

**DRAFT MINUTES
MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS' FUNDING FORUM (SFF)**

10:15 – 12:45, 14 October 2021

Virtual Teams Meeting

Present: John Dennis (Chairperson), Mark Tomkins (Vice Chairperson), Michael Powis, Kate Le Page, Jenny Ashley-Jones, David Stanley, Neerasha Singh, Mark Seymour, Hayley King, Steve Avis, Richard Rule, David Gleed, Ben Cooper, Phil Sayer, Sue Beauchamp, Tracey McCartney.

Shellina Prendergast (Cabinet Member), Sue Chandler (Cabinet Member), Christine McInnes (Director of Education), Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director), Karen Stone (Business Partner), Chris Scott (Schools, High Needs & Early Years Manager), Robin Goldsmith (Clerk).

Guest: Stuart Collins (Director of Integrated Children's Services)

Apologies: David Anderson, Céranne Litton, Sarah Beaney, David Meades, David Whitehead, Annabel Lilley, Emma Bradshaw.

1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the following three new members to the Schools' Funding Forum:</p> <p>Sue Chandler – Cabinet Member Neerasha Singh – Headteacher Northfleet Nursery School representing Maintained Nursery Steve Avis – Chief Financial Officer Leigh Academies Trust representing Special School Academy</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes and matters arising from the SFF meetings held on the 11th of June:</p> <p>Previous meeting Annabel Lilley raised concerns that an EHCP no longer indicates the primary need of a child and has a concern about how this will work with the Dynamic Purchasing System tool. John Dennis asked for confirmation if this is still true. Karen Stone mentioned that there is no longer a tick to say the primary need however the need should be clear in the body of the report. Karen will check with SEN if this is the case as no representative from SEN is present at the meeting. Matt Dunkley mentioned that the form was redesigned to try not to shoehorn a child into a category before an assessment had taken place.</p> <p>John Dennis asked for an update on the Forum Membership and recent Elections. Robin Goldsmith mention that John was successful in retaining his Academy seat and there are currently three more posts that are either vacant or members coming to the end of their three-year term. This election process will</p>	Karen Stone

	<p>begin week commencing 18th October. An email will go out before the next meeting to elect the Chair and Vicechair of the Forum.</p> <p>Notional SEN was agreed to return to this meeting. Karen Stone said this piece of work is being taken up as part of the wider High Needs review and there is not a separate item for this today.</p>	
3.	<p>PRU's</p> <p>Stuart Collins gave a verbal update on this item.</p> <p>Stuart has been approached by an Academy which would like to become its own PRU and therefore take a proportion of the funding away from the PRU where the school is located. This would make the PRU unviable in its current form. Stuart has spoken to the headteachers of the other schools who would be affected and they all thought the affected PRU had made significant progress and is now a strong setting since the new headteacher had taken over. It is now an important resource. Stuart wanted to hear the Forums thoughts and views on this subject.</p> <p>Mike Powis said that as a matter of principle if one school opted out the whole system would fall apart and he could not support the proposal.</p> <p>Sue Beauchamp agreed with Mike Powis and when this was originally setup it was an area approach and what will work best for that area.</p> <p>Hayley King said that taking the funding out of that PRU would that leave the other schools in the area high and dry and this cannot be an acceptable situation.</p> <p>The Funding Forum agreed its view was against the Academy creating its own PRU, and would like to emphasise the fact this is an area resource and if <u>the area</u> would like to change the arrangement, then the Forum would be happy to offer its advice on any proposal.</p>	
4.	<p>High Needs / Deficit Recovery Plan</p> <p>Karen Stone made a presentation. It showed the following information:</p> <p>High Needs Block Forecast Update DSG In-Year Position Impact on Related Council Budgets</p> <p>National Comparators DSG Deficit EHCPs 0-25 year olds EHCPs 0-19 year olds EHCP Placements in Mainstream, SRPs and Special & Independent</p>	

<p>DSG Deficit Recovery Plan: Background Information DFE & MHCLG Guidance: DSG Deficits DFE Guidance: Safety Valve Agreements The Schools' Funding Forum Role Predictive Modelling: Current Trend A Summary of Actions Being Taken High Needs Funding Formula CATIE principles New inclusion commissioned services High Needs Funding Review</p> <p>Other Background Documents: For Information Total Cost of High Need Placements & Top Up Funding Total Number of High Need Placements & Top Up Funding Average Cost of High Need Placements & Top Up Funding Benchmarking Summary</p> <p>Christine McInnes mentioned there will be further discussions on this at the next forum meeting and KCC are particularly interested in the forum's views and their colleagues' views regarding the information in slides 7 to 12 which demonstrate how Kent is different to other authorities. We need to be moving forward as partners with schools as one organisation and share our expertise and experiences. Christine is happy to receive emails on the views of Forum members and feedback to this group is also welcome.</p> <p>Karen Stone mentioned that other authorities have setup a High Needs subgroup and would this interest the Forum. John Dennis noticed a lot of agreement amongst the members and suggested between now and the next Forum meeting we should construct a suitable subgroup to propose to the forum.</p> <p>Matt Dunkley requested that an extra slide be put in with the Predictive Modelling Current Trend to show the percentage of children in Kent with an EHCP.</p> <p>Steve Avis mentioned that the numbers are scary and wondered how much pressure the authority is under to remove the in-year deficit figure. He thought the accumulative deficit must also have an effect on KCC's cashflow. Matt Dunkley responded that the estimated countries deficit is around £2.3bn although the government will not confirm this. At the moment this debt is not on the Council's accounts its sits within the DSG budget and only can be paid back by DSG funding. In 2023 the accounting rules will change and this debt will form part of the Council's accounts and will start to affect things like borrowing. The rules around the funding make it extremely hard to pay back the deficit. For example, if you top slice the budget by reducing the AWPU then this will trigger the Minimum per Pupil Funding and the Minimum Funding Guarantee. The SEN review that started in 2019 is still not published and this makes us believe that the DFE are not certain what to do. At the moment we are not under immediate pressure as the DFE has not contacted us yet for the reason that although our deficit is large but there are other councils in a worse state when considering the deficit as a percentage of funding. At some point they will ask us for a plan but until the reforms of 2014 are themselves reformed, we are going to struggle to tackle to pay back the deficit.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>Karen Stone / John Dennis</p> <p>Karen Stone</p>
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	<p>Sue Chandler mentioned that both numbers impact and the wider impact of legislation is one of the highest priority risks on the risk register of the council.</p> <p>Kate Le Page wondered if we have a grip on why our authority is going up in numbers (as demonstrated on the graphs) more than other authorities and it is urgent to find out why.</p> <p>Christine McInnes we will keep lobbying for more funding however there are things we can do in the meantime and an important one was trying to stop the amount of funding that goes to the private sector.</p> <p>David Stanley reminded the Forum that one of the things that came out of the Ofsted inspection was marketing our own provision and he had not seen anything today to suggest this is changing. Matt Dunkley thought the Local Offer has been revised. Indeed, the parent facing tool is devised to encourage parents to use our mainstream schools.</p> <p>Sue Beauchamp the Local offer is clearer however in other authorities you are where you need to be within just three clicks. Kent could still improve their website further.</p>	
5.	<p>2022/23 Budget update/consultation</p> <p>Karen Stone presented a paper with short accompanying presentation.</p> <p>The paper shared the Council’s response to the recent DFE consultation on the future of school’s funding and outlined the principles of the 2022-23 Budget proposals.</p> <p>The presentation showed the following information:</p> <p>School Budget Update 2021-22 Schools Budgets: Future Funding Consultation Schools Budgets 2022-23: Key Changes Schools Budgets 2022-23: Consultation Requirements for LFF Schools Budgets 2021-22: continuing with Local Factors Schools Budgets 2022-23: moving to full NFF</p> <p>John Dennis asked the difference between Table 1 and Table 2 where schools below 105 pupils will receive an increase above 10% on the National Funding Formula and the eight that will drop out if we apply our local factors. Karen Stone these eight schools will be contributing towards the 1% transfer to the High Needs block.</p> <p>The Forum supported the Consultation.</p>	
6.	<p>High Weald Academy</p> <p>Chris Scott presented a paper.</p>	

The report sought agreement from the Schools' Funding Forum on the proposed approach to High Weald Academy in the 2022/23 formula budget and growth policy arising from the DFE intention to close High Weald Academy in the summer of 2022 having closed the Year 10 group at Christmas 2021.

Mark Seymour agreed with all parts except the 2021/22 proposal where he thought there should be some support for those academies taking on a number of students that they had no idea were coming their way. Two trusts were affected in particular, one being The Tenterden Schools Trust (which Mark is a part of) where they have had 44 students registered for the census date which is ok for next year but there is currently no extra funding for the current year. Marks's opinion is that the funding should follow the students and asks the forum to consider additional funding for those students. The second trust is The Futures Trust which Mark understands have taken in 15 students. These are the current position and since the census more students have been in contact.

Steve Avis's main concern was with financial year 2022/23 and the fact that funding will be allocated at the AWPU rate. In the current year High Weald receives £1,753 per pupil for non AWPU pupil funding. Steve was wondering if there is a different way of funding this so the whole GAG funding would be made available.

Sue Beauchamp asked Chris what happens to the PRU funding (Devolved and Delegated) in the 2022/23 budget where there will be one less school in the area.

Hayley King, who works for Future Schools Trust, confirmed there is a growing pressure with additional students joining this year and like Mark Hayley agrees with the future years proposals but thought this financial year needs looking into.

John Dennis was concerned about the closure as the forum agreed for extra funding for Falling Rolls for High Weald. The documents accompanying the closure suggest there would not be an increase in pupils at High Weald whereas the documents on which the Forum supported a Falling Rolls payment suggested they would increase.

Chris Scott responded that the challenge with the current financial year is there is no budget or policy to make any payments from. Chris is happy to take this away for further discussion though the advice from the DFE was they did not see a place for either KCC or them to make payments in 2021/22. The PRU budgets works on KCC financial year and will be allocated a 5/12 budget for High Weald and the other schools in the area will soak up the additional 7/12. The issue will come if the pupils move to a different area so some modelling will be needed. The proposal for using AWPU comes from our Growth Fund policy where we use the AWPU currently for growing schools. Premises factors are not appropriate to transfer but other pupil led factors could be looked into. Regarding the Falling Rolls fund, the Area Educational Officers take a view if the places are needed in the area. This task is not a complete science and it is not always known where places will be needed.

Steve Avis said the challenge with the funding following the pupils is the school is still open and the costs will continue.

	<p>John Dennis asked what would happen to the site. Steve Avis reported the current proposal is that the site will be used as an annex for the Snowfield Special Academy which will create an additional 140 places for a ASD setting.</p> <p>John Dennis suggested we take a view while we continue to discuss the issues regarding 2021/22 which Steve and Mark are keen to be a part of.</p> <p>The Forum endorsed the three recommendations subject to the ongoing discussion from which a paper will be presented at the next forum meeting.</p>	Chris Scott
7.	<p>Early Years & Disability Access Fund (DAF)</p> <p>Karen Stone presented the paper.</p> <p>The paper gave an update on the proposals to consult in the coming months on the deprivation supplement in the Early Years Formula and to consult on the proposal to amend the Disability Access Fund criteria to extend the criteria to fund 2-year-olds.</p> <p>Neerasha Singh welcomed the extended DAF criteria to fund 2-year-olds.</p> <p>Hayley King also thought that extending this funding to 2-year-olds would be beneficial and would like confirmation the criteria would remain the same. Karen Stone said her understanding is this will be the same criteria.</p> <p>The Forum agreed to the proposal for extending DAF funding to 2 years olds and backdating this to September 2021.</p>	
	<p>Next provisional meeting dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 November 2021 – likely to be an all-day meeting, in person, with lunch • 20 January 2021 	