



# Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the SCHOOLS' FORUM** held at Rutland County Council, Council Chamber on Thursday, 12 January 2017 at 4.00 pm

**PRESENT:**

Mrs J Turner (Chair)	
Mr B Gale	Mr R Gooding
Mr R Shore	Mr J Woodhead
Mrs M Darlington	Mr S Cox
Ms V Savage (deputy for Mr S Williams)	Mr C Smith

**APOLOGIES:** Ms S Hearth

**OFFICERS PRESENT:**

Ms G Curtis	Head of Service Learning & Skills
Dr T O'Neill	Director for People
Ms D Greaves	Services for People Accountant
Mr L Dabin-Williams	Services for People Accountant
Mrs H Fardell (Clerk)	Corporate Support

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D Wilby Portfolio Holder for Lifelong Learning

## **1 MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on 22 September 2016, copies of which had been previously circulated, were confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

Mr Wilby introduced Gill Curtis, who has recently joined the authority as Head of Service Learning & Skills and was attending her first Schools' Forum meeting.

## **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mr S Cox and Ms V Savage declared an interest in matters relating to DSP.

## **3 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

No petitions, deputations or questions were received from members of the public.

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Mr C Smith joined the meeting at 4.10pm

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#### 4 BUDGET UPDATE

Ms Greaves introduced the paper Schools Budget 2016/17 Update & Appendix 1 Forecast outturn 2016/17 paper. Schools' Forum **NOTED** the contents. During discussion the following points were made:

- 4.1 Dr O'Neill advised that alongside preparation for an Ofsted SEND inspection, the Council will be embarking on a piece of work which will attempt to reduce the number of out of county high needs placements, making greater use of the high needs provision within Rutland and thereby reducing the current high needs overspend. This will be a complex piece of work involving partner agencies, schools, and looking at the approaches taken by neighbouring authorities.
- 4.2 Mr Wilby advised that funding has been made available from a DfE SEND reform grant which will fund the appointment of a dedicated Project Officer to oversee this work. In addition to focussing on SEND provision, the approach taken will also consider aspects of and involve children's social care, education and health provision. In planning future high needs provision, it will be important to engage at an early stage with parents.
- 4.3 Ms Greaves advised the Forum of two national consultations currently in progress for High Needs and the National Schools Funding Formula, which close 22 March 2017. The Council's Finance Department will email to all Head Teachers the link to the DfE website, where the consultation documents can be found. These documents provide illustrative budget figures for all schools.
- 4.4 Members of the Forum expressed concern that the proposals within the Funding Formula consultation could have a negative impact on a number of schools leading to a loss of funding. Members were particularly concerned about changes to the primary secondary pupil ratio, which could adversely affect all secondary school provision within Rutland. It was suggested that the Council should make representation to the Government about these proposals through it's MP.
- 4.5 The consultation documents provide illustrative figures only and consideration should focus on the principles behind the proposals, as opposed to looking at the potential negative or positive impact on individual schools. Schools' Forum **AGREED** that the Local Authority (LA) will co-ordinate a group of representatives from each sector, who will meet to consider the proposals with a view to formulating a considered response representing the view of all provision within Rutland. Early February was suggested as the timescale for this. The response once compiled can be fed back through the consultation process and/or to the Government as thought fit, and can be circulated to all Head Teachers for their information.
- 4.6 Ms Greaves advised that the High Needs consultation was primarily concerned with how funds are allocated by the LA, not how funds are spent. High Needs budgets will be under pressure if the number of pupils requiring high needs provision continues to increase.
- 4.7 Mrs Darlington provided a brief update regarding Early Years funding. Providers will be receiving less funding per child, whilst having to deal with increasing living wage and pension commitments. Providers have made

representation to the DfE (November 2016) but with no response as yet. Providers are meeting with LA officers with a view to attempting to increase funding rates from 2018/19 onwards.

## **5 DSG OVERSPEND ON THE HIGH NEEDS BLOCK AND EARLY YEARS FUNDING UPDATE**

Ms Greaves introduced the paper Schools Funding for 2017/18. Schools' Forum **NOTED** the contents. During discussion the following points were made:

- 5.1 Members considered the £400k shortfall in High Needs funding and further discussion focussed particularly on funding for DSP units. Dr O'Neill advised that moving forward the LA plans to work closely with Oakham CoFE Primary/The Parks School, and Catmose College on how best DSP is managed within the County, with a view to building capacity and developing change by agreement. This will also link with the work to reduce out of county placements in 4.1 above.
- 5.2 Clarity was sought regarding the DSP funding for 2017/18. It was noted that the current DSP arrangements will be honoured for the forthcoming financial year and this will be reflected in the budget being submitted on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017. It is recognised that this funding will put additional financial pressure on the High Needs Budget which could be up to £300K overspent by the end of the coming financial year if significant adjustments are not made to the rate of spending, particularly on out of county placements where there are vacancies within Rutland provision. This SEND provision is currently being reviewed and the Local Authority will be working with schools to address this issue over the coming year. It is acknowledged that if this overspend cannot be accommodated through reduction in costs, this will be recovered from the School's Budget.
- 5.3 A report 'Placement for Pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities' will be presented to Cabinet on 17 January 2017, and once approved work will proceed.
- 5.4 Schools' Forum **RECOMMENDED** that funding to cover the High Needs shortfall should not be taken from the Schools Block.

## **6 ANY URGENT BUSINESS**

- 6.1 Ms Savage advised that Catmose College had applied to the DfE for additional places under Growth Funding and been referred to the Schools' Forum. Ms Greaves advised that Schools' Forum had previously made the decision not to have a Growth Fund.
- 6.2 Ms Greaves highlighted to the Forum for their information, the implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy, and advised that invites to a meeting regarding this had been sent to all maintained schools. It was commented that this could potentially be a major issue for small schools.

## **7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 30 March 2017 at 4.00 pm at RCC, in the Council Chamber.

Proposed agenda items: Election of new Chair of Schools' Forum

For information, the following additional meeting dates have been previously agreed for 2017:

Thursday 8 June 2017

Thursday 21 September 2017

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**The Chair declared the meeting closed at 5.40pm.**

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