

HEADLINES FROM THE SCHOOLS' FUNDING FORUM (SFF) 1 December 2023

1	<p>Election of Chair and Vice Chair John Dennis was confirmed as Chair. Kate Le Page was confirmed as Vice Chair following a Forum election.</p>	
2	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p>	
3	<p>Minutes and matters arising Minutes agreed and actions confirmed as complete.</p>	
4	<p>General High Needs overview and Safety Valve monitoring status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karen Stone (Finance Business Partner) presented to the Forum on the current Safety Valve position – link. <p>Action – All SFF members to be go back to the schools they represent and feedback that High Needs Mainstream Top Up Funding is not stopping, to influence rumours.</p> <p>Action – Request for more information circulated to Forum between meetings on HNF, Safety Valve and work of Inclusion Champions.</p> <p>Action – SH to review what information could be shared showing breakdown between pupils accessing independent because no special school against those where driven by parental preference.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>KS</p> <p>SH</p>
5	<p>High Needs Update including public consultation for HNF and localities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siobhan Price (Inclusion Lead) presented to the Forum on the public consultation for HNF and localities, which was opened on 29th November – link. Karen Stone explained the consultation didn't include any detailed financial modelling as the Council wanted to consult publicly on principles initially. Will go back to schools and Schools Funding Forum to further consult on the funding formula. <p>Action – message out to schools to explain will come back for further consultation and discussion on the funding formula.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question about whether this will include PRUs and alternative provision. Karen Stone responded that initially focus is on mainstream top up but the model is flexible and so other things could be considered at a later date. Transparency is important. 	<p>KS</p>
6	<p>High Needs subgroup meeting updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neerasha Singh (Chair of High Needs subgroup) gave an update on the discussions from the High Needs subgroup held on 13th November – link. <p>Action – Alison Farmer to share presentation with outcomes from special school funding review.</p> <p>Action – Jody Catterall-James to forward paper with recommendations from Early Years Review.</p> <p>Action – Request for volunteers to sit on High Needs subgroup, particularly looking for representatives from Special Schools.</p>	<p>AF</p> <p>JCJ</p> <p>All</p>
7	<p>Primary and Secondary School budget consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karen Stone (Finance Business Partner) presented the results from the School Budget Consultation – Item 7a, Item 7b, Item 7c, Item 7d, Item 7e. The Forum was asked whether they supported continuing with a Falling Roll Fund and whether they wanted to supplement that fund with an additional top slice from primary and secondary school budgets. The results of the consultation showed 158 schools agreed with the Falling Rolls Fund, 41 did not and 7 schools responded don't know. In addition, 179 schools agreed that this should not be supplemented with an additional top slice, 12 schools disagreed and 16 responded don't know. The Forum agreed to continue with the Falling Roll Fund without an additional top slice, and so will be financed by the DFE funding allocation only. The Forum was asked whether they were in agreement with continuing with a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. They were also asked whether they supported the principle of transferring a higher amount in earlier years to pay less in later years; the overall amount transferred being the same. The results of the consultation showed 170 schools out of 107 responses agreed with the transfer to the High Needs Block, 163 of those schools agreed with the 1.2% transfer and 161 schools did not agree with the transfer of 1.5%. The Forum agreed with the transfer to the High Needs Block of 1.2% transfer and did not agree the 1.5% transfer. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forum were asked whether they support the principle of mirroring the National Funding Formula except the Minimum Per Pupil Level (MPPL) which is set at 0.5% less than the NFF or whether they support the principle of mirroring the NFF except the MPPL which is set at 0.9% less than the NFF. The results of the consultation showed 84 schools supported the principle of MPPL being set at 0.5% less than the NFF and 123 schools supported the principle of setting the MPPL at 0.9% less than the NFF. The Forum agreed with the principle of mirroring the NFF except the MPPL which is set at 0.9%. Karen Stone summarised the results of the consultation in relation to Notional SEN and explained that this will be discussed in more detail at the High Needs Subgroup before being brought back to the Funding Forum in January. 	
8	<p>Pay Bargaining Update Simon Pleace and Louise Gavin explained that KCC is currently in the process of going through the pay bargaining process with Trade Unions. One of the areas negotiating on is matching or exceeding the National Living Wage, which would be a significant increase on the bottom of pay scales. Once further information on amounts known, will feedback to all schools through the schools e-bulletin.</p>	
9	<p>KCC's Pay Strategy Simon Pleace and Louise Gavin explained the Pay Strategy is about strategy for past 2024/25. This involves looking at options for moving through the pay scales and other options for rewarding staff.</p>	
10	<p>Review of Services provided to Schools update including Maintenance Threshold Consultation feedback Ian Watts (Area Education Officer North) summarised his paper on feedback from the Maintenance Threshold Consultation - link. The LA maintained schools members were asked for agree on the changes to the thresholds, following a vote members voted against the changes. Karen Stone said that the Council will need to discuss next steps following that decision. Action – to be brought back to the next meeting of the Funding Forum to update the group.</p>	IW
11	<p>Summary minutes circulation – agreement Jody Catterall-James (Schools, High Needs and Early Years Manager) explained that the summary minutes were circulated after the previous meeting with agreement from the Chair. The Forum were asked if they agreed the principle of circulating a summary following every meeting. The Forum agreed this.</p>	
12	<p>Disapplications Jody Catterall-James (Schools, High Needs and Early Years Manager) discussed one disapplication relating to Rentals – Item 12a, Item 12b. Action – To review PRU rental allocation with DfE. The Forum agreed this proposal.</p>	KS / JCJ
13	<p>Early years update, Teachers' Pay Additional Grant and DAF Emporium Karen Stone (Finance Business Partner) gave an Early Years update. Jody Catterall-James (Schools, High Needs and Early Years Manager) DAF Emporium - link. Question asked about additional information on current numbers of subscriptions. Decision was deferred until further information provided. Jody Catterall-James gave an update on the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant - link. The Forum agreed to the rate of 5 pence per hour on the QTS.</p>	
	<p>AOB</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A school on the Isle of Sheppey is closing and is planned to reopen as two new secondary schools. An email will be sent to Forum members with further details and a request for agreement. Attendance at meetings raised as a concern by the Chair. It was also noted that it may be helpful for the Forum to have a Special School deputy rep. <p>Action – to bring a paper back to January meeting on membership and attendance.</p>	KS