

**Annex B: Extract of Surrey Schools Forum
Draft Minutes of Meeting
Tuesday 12 January 2021 1.00pm Virtual Meeting on
TEAMS (due to COVID 19)**

For Chair/member approval

Present

Chair

Rhona Barnfield	Howard of Effingham School (academy member)
Joint Vice Chairs	
Kate Keane (item 5pt-8)	Ewell Grove Infant and Nursery School (Primary head)
Justin Price	Freemantles School Special school head
Other school and academy members:	
Donna Harwood-Duffy	Dorking nursery Maintained nursery head
Susan Chrysanthou	Furzefield Primary Primary Head
Clare McConnell	Bisley CE Primary Primary Head
Zoe Johnson-Walker	The Winston Churchill School Secondary head
David Euridge	Reigate Valley/Wey Valley PRUs PRU member
Geoffrey Hackett	Burpham Primary Primary governor
Eric Peacock	Thorpe C of E Primary Primary governor
Fred Greaves	Oakwood School Secondary governor
Lisa Kent	Manor Mead and Walton Leigh Schools (special governor)
Matthew Armstrong-Harris	Rodborough Academy member
Sir Andrew Carter	South Farnham Primary Academy member
Ben Bartlett	HInchley Wood School Academy member (subst)
Kate Carriett	George Abbot School Academy member
Elaine Cooper	SWAN academy trust Academy member
Gavin Dutton	Pirbright School Academy member
Jo Hastings	Ottershaw Infant and Junior Schools (Academy member)
Paul Kinder	Warlingham School Academy member
Nicky Mann	Wallace Fields Infant Academy member
Neil Miller	Bramley Oak Academy Special academy member
Non school members	
Sue Lewis	Private, voluntary & independent nursery providers
Benedicte Symcox	Family Voice Surrey
Joe Dunne	RC Diocese of Arundel and Brighton
Jonathan Gambier	Guildford Diocese (C of E)
Tamsin Honeybourne	Teaching union member of Education Joint Committee (EJC)
Nick Trier	Teaching union member of Education Joint Committee
Christine Ricketts	Post 16 providers

Local Authority Officers

Liz Mills (LM)	Director–Education, Lifelong Learning & Culture
Mary Burguières (MB)	Assistant Director (Systems and Transformation)
Eamonn Gilbert (EG)	Assistant Director (Commissioning)
Jane Winterbone (JW)	Assistant Director (Education)
Daniel Peattie (DP)	Strategic Finance Business Partner (CFLC)
Louise Lawson (LL)	Deputy Strategic Finance Business Partner (ELLC)
David Green (DG)	Senior Finance Business Partner (Schools Funding)

5 Outcome of additional SEN funding consultation

LM recalled that the LA had consulted between 20 November-17 December on ceasing the additional, discretionary, SEN funding paid to some schools towards the cost of the first £6000 per EHCP, from April 2021, and on whether transitional arrangements would be required if the funding were ceased. The results of that consultation, plus the views of Family Voice on the proposals, were now being shared with Schools Forum and the views of the Forum would be taken into account when making the final decision. That decision would not be made in this meeting, but would need to be taken before 21 January. The council had also received a petition against the proposal, signed by over 100 people.

Surrey has provided discretionary funding for several years to support schools for which meeting the cost of the first £6000 per EHCP was particularly onerous. DfE expects the basis of such funding to be “simple, transparent, consistent and fair”. In 2020/21 £1.0m was distributed to 69 schools of which 67 were primary. The paper set out the funding mechanism. For 60 out of 67 schools the funding was less than 3% of their budgets (averaging £10,900) and for 32/67 schools it was less than 1% (averaging £4000). The amounts received by the secondary schools were each less than 1% of their budgets.

Total high needs block expenditure in 2020/21 was projected at £193m, an overspend of £33m against grant funding, and the council was required to balance high needs costs against available funding. The paper set out the results of the consultation and the key themes expressed in the responses. The Forum needed to consider whether this funding stream was the best use of resources for children.

MB asked the Forum to consider whether the current funding distribution met the DfE criteria of being simple, transparent, consistent and fair. Schools Forum should also be mindful of the council and schools duty to balance High Needs Block spend within the available grant. The consultation had asked whether there was a need for transitional arrangements if the funding were to be withdrawn and the Forum was being asked whether a phased withdrawal would be appropriate and, if so, what transitional arrangements might be appropriate.

The schools receiving the most additional SEN funding received up to £61,000 (7% of budget).

Concerns had been expressed as to how the funding was distributed and over the impact of pay awards on the adequacy of SEN funding.

LM confirmed that the proposal was to cease the funding (albeit with possible transitional arrangements) rather than to change the method of distribution. However, if the Forum wanted to do something else, that view would be taken into account.

One member expressed surprise that the equalities impact assessment had suggested that the proposals would not disproportionately affect schools with high incidence of SEN. Members also suggested that the paper had not demonstrated whether the additional funding had had an impact on outcomes

LM advised that data on pupil impact of the funding was not held, and that the LA hadn't asked for evidence of outcomes in the consultation but that a number of schools had contacted her to express concern at the impact of the proposals on their overall funding and their reliance on this additional funding stream. The funding was paid in arrears (based on previous year data) and thus there was no direct link between funding and current activity, although such a link might be desirable. LM noted concerns about the lagged basis of the funding. Another member noted that he had had representations from many local heads about the impact of the proposals, While the lagged basis of funding had been criticised, at least colleagues could anticipate the funding and it made a difference.

In the absence of the additional funding, schools would need to fund £6000 towards every EHCP (even when that exceeded their level 2 notional SEN budget) and this was a real additional cost. Members also noted that some schools, particularly infant schools, faced appreciable costs of providing support to children while EHCPs were secured. A loss of £10,000 (as quoted above) could mean a significant loss of support to children needing an EHCP who did not yet have one

The Chair noted that the funding was not attached to individual children but was based on a threshold.

LM suggested that the move towards NFF had meant more emphasis on individual funding for SEN, DG commented that the LA could define the notional SEN budget within the NFF, but that the NFF made it more difficult to vary the amount of additional needs funding which went into schools, in order to meet local priorities.

The Family Voice rep noted that there had been a vast response from families to the consultation. Surrey families were well informed, but it had been difficult to determine whether the consultation had been aimed at the public or at schools and it had assumed a level of knowledge which the public didn't have. It was important for a consultation in the public domain to give enough information to allow members of the public to give an informed response Parents of SEN children were deeply invested in the system and their lack of understanding of the consultation had caused distress to a group of parents who were already struggling. She suggested that it was difficult to see how the proposals would make schools more inclusive. If a school used all of its notional SEN funding to support children with EHCPs, children with lower levels of SEN would lose out. Parents had not been able to see clearly how the proposals would affect children with EHCPs and children at SEN support. She also noted that schools had gone above and beyond duty to support children with SEN in home learning and should not be burdened with additional administration at this time to secure funding. She saw a need for better background information for a consultation which was in the public domain.

The Chair asked that these points be taken into account in the analysis of the consultation responses.

MB recognised that, although the consultation had been presented as a schools funding consultation, it had actually attracted considerable public interest and that had been welcomed.

The council had made significant investment in promoting inclusion, eg graduated response, learners Single Point of Access,

One member suggested that more parents were seeking EHCPs because they believed, or had been told by schools, that it was the only way to secure additional support. Some schools were said to believe that parental requests for EHCPs were more likely to be successful than school requests, although the process was actually the same. LM noted that the vast bulk of EHCP requests came from schools, but that in the summer term there had been a notable increase in parental requests.

The Chair summarised that there was no right answer to the proposals and that the current distribution mechanism did not meet the DfE criteria.

LM would now consider all of the responses and comments and would make a decision in consultation with the lead Cabinet member, before 21 January. That deadline was determined by the need to report proposed mainstream budget arrangements for 2021/22 to DfE by that date. Options could include doing nothing. The decision would be published and linked back to the original consultation. **Action for LM**

LM sought the Forum's views on the speed and timeliness of any change. The consultation responses had suggested that one term's transitional funding was not seen as enough.

Members suggested that any change should recognise that schools set staffing based on academic years., and that there should be no change for the forthcoming year. However, the current method was not fit for purpose despite being reviewed many times.