

Peterborough Schools Forum

Wednesday 7th July 2021

9.30 – 10.30 am

Present

Jonathan Lewis	Service Director: Education	Peterborough & Cambridgeshire
Mark Woods	CEO Cambridge Meridian Academy Trust & Chair of Peterborough Schools Forum	Chair & Primary/ Secondary Academy Representative
Alan Sadler	Cross Sector	Governor Reference Group
Rachel Davies	Senior Accountant	Peterborough City Council
Susannah Connell	CEO The Diamond Learning Partnership	Vice Chair & Primary Academy Representative
Amanda Daoud	Chief Operations Officer, Lime Trust	Primary Academy Representative
Kate Pereria		Diocese – Catholic – East of England
Rhys Thrower	Wittering Primary School	Primary Academy Representative
Mohammed Younis	Stars Day Nursery	Non-school Representative
Jo Cook	Paston Riding Primary School	Primary Maintained Representative
Stuart Mansell	Nene Valley Primary School	Primary Academy Representative
Debbie Hayes	Caverstede Nursery School	Nursery Representative
Darren Ayling	The King's School	Diocese CofE Peterborough Observer
Sarah Burling	PA to Service Director: Education	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
John Gilligan	Hampton College	Primary/Secondary Academy Representative
Adam Brewster	Heltwate Special School	Special School Representative
Roz Mecuri		Bursar Representative - Secondary

Apologies

Bryan Erwin	Ken Stimpson Secondary School	Secondary Maintained Representative
Scott Hudson	Queen Katherine Academy	Secondary Academy Representative

1.0 Apologies, declarations of interest and housekeeping Action

- 1.1 Apologies were noted as above.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 Constitution is on the agenda for this meeting.

The consultation to seek views on proposals to support small, remote schools through changes to the national funding formula, closed on the 9th April 2021. Sparsity distances are currently calculated using straight-line distances from pupils' postcodes to school postcodes. It is proposed that this is changed to calculate these using the shortest distance by road from schools' properties to pupil's postcodes. There is only one school in Peterborough that meets the criteria for sparsity and if they change the arrangements they will get about an extra £1500 a year.

It is our understanding that the consultation on changes to the payment process for schools' business rates will centralise the payment of business rates for maintained schools from the 22-23 financial year onwards.

In light of the need to focus efforts on meeting the challenges of COVID-19, there will be no change in local authorities' flexibility over the distribution of school funding in 2021-22. The government will shortly put forward proposals to move to a 'hard' national funding formula in the future, which will determine schools' budgets directly, rather than through local formulae set independently by each local authority.

The local authority has received feedback from schools around SEND Hubs. Jon will be hosting a meeting for Headteachers in the autumn around the challenges and the SEND offer.

JL

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3.0 Schools Financial Health & Balance Mechanism

- 3.1 The report to accompany this item covers annual reporting to the Forum around the level of balance in maintained schools. Balances reflect the challenges of Covid and the financial risk schools are managing at the moment. The decision was made to remove balance control mechanisms for maintained primary schools this year. This is a temporary adjustment due to Covid.

Overall balances have increased across primary, secondary and special schools, but decreased for the nursery. This is replicated nationally. The local authority has gathered information for Academy schools in Cambridgeshire and revenue balances have also increased. It is the local authority's intention to gather this information from Academy Schools in Peterborough too and expects a similar result. The local authority seeks endorsement from Schools Forum to give schools flexibility this year and arrangements will put back in place for next year.

There were no objections.

Heltwaite received a testing grant that they were not expecting - will that be clawed back? It is the local authority's understanding that it is based on the number of tests done in schools.

Can it be transferred to Capital Reserves? The local authority will consider exceptions through discussions with individual schools.

4.0 Forum Constitution

- 4.1 The end of the academic year is a chance to review membership of Schools Forum, especially as the Terms of some Forum members were extended due to Covid. Jon thanked those whose Terms are coming to an end and hoped that they would stand again. The process for selecting members is outlined in section (B) and Annex 4 of Appendix 1.

Mark has pulled together a proposal about how the academy sector will elect their representatives. This will also be discussed with the PCEOs at their meeting on Friday.

The Constitution has been adjusted to align with new national guidance.

Of the Forum members that are drawn from academies, one must be from academy alternative provision and one must be from academy special provision. It is proposed that one should be from a primary only MAT but sitting as an academy member. The remaining seven members would be from a wider non-designated category but should aim to be representative of the variety of MAT structures represented in the city to provide an appropriate spread of views.

Diocesan representatives are observers and may participate in debate but do not have voting rights should any business of the Forum require a vote. Should a Diocesan representative resign, the Forum will seek new representation from the Diocese.

Change in legislation has been made to make permanent provision for Schools' Forum meetings to be held remotely. This is an effective way of operating Forum and would like this to continue.

Alan Sadler suggested that governance is best served by being in a room together and feels that virtual meetings are less effective and suggested that we do have face to face meetings where they would add more value. Mark suggested a hybrid model – perhaps two virtual meetings and two face to face meetings a year. November and January meetings are more critical as that is where the budget is set. Mark suggested having January meeting as face to face. Jon to come up with a proposal for future meetings.

JL

As a result of the self assessment, timeliness of the circulation of the agenda and associated papers will be addressed. The Peterborough Schools Forum Learn Together page is being maintained.

Forum is asked to accept the Constitution and the Self Assessment. Forum agreed.

5.0 Growth Allocations to date for 2021-22

- 5.1 Each autumn the local authority estimates growth in pupil numbers and the number of new schools and classes based on census data. Have seen a lowering in the requirement for growth in the last few years. Pressure on secondary school places has meant an overspend of £188,000.

As it is not confirmed when the new Hampton primary school will open, this is not included in the figures. The LA will look to meet the deficit from DSG carry forward or from the 2022/23 growth fund top slice.

Is the business rates relief applied to EY settings as well? No unfortunately not.

Does it take account of the new year group in the UTC? No, as this has been agreed directly with the DFE.

A further update on the overall financial position will be brought in the Autumn. Have also got some Heads involved in the process this year so not just come from the local authority.

SEN growth doesn't appear. Funding for Special Schools comes from the High Needs Block so is separate to this.

Forum accepted the paper.

6.0 AOB

Role of Schools' Forum with the changing landscape and DFE ambition for more schools to become academies. Do we need to consider this from a Forum perspective, or will it go through PCEOs? Local Authority view is that not all schools need to become academies – it is what is best for the individual school.

Jon apologised for the lateness of papers and thanked Rachel Davies for her work. Steve Whitley and Margaret Courtman have now left the Local Authority. Jon will update on arrangements for September.

Mark thanked those whose term of office has ended for their contribution to Forum and asked Jon to pass on our thanks and very best wishes to Steve and Margaret.