**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 8 July 2022**

**09:00 – 11.30 hours**

**Teams Meeting**

**Present: Representing**

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne (Sub) Academies

Adrian Ball, Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Academies

Trust

Chris Caddamy, (Vice Chair) City College 16 – 19 Representative

Amanda Connor (Sub) Primary Maintained Schools

Lacey Douglass Early Years Representative

Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School Primary Maintained Governors

Bob Groome National Education Union

Glyn Hambling, Unity Education Trust Alternative Provision

Howard Nelson, Diocese of Norwich Diocesan Board of Education

Peter Pazitka, SJB CMAT Academies

Sarah Porter, The Heart Education Trust Academies

David Shaw, Creative Education Trust Academies

Joanna Tuttle, Aylsham High School Secondary Maintained Schools

Martin White, (Chair) Nebula Federation Primary Maintained Governors

Vicky Warnes National Education Union

Michael Bateman Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement & Early Effectiveness

Martin Brock Accountant, Schools, SEN, and Early Years

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Nicki Rider Head of High Needs SEND

Chris Snudden Director of Learning & Inclusion

Alison Randall Head of Education Finance

**Apologies:**

John Crowley Assistant Director Learning & Achievement

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy Special School Academy

David Hicks Academies

Carol Jacques Maintained Nursery School

Clare Jones, Boudica Schools Trust Academies

Sarah Shirras, St Williams Primary Primary Maintained Schools

Rebecca Wicks, The Clare School Maintained Special Schools

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

1. **Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

A spelling amendment was made to page 8 of the minutes. The word ‘Offers’ changed to ‘Officers’. The minutes were otherwise agreed as a true record of the meeting.

* Central Schools Services Block

Will not be covered in this meeting. Eighteen clauses have been removed from the Bill by the House of Lords and a lot of uncertainty at this stage.

* Finance briefings

Sarah Shirras and Martin White delivered a Finance Briefing to Primary Educate Norfolk. Mike Grimble did not attend due to illness and Dawn Filtness was significantly delayed due to traffic. The purpose of the briefing was to raise awareness of Schools Forum and the importance of responding to consultations with headteachers. This was only partly achieved as the audience was primary headteachers only.

All acknowledged that further briefings will be required reaching a wider audience.

* Schools Catering Contract

A number of queries were raised at the last meeting and conversations on the status of Norse Eastern.

Clarity has been sought that the decision is with Norfolk County Council.

Following previous queries from Schools Forum, a decision on tendering is being revisited but has not yet been made

There was some discussion last time around change to costing, reducing the management fee to a nominal sum and using Universal Infant Free School Meals and other Free School Meals income from Government as a basis for the charge. Following this feedback, a capping mechanism is being considered due to the potential impact upon large schools.

Members noted that the paper brought to the last meeting did not mention a capping mechanism so this is new, there is a concern if large schools do not buy into the contract, it will not be viable. Members said schools needed a decision on this sooner rather than later.

**Action: In response to members concerns officers will seek legal advice as to whether tendering can be introduced at any time and if an element of control of quality could be a clause within a contract with an outside company.**

* Outcome of National SEND Review/Green Paper

Officers confirmed that Norfolk has contributed to the Local Government Association and the Regional SENDS lead and there has been a consensus across the region on parts of the green paper we support and the parts that cause concern.

1. **MyOracle update**

John Baldwin is unable to attend at short notice due to illness. He said he will arrange for a briefing note to be sent out regarding introduction of payroll services following the introduction of technology and the steps that are being taken to resolve these issues. He wants to personally apologise for the difficulties this is causing schools and their staff. He said extra staff have been brought in to understand and fix the problems with both pay and reporting payroll data and believes these will help with July pay runs. He thinks that they have identified the problem that is causing the issues with payment of staff.

**Action: DF to check he is sending communication to all schools.**

Members were pleased that further information had been released. The issue was understanding the implementation of the system and was there any dual running carried out prior to implementation?

JT - my school had some staff that had not been paid for 2 to 3 months. There should have been transparency from county about the issues, more pro-activeness, we have had no communication about the issues that have been occurring and schools have spent a huge amount of time trying to sort this out. If county knew there were staff not going to be paid, they should have alerted schools.

This is a learning curve, and we need to understand the issues going forward.

Lack of empathy when staff have not been paid.

MW – Affects the lowest paid

GH – Not only a matter that affects County Council schools.

JT – Reporting issues to HMRC

JT – Casual claims forms biggest issue. The view was that it was something the schools had done incorrectly and can’t payments wait until the next month.

GH – small schools with less staff capacity may be spending significant amount of time trying to solve these issues and would be interesting to ask them for their response.

MW – there may be some schools who have not realised there is a problem.

Officers said that dual running was carried out for 2 to 3 months. A change in configuration quite late on caused these issues.

Officers were shocked to hear about problems schools encountered with obtaining supplementary payment runs. Any evidence colleagues have on this they should pass on to Chris Snudden or Dawn Filtness.

**3a. Dedicated Schools Grant 2021/22 Outturn**

* Norfolk’s Dedicated Schools Grant Recovery (Phase 2) within DfE Safety Valve Programme

This paper is following on from the presentation at the last Forum meeting.

Norfolk are required to submit an initial paper on 15 September and a final paper on 6 October. Therefore, officers will need to engage with Forum members early September but also communicate mid-August.

Comments:

Members asked about Free School expressions of interest in MLD schools.

Officers said they were putting expressions of interest in – however they do not believe MLD is something that should be introduced into the Special School System, but they acknowledge that children are being placed as part of the tribunal process.

Officers highlighted that proper investment in SEN Support could reduce unnecessary EHCPs.

Members said it was also about managing expectation and working with Health and social workers.

Officers said there has never been enough investment in early intervention/ prevention and this programme is about addressing that. The combination of effort and funding through the Safety Valve Programme is really exciting.

EHCP looked on as pathway to preferred secondary school.

One member challenged that schools are putting in EHCPs to get funding – our school has a joined up process with the authority. Is about diagnostic issue – I challenge the premise that schools do this for the money.

The perception is still there that schools would get more money.

Officers said they were keen to upscale alternative provision and increase capacity around wider services.

The 16-19 representative highlighted Post 16 place planning and challenges with complicated forms coming into Post 16.

Officers confirmed expectation is that transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block will continue but taper off in later years.

Members said plans need to be robust enough to gain extra funding.

Members asked how a review body would be put in place for each of the years once an agreed plan is in place and are they expecting to set up a committee that will monitor this work.

Officers said the setting up of a sub-group with the Forum would be immensely helpful.

Review group prior to initial submission: the following people expressed an interest in being on this group:

A meeting will take place w/c 5th September – Marilyn will canvass for suitable date

Adrian Ball

Mike Grimble

Jo Tuttle

Glyn Hambling

Bob Groome

Lacey Douglass

Sarah Porter

Sarah Shirras

Martin White

**Action: Marilyn to send out date for September meeting – week commencing 5 September.**

**Officers will come back about a meeting middle of August – which will be a remote meeting.**

**3b. DSG Management Plan update**

This is a relatively minor update from the plan released in January. A major refresh to the plan is due in the Autumn. The plan has been brought up-to-date with the year-end outturn for the financial year 2021/22.

The paper also details where average costs assumptions have also been update for some individual schools. The largest change is inflation assumptions.

The paper does not consider any changes that may occur due to the Safety Valve programme discussed earlier e.g., strategies and investment to reduce escalation of need or the use of national tariffs.

A major refresh to extend timescales to beyond years 2025/26 and to reflect response to the Safety Valve Programme will be released in the autumn.

**Schools Forum noted the information provided.**

1. **Consultation on Scheme Changes**

* Analysis of Balances

Schools Forum are asked to agree to the changes, as detailed in the paper, being included in the autumn consultation with schools.

**Agree: unanimous**

* Salix/Building Maintenance Fund Limits

Schools Forum are asked to agree to the changes, as detailed in the paper, being included in the autumn consultation with schools

**Agree: unanimous**

**Vice-Chair of Schools Forum**

This is Chris Caddamy’s last meeting before he moves on to a new position. The Chair thanked him for his contribution to Forum over the years and his hard work as vice chair of Forum.

Members were asked to consider the role of vice-chair and invited to register their interest by email to Marilyn Edgeley.

1. **Future Plan**

The next two meeting will be face to face. Chris Caddamy will look into Easton college as a venue.

**Date of next meeting**

30 September 2022, 09:00 – 12:30: Rm JB031, Jubilee Building, Easton College