope with the demands.

Mr D Alston suggested that the next High Needs meeting involves everyone and not just shuffling as it is so complex it requires sitting down to look at all the issues not just minor problems.

Mrs J Lomas mentioned that this is reviewed every year and agreed that she has concerns that need addressing that aren't being addressed, we need to cut costs extensively and make savings, therefore, the issues really need addressing.

Mr M Rayner suggested that the group stop going for little meetings and to raise issues on a larger scale, to meet and cover all areas of concern that will enable young people to get the required provision. Some schools will put strategies in place but we need all schools to be working towards the same goal.

Mrs J Lomas said that the next meeting is planned for 26 June 2017 and asked if we should keep this date or change to give schools the opportunity to prepare. We need to ensure that as many people as possible are on board around inclusion and provision and that there are more teams around supporting work in schools. The funding is not there, therefore, we need school investment.

To be rectified by DP/HM

Mr D Perrett said that we can't overspend as this will go back to the DfE and a requirement will come back asking that we get our schools in order. We have to drive down overspends as it is unacceptable.

In September if not addressed we will have to top-slice from schools to balance the figures, for example £1.7M presently. Under the present regulated budget we are not balancing, therefore, top-slice to the tune of £1.7M.

How we are going to bring down the deficit to be discussed on 26 June 2017. We are looking to bring young people back to the City around a number of ways or the deficit will continue to grow.

Mr D Perrett gave out a copy of High Needs Block DSG 2017/18 figures that still requires some adjustment.

Tough decisions need to be made, presently funding for young people in hospitals that schools will have to pay for. Money is in the system and requires a bigger discussion around bringing the costs down if we can get the provision correct. The budget presently shows that this doesn't meet the requirement.

Mr M Rayner said that problems are national and to adopt some recommendations from now going forwards and that the government problem is also SOT problem. We need to spend time reviewing documents and see how funding is allocated and look at how we have dealt with issues arising.

Mr D Perrett mentioned Learning Pathways and that the need for In-house provisions would be better and more cost effective.

Mr J Baddeley asked for a strategy to ensure that all understand and this could be a different type of meeting for example planning/strategy. Go with the meeting on 26 June and another on 11 July to discuss further.

Mr D Perrett said that Schools Forum need to look at £1.7M, the LA will have to save this amount and look at who is responsible for the deficit, therefore, Forum could be challenged. We need to look at scope, proposal and put something together for 11 July (bigger meeting).

Miss H Meigh stated she had attended East and West Midlands meetings where LAs have top-sliced budgets to meet HN/DSG. This is common practice in some areas and Stoke are lucky at not having to do this yet. £1.7M maximum is allowable as we can't drop pupil values.

Mr J Baddeley said that there is an obligation for the LA to meet pupil needs sufficiently, look at "is it value for money", where and who is financing. We need to take action now.

Mr D Perrett suggested opening provisions within schools that would be inspected under special schools provision. There are a lot of vacant buildings around the city that could be resourced and unlock how we operate to meet different needs and requirements.

Mr D Gray said that he remembers similar arguments from the 90s and the expense of sending young people out of area for provision.

Mrs J Lomas said that the numbers had gone up rapidly in the past 2 years. There are difficulties in placing young people via parental demand/assessment, etc. Need to look at Code of Practice around provision and changes.

	<p>Mr I Beardmore asked for an example, if a parent wants their child to go to Derby, do we have to send them at a cost of £64K + transport costs?</p> <p>Mrs J Lomas responded by saying parents could take us to tribunal if not accepted and to look at local provision for young people. Case law will reflect on what we can win. Parents look at what they want to get for their child and if we could provide similar without going to trial that would be an achievement.</p> <p>Mr D Perrett said that we need to show that we have the capacity in our local schools. Case law shows that some parents are using LA Barristers to fight specific cases and that this will impact on the LA and provision. Parents have a right to access their choices and it is up to us to change perceptions around SEN. Some young people with special needs don't necessarily need to be in special needs provision as long as their needs are being met sufficiently within schools.</p> <p>Mr J May asked who can attend the meeting on 26 June at the Civic Centre and a follow up meeting 11 July, (good show of hands in response).</p> <p>Mr D Perret said that school transport is a concern, as it has spiralled to a £3.5M overspend. Post 16 not required to be funded in schools and could get concessionary passes within the LA as we are unable to sustain present costs and we need to drive the costs down.</p>	<p>JL & DP having discussion around driving this budget down</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Funding formula working groups discussion</p>	
	<p>Miss H Meigh commented on re-constituting the formula working groups when DfE information is received around Early Years Schools funding formula and High Needs representation. Meeting with Rowena & Emma on the first of each month, however, more members are required and also a requirement to meet on a more regular basis.</p> <p>Mr D Gray asked about the school formula?</p> <p>Mr R Johnstone suggested getting a list of attendees and to prepare a draft list together.</p> <p>Mr C Smith asked if there was a full complement on the forum, have all vacancies been filled.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh said that she is going to write to SASCAL regarding post 16 representation.</p>	<p>HM to write to SASCAL</p>

	<p>Mr R Johnstone added we could put together a grid/list to look at who is on the schools' forum and who their representatives are.</p> <p>Mr C Smith said that the SASCAL meeting is due and he can ensure that this is achieved.</p> <p>Mr D Perrett said that all secondary schools should be academies by December 2017.</p>	
6.	Training requirements discussion	
	<p>Miss H Meigh asked about further training specifics and what the group thinks is the best approach to take around training.</p> <p>Mr J May suggested an induction and brief overview of what has been going on for everyone including new members, (should take about 1.5 hours)</p> <p>Miss H Meigh agreed with this and asked if training would be required on the funding formulas including what is involved.</p> <p>Mr D Perrett responded to this saying that as this is the last year it probably won't be necessary. We will be informed what is in the pot and have to monitor what goes out.</p> <p>Miss H Meigh responded that for Early Years this is not as simple as that.</p> <p>Mr J May re-iterated that high needs should be hitting home with school representation following Mrs J Lomas's presentation.</p>	
7.	Any other business	
	<p>Helen Meigh mentioned the finance restructure and different opportunities.</p> <p>This is Mr A Brindley's last meeting and the group would like to give a big thank you to him for all his input over the past 4 years. Also a big thank you to Mr D Perrett for his contribution to the forum as this is his last meeting as well.</p>	
8.	Date of the Next Meeting	
	September 2017 08:30 am – 10.30 am at The Bridge Centre	