

THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS' FORUM
Draft MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
26 November 2019
Conference Room A, Cumbria House, Carlisle

PRESENT

Jane Faulkner (PVI)
Gerry Garvey (PVI)
Stephen Gilby (North Secondary)
Matthew Hardwick (South Secondary)
Daniel Hinton (Special Schools)
Chris McAree (North Secondary Academy)
Michael Mill (CE Diocese)
David Nattrass (North Primary)
Ty Power (South Secondary Academy)
Jennifer Rowlands (West Secondary – representing Judith Schafer)
Cathy Styles (South Primary)
Ruth Webster (South Primary)
Kris Williams (North Secondary Academy)

Officers in Attendance:

Dan Barton	(AD – Education and Skills)
Marie Barnes	(Senior Adviser – South and Assistant Manager – Learning Improvement)
Susan Milburn	(Group Finance Manager)
Amanda Chew	(Finance Manager)
Nicola Shiels	(Forum Support)

Observers:

Lizzie Templeton, Finance Apprentice

Apologies for Absence

Lisa Balderstone (PRU)
Des Bird (West Secondary Academy)
Louise Donnelly-Stott (Small Schools)
Stephen Holmes (South Secondary Academy)
Matthew Jessop (South Primary)
Jonathan Logan (PRU)
John McAuley (RC Diocese)
Judith Schafer (West Secondary)
Alan Rutter (Teacher's Associations)
Sue Sanderson (Cabinet Member – Schools and Learning)

PART 1: ITEMS LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

In the absence of Alan Rutter, David Natrass chaired the meeting.

Lizzie Templeton, an apprentice with the finance team was attending the meeting as an observer.

It was noted that this would Michael Mill's last meeting as he would be retiring and CE Diocesan Director of Education at Christmas.

1. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was agreed that all items would be considered in the public domain.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this stage.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Subject to a minor amendment, the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 29 October 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. School Funding Consultation Outcome 2020-21

Forum considered a report that provided information on the results of the consultation on changes to schools funding arrangements for 2020-21. Following Schools Forum on 29 October 2019, a consultation had been launched asking schools whether they agreed to implement the NFF in 2020-21 and also on 2 different options for a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in order to assist with the ongoing pressure on the High Needs Block.

The options for a transfer from the Schools Block were:

- Option 1 – apply the NFF in full and transfer any remaining surplus up to 0.5% to the High Needs Block;
- Option 2 – reduction in AWPU values to allow a 0.5% transfer to the High Needs Block.

At the closing date of 20 November 2019, 78 responses had been received from schools, school forum members and CASL representatives. All 78 (100%) had responded in agreement that the national funding formula should be used to allocate funding to schools in Cumbria in 2020-21.

On the question of whether a transfer should be made from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, 41 (58%) were not in favour, 30 (42%) were in favour and 7 provided no response. The last question asked whether the transfer should be on the basis of option 1 or option 2; 40 (54%) favoured option 1, 7 (10%) favoured option 2, 27 (36%) did not agree that there should be a transfer and 4 did not respond.

Schools Forum was asked to consider the results of the consultation and to make a recommendation to Cabinet regarding whether the national funding formula should be used to allocate funding to schools in Cumbria from April 2020 and which of the options for a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block should be applied. Depending which option was recommended, Schools Forum was also asked to consider an in principle agreement of the treatment that the LA would apply if it arose that there was a surplus or shortfall in Schools Block balance to transfer to the High Needs Block once the final allocations for 2020-21 had been confirmed.

Forum discussed the responses to the consultation; there appeared to be some lack of understanding about the process and it was suggested that a communication should be issued to schools providing a narrative to the Schools Forum recommendation to Cabinet.

Schools Forum recommended to Cabinet that the national funding formula should be implemented in Cumbria in full in 2020-21, impacting maintained schools from April 2020 and academies from September 2020 with any residual balance remaining to transfer to the High Needs Block up to a maximum of 0.5%.

The principle that would be applied was that if the surplus was less than 0.5% it would be transferred in full. If the surplus was greater than 0.5%, only 0.5% would be transferred to the High Needs Block with the remaining balance above 0.5% being retained in the Schools Block; Schools Forum would be asked to consider further at their meeting in January.

5. **De-Delegation 2020-21**

De-delegation continued to be an option for maintained schools in 2020-21. Funding of de-delegated services was allocated through the Schools Block but could be de-delegated for maintained primary and secondary schools with Schools Forum approval. Indicative budget figures were provided for 2020-21 which anticipated no significant change from 2019-20, however, there would be a small increase in insurance relating to rising liability costs.

The maintained schools representatives recommended that the following services should be de-delegated for 2020-21:

De-Delegated Service	Primary	Secondary
Contingencies	Yes	Yes
Insurance	Yes	Yes
Staff Costs	Yes	Yes
Library Services	Yes	No

DfE had recently consulted on extending the risk protection arrangement for academy trusts to local authority maintained schools. The consultation closed on 4 November 2019 and outcomes were awaited. If appropriate, this issue would be brought back to a future meeting of the Forum.

6. Cumbria Schools Forum – Membership

Schools Forums must have schools members, non-schools members and academy members if there was at least one academy in the local authority area. The balance between primary, secondary and academy members should be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category.

Where a local authority maintained one or more special school the schools forum must have at least one schools member from that sector. The same applied to nursery schools and pupil referral units (PRUs). In addition, there must be one member for special academies and alternative provision academies, including free schools, if such existed in the local authority area.

As schools converted to academy status the school member representation on the Schools Forum should periodically be reviewed in terms of proportionality. A report was presented that set out a review of school member representation on the Forum based on pupil numbers as reported in the May 2019 census update.

Currently, the Schools Forum was made up of 23 school members (10 maintained primary, 3 maintained secondary, 7 academy (6 secondary and 1 primary), 1 special, 1 nursery and 1 PRU), 6 non-school members and the lead member for Schools & Learning.

Based on pupil numbers from the May 2019 census update, and to maintain a membership that was broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category it was proposed that from 1 January 2020 there should be 12 maintained school representatives, rather than the current 13 and 8 academy representatives, rather than the current 7. It was also proposed that the number of school constituencies should increase from 23 to 24 to include a representative of special academies.

Constituencies within each category have been based on a geographical split which aimed to ensure that each area of the county (north, west and south) had a similar number of representatives on the Schools Forum. There were 9 maintained primary and 3 maintained secondary constituencies and 6 secondary academy constituencies, all based on the geographical split, together with a small schools constituency (maintained) and a countywide primary academy constituency. To maintain this type of geographical split, the maintained small schools constituency could be incorporated into the 12 maintained school constituencies (9 primary and 3 secondary). To maintain a proportionate split of primary and secondary academy constituencies, six secondary academy constituencies (north, west and south) could continue and the countywide primary academy constituencies could increase from 1 to 2.

Alternatively, representation could be simplified to a proportionate split between maintained schools and academies and between phases – primary and secondary. The simplified option may make it easier to recruit new members to any vacancies that arise; however, it could result in some areas or phases having more representation than others.

Representation of special schools, nursery schools and PRUs would remain unchanged but as two of the five special schools in Cumbria now had academy status and the Cumbria Academy for Autism had recently opened, there should also be a special academy representative on the Forum.

It was also noted that the Schools Forum had two established working groups and that each member of the full Forum was expected to contribute to at least one of the groups; some were members of both working groups. Regular attendance at meetings was important in ensuring that all schools and constituencies were properly represented and members were reminded that they should represent the views of their constituency as a whole. An update on attendance could be reported to Forum annually and could be included as part of the annual membership update report.

There were a number of 'vacant' constituencies, however, as there was a proposal to make adjustments to maintain the proportionate balance of representation on Schools Forum, these vacancies would be addressed after this meeting.

The Schools Forum

- i) noted that the proportionate split between maintained school representatives and academy representatives had changed and recommended that membership of the Forum should be adjusted in line with paragraphs 4.11(i) and 4.13(i) in the report;
- ii) recommended that the number of school member/constituencies should increase from 23 to 24 to include a representative of special academies; and
- iii) agreed that membership of the Forum should be reviewed again in relation to proportionality during the autumn term 2020. The next report would include an update on attendance at meetings.

7. CCC Budget Consultation 2020-21

The County Council had launched its annual budget consultation on 14 November 2019. Part of the usual planning ensured that Schools Forum were made aware of the consultation in order that they could respond as appropriate.

A link to the consultation had been circulated to all Schools Forum members with the agenda. Schools Forum noted that the annual consultation on the CCC budget for 2020-21 was ongoing and that responses could be submitted by the closing date of 6 January 2020.

8. Dates of Next and Future Meetings

- i) The next meeting of the Schools Forum would be held on Friday, 10 January 2020. The meeting would begin at 9.30am and would be held in Conference Room A, Cumbria House, Carlisle.
(Final allocations for 2020-21 should be available before the Christmas break but if receipt of these was delayed it might be necessary to change the date of the January meeting).
- ii) Proposed Meeting Dates 2020 – a list of dates for meetings of the full Forum and the two working groups had been circulated for comment. It was proposed that the working groups meet on 13 May; this date was during SATs week for primary schools so an alternative date would be identified and a revised list of dates would then be circulated. William Howard School and Ullswater Community College offered to host a meeting during 2020.