

Schools Forum

Held on **Thursday 18th March 2021 at 1.30pm** via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Meeting opened: 1.30pm

Members Present:

E.Ellis	Primary Representative
G.Hayes	Primary Representative
C.Williams	Primary Representative
J.Hassan	Primary Representative
T.Mingaud-Cunningham	Primary Governor
A.Birchall	Secondary Representative
H.Phillips	Secondary Representative
A.Hardy	Secondary Governor
E.Loftus	Special Schools Representative
M.Atkins	Union Representative
A.Isherwood	PRU Representative
R.Lewis	Nursery School Representative
P.McGhee	16-19yrs

Observers:

Cllr J Bullen	Authorised Observer
M.Wilkinson	Authorised Observer
K.Winnard	Authorised Observer

In Attendance:

C.Tarring	Wigan Council – SEND
A.Meehan	Wigan Council – Finance
J.McDonald	Wigan Council - Finance
C.Pealing	Wigan Council – Assistant Director Education
M.Larkin	Governor Services – Senior Professional Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from: F.Quinlivan, K Parkin and A.McGlown

2. AGREEMENT OF ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS TO BE ADDED TO THE AGENDA

The following items were accepted for inclusion under any other business:

- Membership of the Schools Forum
- TESS Services charge

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES

It was agreed: the minutes from the forum meeting held on **21st January 2021** be approved as a true and correct record.

There were no matters arising.

4. SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

A report providing updates to the Scheme for Financing Schools had been circulated in advance of the meeting. It was highlighted:

- This was a statutory document which sets out the the financial relationship between the local authority and the maintained schools which it funds
- Approval of any changes is the responsibility of the maintained school members of the Forum
- Key changes to the scheme had been summarised in the report

A question was raised about the changes and if they had been made in line with national changes; it was explained changes had been made to reflect both national and local policy changes.

A question was raised about leasing arrangements and if schools had the flexibility to chose companies from which they lease equipment; it was explained that the LA had entered into an agreement with a leasing partner. Schools can select suppliers and submit to the leasing partner for approval – it is the responsibility of the LA to sign the lease agreements.

It was agreed: Forum members representing maintained schools agreed to the proposed revised Scheme for Financing Schools.

5. HIGH NEEDS NFF CONSULTATION

A report providing information on the DfE's consultation on changes to the High Needs NFF. It was highlighted:

- On 10th February, the DfE launched a 6-week consultation on some proposed minor changes to the High Needs National Funding Formula (NFF)
- The consultation was seeking views on proposed changes to two specific factors of the formula, with changes being implemented in 2022-23
- The first factor related to the historic spend factor. The consultation proposes to use actual expenditure from 2017-18 going forward as a means of calculating the lump sum under this factor, in place of the planned expenditure from 2017-18. It is felt that this would provide a better representation of past spending levels
- Wigan would see a small increase in the value of funding received through this factor
- The overall proportion of funding allocated through the historic spend factor had reduced from 44% in 2018-19 to 34% in 2021-22. The DfE were also seeking views on whether it would be appropriate to increase the proportion of funding through this factor. One example provided would be to provide 60% of the historic spend baseline, rather than the current 50%.

- There was a recognition that using historic spend was not an ideal solution for reflecting local issues in funding arrangements. The DfE were seeking initial views on the extent to which the funding formula should reflect local demand for and pattern of SEND and AP provision and the factors that may be used for this.
- Any such changes would likely to come into effect from 2023-24.
- The second factor related to low attainment proxy. The formula uses low attainment at the end of key stages 2 and 4 as two of the group of proxy indicators of SEND in the national funding formula. The formula calculation uses attainment data for pupils living in each local authority area, from the most recent 5 years of key stage 2 tests and GCSE exams. For the 2022-23 funding formula the DfE would not have 2020 key stage 2 test data, or GCSE exam results that would be appropriate to use for this purpose, because of the disruption caused by the pandemic.
- In view of the absence of this data the DfE proposed to update the series using 5 years' data from 2016, and to substitute the most recent 2019 data in place of forum members to note the information in relation to the consultation and to provide feedback on the proposals.the missing 2020 attainment data. The consultation was seeking views on this proposal.

It was agreed: Forum members noted the information in relation to the consultation

6. **3 YEAR SCHOOL BUDGETS**

A report providing the outcomes of the three-year budget exercise and the forecasted deficits of schools over the longer term had been circulated in advance of the meeting. It was highlighted:

- Explanation of the assumptions made when producing longer term budgets had been included in the report
- 91 out of 99 schools across the borough made returns in relation to 3-year budgets
- In 2020/21 6 schools had set a deficit budget, a number of these schools had managed to address their deficit in year
- It was anticipated that there would be further schools entering a deficit position next year; work would continue closely with these schools
- Falling rolls in primary schools across the borough had been identified and Reception intakes for a number of schools had been significantly below their PAN last year.
- Projections from the School Organisation team showed that this was a trend which was likely to continue over the next few years which could create further financial pressures in the primary sector in the coming years.

It was agreed: Forum noted the information within the report and the future forecasted deficits.

7. **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

7.1 **MEMBERSHIP OF SCHOOLS FORUM**

Schools forum members were reminded of the importance of sharing information with the colleagues they represent within their consortia/locality. Discussion took place around:

- Additional members – such as a Primary Academies Representative – the Chair undertook to review the allocation of spaces in proportion to maintained -v-academy pupil numbers in each sector and report back to the next meeting of Forum.
- A reliance on colleagues receiving the information to open and read it to ensure they had sight of relevant information around important discussions and decisions taken by Schools Forum

A question was raised about the agenda and information documents being shared on a public forum. The Clerk confirmed that the agenda, supporting papers and minutes of schools forum meetings were shared on the Wigan Council schools forum webpage.

Action: Clerk to contact Forum Members not in attendance to highlight this item. Chair to review representation of each sector.

7.2 TESS Services Charge

It was reported, work continue to be carried out to gain a better understanding of TESS service charges. Previous consideration of the charges had been given at earlier meetings - no conclusion had been reached.

Concern was raised as to the perception of overcharging; it was highlighted that no profit was made, and additional monies were used to reduce the high needs block spend in this area.

A nominal charge of £2,500 was proposed for Academies – to be paid next term. Further work would be carried out to ensure reasonable charges were proposed which would be fair and equitable, for the next academic year and that detailed explanation could be provided in relation to charges for both Academies and maintained schools.

Discussion took place.

It was agreed:

- (1) the nominal charge of £2,500 be paid by Academies during the summer term in support of the TESS services provided throughout the 2020-21 academic year
- (2) further work to be carried out and proposals for the next academic year to be brought back to Forum on 24th June 2021

ACTION: Agenda item for Schools Forum Meeting on 24th June 2021

8. FUTURE MEETING DATES

13th May 2021 - all meetings will commence at 1.30pm

24th June 2021

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 2.15pm

Background documents (available for public inspection):

Appendices to the circulated briefing reports disclose important facts on which the reports are based and were relied upon in preparing the reports. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact the Forum Clerk

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