



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the SCHOOLS' FORUM** held via Zoom on Thursday, 16th March, 2023 at 4.00 pm

PRESENT:		Representing
1.	Mr B Solly (CHAIR)	Academies
2.	Mr S Cox (VICE CHAIR)	Special Schools
	Mr P French	Dioceses
3.	Mrs S Milner	Academies
4.	Mrs K Pullan	Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI) Early Years
5.	Mr C Smith	Academies
6.	Mrs F Wilce	Maintained Schools

IN ATTENDANCE:		Representing
7.	Councillor D Wilby	Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services

OFFICERS:		TITLE:
8.	Dawn Godfrey	Strategic Director of Children and Families (DCS), RCC
9.	Gill Curtis	Head of Learning and Skills, RCC
10.	Bernadette Caffrey	Head of Early Help, SEND and Inclusion, RCC
11.	Andrew Merry	Finance Manager, RCC
12.	David Wylie	Business Intelligence Officer, RCC
13.	Jane Narey (CLERK)	Scrutiny Officer, RCC

ABSENT:		
14.	Mrs A Chambers	Academies
15.	Mr G Morphus	Trade Unions
16.	Mr S Williams	Academies
17.	Louise Crookenden-Johnson	SEND Capital Programme Manager, RCC

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Clerk confirmed that no apologies had been received.

2 MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the meeting held on the 8th December 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

Action 1

Ben Solly and Sharon Milner to attend the meeting of the Collaboration Group on Tuesday, 17th January 2023, 10.00 – 2.00 at the Wisteria Hotel, Oakham to brief them on the provision of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and the EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) banding.

Members were informed that the item was on the agenda for discussion.

Action 2

The Early Years Department for Education (DfE) representative should attend a meeting of the Early Years Working Group – date to be confirmed.

Gill Curtis, the Head of Learning and Skills informed members that she had spoken with the Early Years DfE representative who had confirmed that they were unable to attend a meeting of the Early Years Working Group as it did not fall within their remit but would be happy to respond to any questions from the Group.

3 FINANCE UPDATE

A report was received from Andrew Merry, Finance Manager. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The overspend within the High Needs Block continued.
- This was a national problem and not just a Rutland problem.
- The Council's recovery plan was having a positive impact but demand was outstripping the savings generated from the actions in the recovery plan.
- The mix of the children being funded was different to that of the funding that had been received.
- More 2 year old funding was being spent and less 3 and 4 year old funding was being spent than had been received.
- The January Census would determine the Council's new funding and this would impact the over/underspend in year.

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Bernadette Caffrey joined the meeting at 4.05 p.m.

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- Peter French queried what impact the latest DfE information on special needs education would have so the Strategic Director of Children and Families requested that her agenda item (Delivering Better Value Programme) be taken next as this would update attendees. The Forum agreed that Agenda Item 7 would be the next item discussed.

RESOLVED

That the Schools' Forum:

- a) **NOTED** the contents of the report.

4 DELIVERING BETTER VALUE PROGRAMME

A verbal update was received from Dawn Godfrey, Strategic Director of Children and Families. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Delivering Better Value Programme had been commissioned by the DfE and would support 55 Local Authorities and their local systems to identify the highest impact changes that each system involved could make to better support their local children with SEND and make plans to implement those changes.
- Rutland was one of the 55 local authorities that had been invited to take part in the programme.
- The programme would place children and young people with SEND at the centre of the approach and decision making.
- Phase 1 of the programme, working with the DfE and its partners Newton and CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy), had commenced.
- A diagnostic of all SEND information/data including all the financial data was being done to identify the current state of play and see how it could be used more effectively for future forecasting.
- The aim was to stop the year-on-year growth of the budget deficit.
- The first meeting of the Delivering Better Value Programme would be held on Monday, 20th March 2023 for the 55 Local Authorities to feedback the initial findings of their diagnostic investigations.
- It was noted that officers from Rutland's SEND Service and Finance Team had done an amazing job of collating a huge amount of evidence.
- Members were informed that there would be no 'magic wand' but that learning around forecasting would be discussed and used moving forward.
- Case Review Workshops would take place on the 18th, 25th and 27th of April 2023. Schools had been notified of the dates/times and it was noted that it was important for schools to attend to help identify all the challenges being faced.
- Parent and education provider questionnaires would be sent out in the near future regarding a child's journey through the SEND system to help identify what could be changed for the better.
- Further detailed feedback would be provided at the next School's Forum meeting.

ACTION: Dawn Godfrey

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Steve Cox joined the meeting at 4.15 p.m.

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5 SEND RECOVERY PLAN

A report was received from Louise Crookenden-Johnson, SEND Capital Programme Manager and was presented by Bernadette Caffrey, Head of Early Help, SEND and Inclusion. During the discussion, the following points were received:

- The Head of Early Help, SEND and Inclusion emphasised the need for schools and partners to engage in the Delivering Better Value Programme and the work being undertaken by the LA and Ofsted.
- Members were informed that the best way for schools to assist with the process was to attend one of the workshops being delivered in April 2023.
- If anybody had any queries regarding the Delivering Better Value Programme or just wanted further information, they should contact Louise Crookenden-Johnson, SEND Capital Programme Manager [lcrookendenjohnson@rutland.gov.uk] or Helen Chester, Service Manager SEND and Inclusion [hchester@rutland.gov.uk].
- The Head of Early Help, SEND and Inclusion informed members that Rutland County Council had remaining capital funding available as part of the DfE High

Needs Capital allocation and that an Expression of Interest process would be opened later in the year for proposals on how to utilise the funds.

- The main issue regarding SEND was the increasing demand for assessments and plans. Providers were currently managing the capacity but demand on special school places remained high. Conversations were being held with providers and other LA's on finding creative ways of managing the demand.
- Good work continued with the SENCO network but the Schools' Forum was being asked to provide £8k funding to enable it to continue into the next academic year. Steve Cox informed the Forum that the SENCO network had been really good and he endorsed its good work. The Schools' Forum approved the £8k funding and requested details on how the £8k was/would be spent – details attached.

RESOLVED

That the Schools' Forum:

- a) **NOTED** the update to members of Schools Forum on the progress of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Recovery Plan initiatives and projects designed to reduce the pressure on the Designated School Grant (DSG) High Needs Block:
 - To update on the progress with DfE Delivering Better Value review.
 - To propose SEND Capital opportunities to address SEND system needs.
 - To highlight related risks and issues.
- b) Unanimously **APPROVED** the request that the SENCO network continued in its current format at an additional cost to Schools' Forum of £8k yearly.

6 EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP

A verbal update was received from Mrs K Pullan, representative of the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Early Years. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The SEND Capital Programme Manager and the Finance Manager had briefed the Early Years Working Group regarding the funding for the next academic year and had agreed to support the SEND Recovery Programme for a year.
- Recruitment briefings to encourage pupils to seek a career in Early Years were being undertaken at Catmose College and Casterton College. Ben Solly confirmed that he would be happy for a recruitment briefing to be held at Uppingham Community College.
- A lot of questions had been raised following the recent budget news but a meeting would be held with the Council's Finance Team to help resolve these queries and issues.
- The main issue was regarding the capacity of current buildings. Many providers did not have the space to be able to take on additional children.
- The hourly rates would increase but no details had been received so it was impossible to state what implications this would have on providers.
- The Head of Learning and Skills confirmed that the implications could be quite dramatic by 2025 if the 9 months funding offer for 2 year olds continued.
- The minimum wage would also increase in April 2023 so increasing costs for providers but it was believed that staff recruitment would remain an issue.

- It was agreed that Kathryn and the other Early Years' managers would meet to collate the budget data for discussion at the next School's Forum meeting.

ACTION: Kathryn Pullan

7 PUPIL PLACE PLANNING

A. ANNUAL SCAP RETURN

A presentation was received from David Wylie, Business Intelligence Officer. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Members were asked to note that Lincolnshire County Council overestimated the number of children going to Stamford Welland Academy and underestimated the number of children going to Casterton College.
- The Head of Learning and Skills confirmed that a trend of 3 years was required before the data figures would be noted and that the pressures on secondary school places continued to be high especially for those joining mid-year, which placed additional pressure on the Admission and Inclusion Service.

8 PARENT CARER VOICE COLLABORATIVE GROUP

A verbal update was received from Ben Solly and Sharon Milner regarding feedback from the collaborative group meeting held on the 17th January 2023 and the discussion regarding the EHCP banding. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Both confirmed that attending the meeting had been a very useful experience.
- Parents had explained the frustrations they felt with the EHCP banding system.
- Ben and Sharon explained the new banding model and the commissioning work of the Schools' Forum. They detailed how the model worked and the positive impact it was having.
- Concern was expressed by the group regarding inclusivity and the sharing of good practice.
- The Head of Early Help, SEND and Inclusion reported that feedback from the group regarding Ben and Sharon's attendance had been really positive.
- It was noted that the service was working on developing a multi-agency guidance and that a meeting would be held in June 2023 to further discuss this.
- Input from the Parent Carer Voice Collaborative Group continued to be very helpful but it was noted that input from schools and attendance at the June meeting would be most welcome. It was agreed that the details of the relevant school staff member who would attend the meeting should be sent to the Clerk.

ACTION: ALL

- It was agreed that Sharon Milner would also arrange a meeting of the Rutland headteachers cohort for them to provide feedback regarding the multi-agency guidance.

ACTION: Sharon Milner

9 FORWARD PLAN FOR 2022/23

The Forward Plan was discussed. There were no amendments.

10 ANY URGENT BUSINESS

Section 106 Spending

The Head of Learning and Skills briefed the Schools' Forum on the remaining capital funding available as part of the DfE High Needs Capital allocation. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Indicative allocations to Children and Young People of £721K of S106 contributions was approved by Cabinet on 13/12/2022.
- An amount of £334,967.41 has not been allocated to a specific capital project to date.
- The amount of £334,967.41 comprises of contributions collected from S106 agreement for developments listed below.

OUT/2010/0954 Land at Uppingham Road, Oakham	£302,123.91
APP/2011/0635 Gunthorpe Farm, Hall Lane, Gunthorpe	£ 4,886.92
2013/0802/FUL South Lodge, The Wisp Braunston	£ 27,956.58

- The S106 agreements are available to view on the Council's planning public access system within the documents section of the planning application.
- As the Council has adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy, no further S106 contributions for Education were anticipated unless there was a site specific need from a new strategic residential development.
- As detailed in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report, indicative allocations for the Community Infrastructure Levy and Oakham North agreement have been approved leaving remaining amounts of £69k and £168k, respectively.
- Members were asked to note that spending would be a Council decision linked to strategic priorities and there would be a formal application process (details attached). There might also be some limitations as any spend would have to comply with the covenants within the S106 agreement.

11 MEETING DATES

Thursday, 22nd June 2023, 4.00 – 5.30 p.m. (to be confirmed)

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The Chair declared the meeting closed at 5.01 pm.

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SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

No.	Ref.	Action	Person
1.	4	Further detailed feedback regarding the Delivering Better Value Programme would be provided at the next School's Forum meeting.	Dawn Godfrey
2.	6	Kathryn Pullan and the other Early Years' managers to meet to collate the budget data for discussion at the next School's Forum meeting.	Kathryn Pullan
3.	8	Details of the relevant school staff member to attend the Parent Carer Voice Collaborative Group meeting in June to be sent to the Clerk.	ALL

4.	8	Sharon Milner to arrange a meeting of the Rutland headteachers cohort for them to provide feedback regarding the multi-agency guidance.	Sharon Milner
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RCC SENCO NETWORK PROPOSAL FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2023- 2024

CURRENT PROVISION (ACADEMIC YEAR 2022- 2023)

- 3 x year afternoon virtual Teams sessions: Rutland County Council services and support updates and presentations. Planned, managed and chaired by School Support Partnership Coordinator
- 6 x year Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions: Planned by School Support Partnership Coordinator and Rutland Learning Trust Family SENCO in consultation with schools.

PROPOSAL FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2023 – 2024

Context:

- Schools' Forum have agreed unanimously to fund the £8k for the SENCO Network.
- Positive remarks about the SENCO network.
- A question was asked what the Network would be doing going forward - will it be more of the same or anything new and who co-ordinates it?

What?

- Continuation of 3 x year afternoon virtual Teams sessions. Rutland County Council services and support services updates and presentations. Open forum for professional and peer-to-peer support.

Why? (feedback from schools)

- Really helpful to be able to put a face to a name.
- Being on Teams means meetings are easily accessible and less time consuming.
- It brings services and other resources to our attention that will benefit the children that we wouldn't know to look for or that we may not come across if just searching for them
- Very informative - a good way of communicating changes and services.
- (SENDCo) attended two out of three sessions and finds them extremely useful in terms of keeping up to date with what is on offer and how schools can access/ refer to services.
- They have always been very helpful. Keeping us up to date, plus providing a platform for 'question and answer' sessions to other professionals.
- The forum is supportive with no question too silly to ask. Thankyou!

How?

- Continuation of previous academic format.
- School Support Partnership Coordinator offer to manage as part of School Support Partnership role.

What?

- Continuing Professional Development sessions.

Why?

- To ensure planned support reflects the broad and individual needs of schools developing understanding of SEND.
- Supporting SENCOs as Strategic Leaders of SEND.
- SEND criteria and identifying the main barrier to learning.
- SENCOs to support Broad Areas of Need and appropriate pathways.

How?

- School Support Partnership Coordinator to add agenda item on next Network session 23rd May 2023 for discussion to gain perspective, next steps to enable planning of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session and evolving the Network model.
- Sessions to be planned and arranged by School Support Partnership Coordinator /Rutland Learning Trust representative and 2 other Multi Academy Trusts / Rutland County Council representatives tbc).
- School Support Partnership Coordinator offer to lead as part of School Support Partnership role at no additional cost.

PROCESS FOR S106 APPLICATIONS

STAGE 1: Identification

- Service provider identifies need and completes Developer Contributions Request form (detailing alignment to strategic priorities, amount of funding requested, total cost of project, delivery timescales, benefits and outcomes for residents/county) and returns to cil@rutland.gov.uk

STAGE 2: Validation

- Validation Application form checked for completeness – this is undertaken by Community Infrastructure Levy Team.

STAGE 3: Review of Strategic Relevance

- Strategic Lead requested to confirm that application aligns with strategic priorities for Alignment Council/County

STAGE 4: Decision Making

- Subject to confirmation that project aligns with strategic priorities, it will progress to formal decision-making in line with Council Constitution and Financial Procedure Rules:
 - Delegated decision to be completed by Head of Service for s106 funding £500,000 and below (Note: depending on project a formal Cabinet/Council decision may be required even if meets delegated decision thresholds)
 - Cabinet Decision for s106 funding £500,000 and up to £1m - Cabinet report required by Head of Service but no delegated decision.
 - Council s106 funding over £1m will require a Council report completed by Head of Service but no delegated decision.

STAGE 5: Release of Funds

- Subject to approval, the relevant service provider will be required to complete a funding agreement detailing the benefits and outcomes expected – to be undertaken by Head of Service and Service Provider. A project record will be established on Finance and Community Infrastructure Levy/s106 systems – undertaken by the Community Infrastructure Levy Team and Finance.

STAGE 6: Monitoring of Expenditure

- Annually reported through the Infrastructure Funding Statement. Service provider will be required to provide updates to inform the IFS and a project completion report once implemented.
- Sample audits may be undertaken on risk based/sample basis.

Please note that that there are different thresholds for decision making for the Community Infrastructure Levy.

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