

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **SCHOOLS' FORUM**

At a meeting of the **Schools' Forum** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 20 February 2018 at 9:30 am.

#### **PRESENT**

C Pearson (Chair)  
Governor, Abbeyfields Three Rivers Trust

#### **Headteacher Representatives**

M Allan	M Deane-Hall
A Bennett (substitute for C Bradshaw)	F G Hartland
C Davison	J Kennedy

#### **Governor Representatives**

K Faulkner	M Hodgson
S Harker	G Wilkins

#### **Academies Representatives**

G Atkins	A Okeke (substitute for G Evans)
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#### **Trades Union Representatives**

R E Woolhouse

#### **Northumberland County Council Elected Members (Observers)**

W Daley	N Oliver
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#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

S Aviston	Head of School Organisation and Resources
A Johnson	Project Director (Educational and Skills)
L Little	Democratic Services Officer
C McEvoy	Executive Director of Children's Services
B Parvin	Education and Skills Business Manager
A Russell	Principal Accountant
A Whitehead	School Funding and Business Relationship Manager

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## 1. MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

- 1.1 The Education and Skills Business Manager advised that there were two vacancies at present. An expression of interest had been received from Mr B Watson, a Governor at a school in Morpeth and Business Manager for the Seaton Valley Federation. It was considered he would be a useful addition to the Forum and therefore it was agreed that he be invited to join.
- 1.2 Following the confirmation of Daljit Lally as Chief Executive of the Council a restructure of senior management had been undertaken. As reported previously Cath McEvoy had been appointed as the Executive Director of Children's Services and Andy Johnson would commence his new role as Project Director (Education and Skills) in May 2018. Whilst appointments had been made to the posts of Service Director (Children's Social Care) and Service Director (Education and Skills) these had not been announced at the current time.

## 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from S Barron, S Connolly, J Guthrie, M Hall, J Kennedy, K McGrane, K Morrison, I Walker and D Wylie.

## 3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on Wednesday, 17 January 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:  
  
K Faulkner, Governor Representative be added to the list of those present.
- 3.2 The Chair reminded those present of the need to sign the attendance register in order to ensure their attendance was recorded.
- 3.3 The Project Director (Education and Skills) advised that in relation to the Haydon Bridge High School, a letter had been received from the Regional Schools Commission asking what were the Local Authority's intentions following the Bright Tribe Trust withdrawal and what would be the consequences if Haydon Bridge High School was discontinued. The Authority advised that a consultation was required in order to ascertain the views of the community and to take account of the possible change in age range for the Hadrian Trust, capacity issues schools and very challenging financial position of smaller schools.
- 3.4 The first stage of the consultation on Education in the West of Northumberland which had involved the Headteachers and Governors of 32 schools. Their views had informed the second part of the consultation which had been launched on Monday 19 February 2018. Full details were available on the Council's website which also set out the reasons for the consultation being carried out. The four potential options were briefly outlined as follows,

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although it was clarified that these had been put forward to stimulate debate and were not set in stone:-

### **Model A**

Closure of Haydon Bridge High School (HBHS) and the creation of larger Queen Elizabeth High School (QEHS) and Hexham Middle School (HMS) and the closure of 8 first/primary schools depending on size/proximity to other schools.

### **Model B**

The creation of a 2-tier system with the closure of 14 schools including middle schools and a new building for QEHS which would take pupils from ages 11-18.

### **Model C**

Keep HBH School open with a change of age range to 4-16 with significant modifications provided to the existing buildings and closure of other schools in Haydon Bridge. QEHS and HMS would co-locate on a new site and become a age 9-18 campus with other schools in Hexham remaining as at present.

### **Model D**

Any combination of the above, or any other options proposed during the course of the consultation.

- 3.5 All financial implications were set out in the consultation document. It was stressed that the Local Authority had no control over Academies and agreement was required from all involved parties.
- 3.6 An application had been made to the Secretary of State for a Local Authority Interim Executive Board to be appointed to HBHS in order that the governance of the school can be brought back under the Local Authority and allow more budgetary control . It was noted that as the school was linked to the Pennine Learning Partnership any objection they made must be taken into account by the Secretary of State.
- 3.7 The Forum was advised that a large number of meetings would be undertaken over the consultation period including public meetings in Haydon Bridge and Hexham.
- 3.8 Councillor Daley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services along with A Johnson, Project Director (Education and Skills) had met with Sir David Carter and advised him of the problems being encountered with the removal of powers from the Local Authority in relation to academies and parental choice. He advised that his officers and Regional Schools

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Commissioners were encouraging academies to work in partnerships with Local Authorities. It was reported that there were now good lines of communication between the Local Authority and the Regional Schools Commissioner.

- 3.9 In relation to paragraph 4.3 it was confirmed that a draft had been circulated and there was a response included with the agenda papers for today's meeting. No further information was available in relation to the Education Challenge however it was confirmed that work had commenced on the proposal.
- 3.10 In relation to SEN, it was confirmed that the two responses received from the top-up policy consultation were now being considered.

#### **4. COMMUNICATION**

##### **Devolution of North of Tyne**

- 4.1 A copy of the response from the Schools' Forum to the consultation was circulated with the papers for information.

##### **F40 Update**

- 4.2 A copy of a letter sent from the F40 Group to the new Secretary of State for Education along with his response was circulated with the agenda papers for information.
- 4.3 The Education and Skills Business Manager advised that he was to attend a conference hosted by the F40 Group and as the Chair of the Forum was unable to attend if any other member wished to attend then they should contact him to discuss.
- 4.4 It was suggested that the F40 Group could try to seek clarity as to whom would be responsible for any deficit when the National Funding Formula (NFF) was implemented, individual schools, the Local Authority or whether it would be subsumed into the NFF.
- 4.5 A further point for clarification was in relation to additional schools block grant funding received by the Local Authority if this had not all been distributed when the NFF was applied then what happened to that money?
- 4.6 No meetings of the SEN Finance Committee or AEN Committee had been held since the last meeting.

#### **5. SETTING THE 2018/19 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT**

- 5.1 It was confirmed that approval had been received from the Secretary of State for the transfer of 1% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block on 30 January 2018 and the final figures could now be confirmed.

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## 6. SETTING THE 2018/19 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK BUDGET

6.1 The Project Director (Education and Skills) introduced the report (attached to the signed minutes as agenda item 7) to the Forum with the following information being noted:-

- The increase in special schools place funding was due to the extra places to be created within the County.
- If a child was identified as requiring top-up funding this could not be denied therefore the budget could not be capped. There was a target to reduce the top-up funding budget but this would be through rationalising payments. All payments in relation to each child would be scrutinised and the proper recording of data enforced. The processes undertaken at Funding Panels would also be scrutinised to ensure parity.
- Additional places at the PRU for younger children would allow earlier intervention and potentially more integration back into schools.
- The reduction in budget for Education Psychology would be made by the introduction of SLA's with schools.
- The SEND review would involve a workstream to bring both the Health Service and Local Authority teams together in respect of speech/language therapy and it was hoped this could reduce the spend from this budget.

6.2 The forecast overspend was very worrying and it was not known who would be responsible for this overspend in 20/21 when the NFF was established. The worst scenario would be that schools would have to pay back the overspend prior to the NFF coming in. The debate regarding funding for SEND would continue.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools' Forum agree to the setting of the High Needs Block budget in line with the information contained in the report.

## 7. SEN UPDATE

7.1 An update would be provided following the completion of the SEND consultation. A review of documentation was to be undertaken and it was stressed that consistency was required across Panels.

## 8. DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

8.1 The Project Director (Education and Skills) introduced the Annual Report to the Forum (attached to the signed minutes as Agenda item 9). He advised that the data had now been validated and provided a narrative against the points in the executive summary as follows:-

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- (1) A number of good Ofsted reports had been received in recent months which now showed that Northumberland was above the national average.
- (2) A number of schools which had been put into special measures had not been re-inspected.
- (4) This was a very significant improvement.
- (5) The proportion of good and outstanding primary and first schools is now approaching 90%.
- (6) Northumberland was always in the bottom percentage nationally.
- (7) There were still significant pressures in relation to recruitment. Retiring Headteachers of smaller rural schools were especially difficult to replace.
- (8) 75% Of funding was based on the pupil roll of a school and there were challenges in Northumberland that were not replicated in other areas.
- (9) Special school Headteachers and Governors came under considerable pressure from parents to take additional pupils when full with a Tribunal forcing a school to take a child. The geography of the County is especially challenging.
- (10) Close working across Education and Social Care was carried out to ensure safeguarding and this was a high priority for the Council.
- (11) Whilst the Local Authority still try to exert some influence it was probable that 75% of schools within Northumberland would be academies by this time next year.
- (12) This Local Authority was one of the only ones in the Country who was continuing to invest in their schools at this level with new schools being provided and new places being created at special schools.

8.2 Councillor Daley highlighted that this would be the last Annual Report prepared by Andy Johnson in his former role and as such would formally like to acknowledge the role played by Mr Johnson over the last few years and was delighted that he had agreed to continue in a new role with the Authority. This sentiment was echoed by the Forum.

## **9. ANNUAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES 2016/17**

- 9.1 The Project Director (Education and Skills) provided a powerpoint presentation (copy attached to the signed minutes as Agenda item 10). He advised that the percentage of children reaching a Good Level of Development (GLD) at Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) had increased to 75%, was above the emerging national average and had increased by 10% in the last three years.
- 9.2 In the Phonics test in Year 1 whilst a gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children existed this was the smallest of its type in all the key performance measures, however this gap grew as children got older.

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- 9.3 Northumberland's overall position compared with the national averages at Key Stage 1 had improved over the last four years in all subjects. Outcomes at Key Stage 2 were not as strong as in Early Years and Key Stage 1 and the gap between disadvantaged children remained too large in all subjects.
- 9.4 No comparable data was available for Key Stage 3.
- 9.5 At Key Stage 4 the average Progress 8 score was 0.16 with individual schools attainment between -0.80 to 0.53 with six schools at or above the 2017 national average of 0.03; the Attainment 8 score was 44.7 with individual schools ranging from 34.0 to 54.4 with six schools at or above the 2017 national average of 46.3; 39.3% of pupils achieved 5+ in English and Maths; and 94% of pupils stayed in education or employment.
- 9.6 The Disadvantaged and Gender Gaps were closing but this was not fast enough.
- 9.7 There was no consistent data recorded for students after university and therefore outcomes for students aged 21 years+ were generally not available.

## **10. 2018 WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING DATES**

- 10.1 The Education and Skills Manager advised that dates had been set for the Additional Educational Needs Committee as below and anyone else interested in joining should contact him.
- 9.30 am on Wednesday 7 March 2018
  - 9.30 am on Wednesday 13 June 2018

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Educating the North**

- 11.1 A copy of the document "Educating the North" had been circulated with the agenda as Item 12. It was noted that Officers had been contacted for their views however the information provided was not used in the published document.
- 11.2 A presentation of flowers was made to Angela Whitehead, the School Funding and Business Relationship Manager who was taking early retirement from the Authority. The Chair thanked Mrs Whitehead for the intervention and clarity of information provided for the Forum which had been very much appreciated and wished her well for the future.

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12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Schools' Forum would take place on Wednesday 16 May 2018 at 9.30 am.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

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