



Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the SCHOOLS' FORUM** held via Zoom on Thursday, 1st February, 2024 at 4.00 pm

PRESENT:		Representing
1.	Ben Solly (CHAIR)	Academies
2.	Steve Cox (VICE CHAIR)	Special Schools
	Carl Smith	Academies
3.	Craig Charteris	Academies
4.	Fiona Wilce	Maintained Schools
5.	Lucy Lewin	Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI) Early Years
6.	Stuart Williams	Academies

IN ATTENDANCE:		Representing
7.	Councillor Tim Smith	Portfolio Holder for Children and Families, RCC
8.	Pat Bullen	Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Change Programme Partnership - Strategic Lead, SEND & AP Improvement Plan

OFFICERS:		Title
	Dawn Godfrey	Strategic Director of Children and Families (DCS), RCC
	Kirsty Nutton	Strategic Director of Resources (S151 Officer), RCC
	Andrew Merry	Head of Finance, RCC
	Helga Spry-Shute	Early Help Co-ordinator, RCC
	David Wylie	Business Intelligence Technical Development Lead, RCC
	Jane Narey (CLERK)	Scrutiny Officer, RCC

APOLOGIES:		
	Gill Curtis	Head of SEND, Inclusion and Learning, RCC
	Kulwinder Bola	SEND Improvement Programme Manager, RCC

ABSENT:		
	Gary Morphus	Trade Unions
	Oliver Teasel	Post 16 Provision
	Peter French	Dioceses

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Gill Curtis, Head of SEND, Inclusion and Learning and Kulwinder Bola, SEND Improvement Programme Manager.

2 MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the 30th November 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

Action 1

Andrew to send Jane wording regarding the Finance Working Group for an email to be sent to all schools on behalf of the Chair requesting volunteers to be members of the Finance Working Group.

Action completed.

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Following a proposal by the Strategic Director of Children and Families and with the agreement of the Chair, Agenda Item 7 was taken as the first item.

Pat Bullen joined the meeting at 4.05 p.m.

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3 DFE SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITY AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION (SENDAP) CHANGE PROGRAMME

A detailed presentation was received from Dawn Godfrey, Strategic Director of Children and Families, RCC and Pat Bullen, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Change Programme Partnership - Strategic Lead, School Development Support Agency. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- A national change programme - not just for Rutland.
- Rutland, along with Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council, was the lead authority for the £5.9m change programme for the East Midlands.
- Rutland, on behalf of LLR, would be leading on two main areas of testing:
 1. Establishing a new Change Programme Steering Group with stakeholders
 2. Effective multi-agency panels
- The Parent/Carer Forum from each of the three areas had given positive feedback regarding the new EHC template.
- The draft Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) had been submitted on time but still required further work.
- The Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) was not part of the change programme but was aligned to it through NHS England and funded by the Department for Education (DfE).
- Involvement by schools would be on a voluntary basis and schools should have received a letter inviting them to take part.
- The national standards testing would be the first part of the change programme that schools would be involved in.
- The change programme was expected to run until August 2025 and regular updates would be provided to the Schools' Forum.

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Pat Bullen left the Schools' Forum at 4.25 p.m.
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4 FINANCE UPDATE

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

Dedicated Schools Grant

- Deficit of just over £1.0m was being projected for 2023/24. Equated to a £900k deficit in the High Needs Block and a £100k deficit in the Early Years Block.
- Demand for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) continued to increase. 18 new EHCP's were approved in January 2024. Equated to 5% of the total EHCP requests received each year. 29 EHCP's were currently waiting to be assessed.
- Massive potential deficit of £15.8m projected for 2029/30.
- Need to work together to achieve the goals of the recovery plan.

Early Years Funding

- New Early Years Funding rate of £9.45 to be introduced for children under the age of 2 years.

Finance Sub-Group

- Rob Gooding was not a member of the Schools' Forum so Steve Cox volunteered to be a member of the Finance Sub-Group so that it had three representatives from the Schools' Forum.
 - The Head of Finance confirmed that he would update the membership table and arrange a meeting of the Finance Sub-Group.
- ACTION: Andrew Merry**
- Members agreed that an update from the Finance Sub-Group would be a standing item on future agendas.

RESOLVED

That the Schools' Forum:

- a) **NOTED** the financial update.
- b) **NOTED** the proposed rates for Early Years for 2024/25.
- c) **AGREED** the Membership of the Finance Sub-Group following the agreed amendments.
- d) **AGREED** that the Head of Finance would arrange a meeting of the Finance Sub-Group.

5 SEND PROGRAMME UPDATE

A report was received from Kulwinder Bola, SEND Improvement Programme Manager. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The overarching aim of the programme was to reduce the deficit in the High Needs Block funding and keep it down.
- Some Local Authorities, where their deficits were a lot higher than Rutland's, had stepped out of the Delivering Better Value programme and were now using the [Safety Valve Programme](#).

- Rutland had a lot of good partnership working in place but early identification and early intervention were the key work aims that must be continued by all partners.
- The Strategic Director of Children and Families confirmed that a detailed report would be presented as a standing agenda item at future meetings.
- The Early Help Co-ordinator informed attendees that schools will be asked to help assist with a parental survey about their views of the inclusion and SEND services in Rutland.
- The Strategic Director of Children and Families stated she would contact the Head of SEND, Inclusion and Learning for an update to be included in the minutes regarding the expressions of interest (EOI) for investment for both Nurture Next and Alternative Provision – details attached.

RESOLVED

That the Schools' Forum:

- a) **NOTED** the report.

6 EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP

An update was received from Lucy Lewin, representative of the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Early Years. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Concerns regarding expanded entitlements were ongoing but positive discussions had been held regarding funding rates.
- The minimum wage increase was due in April 2024 which has added extra pressure to the service.
- There were challenges around the detail in the expanded entitlement but communication with the DfE was ongoing to clarify the details.
- Issues regarding staff recruitment and the retainment of staff continued to challenge the whole service.

7 PUPIL PLACE PLANNING

A report was received from Gill Curtis, Head of SEND, Inclusion and Learning, RCC. Following a proposal by the Strategic Director of Children and Families and with the agreement of the Chair, Agenda Item 6 – Pupil Place Planning and Agenda Item 8 – Annual SCAP Return were taken together.

8 ANNUAL SCAP RETURN

A verbal briefing and a presentation were received from David Wylie, Business Intelligence Technical Development Lead, RCC.

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The Strategic Director of Children and Families left the meeting at 4.57 p.m.

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No questions were received but it was agreed that a copy of the presentation on the School Capacity Survey 2023 would be distributed with the minutes (copy attached).

9 WORK PLAN 2023-2024

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Ben Solly, Carl Smith and Helga Spry-Shute left the meeting at 5.01 p.m.
The Vice-Chair, Steve Cox chaired the remainder of the meeting.

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- The work plan was reviewed and no amendments were made.
- Members were requested to send any proposals for agenda items to the Clerk via Democratic Services (democraticservices@rutland.gov.uk).

10 ANY URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

11 MEETING DATES

Thursday, 9th May 2024 at 4.00 p.m.

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The Chair declared the meeting closed at 5.03 pm.

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SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

No.	Ref.	Action	Person
1	4	The Head of Finance to update the membership table following the agreed amendments and arrange a meeting of the Finance Sub-Group.	Andrew Merry