

**MEETING OF WIGAN SCHOOLS FORUM  
HELD ON THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2022 AT 1.30PM  
VIA MS TEAMS DIGITAL PLATFORM**

**MINUTES**

**Quorum: 40% (7) School/Non-School Members**

**SCHOOLS MEMBERS**

**PRESENT**

Rachel Lewis	Nursery Headteacher
Gary Hayes	Primary Headteacher
Julie Hassan	Primary Headteacher
Cathie Williams	Primary Headteacher – nominated substitute
Emily Ellis	Primary Headteacher ( <i>joined by phone</i> )
Alan Birchall	Secondary Headteacher
Adrian Hardy	Secondary Governor/Chair

**NON SCHOOL MEMBERS**

**PRESENT**

Peter McGhee	16-19 Partnership
--------------	-------------------

**NOMINATED OBSERVERS**

**PRESENT**

Mike Wilkinson	Wigan NASUWT ( <i>until 2pm</i> )
----------------	-----------------------------------

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mark Rotheram	LA Finance – Strategic Finance Manager
Anthony Meehan	LA Finance – Group Finance Manager (Schools)
Cath Pealing	LA Education – Assistant Director
Marie Collier	Wigan Governor Services Clerk

**1. APOLOGIES AND CONSIDERATION OF CONSENT TO ABSENCE**

Apologies were **received** and **accepted** for the following Members/Observers:

- Wendy Hughes – Primary Headteacher (nominated substitute attended)
- Tracy Mingaud-Cunningham – Primary Governor
- Louise Curran – Special School Headteacher
- Sue Morris – PVI Nursery Representative
- Cllr Jenny Bullen – Cabinet Member for CYP
- Karen Parkin – NEU
- Max Atkins – Teacher Representative

**2. URGENT/STRATEGIC ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED UNDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of AOB requested for consideration.

**3. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes from the Schools Forum meeting held on **20<sup>th</sup> January 2022** were **approved** as a correct record and **publication** was authorised.

## **Matters Arising**

**Question:** Have we received confirmation of the Supplementary Grant?

**Answer:** Yes, it will be received at the end of this term to cover 5/12ths from April onwards, then a further instalment of 7/12ths.

**Question:** Would that leave 5/12ths of academies' next financial year uncovered?

**Answer:** Understanding is that academies will receive the 5/12ths as a continuation of grant.

**Question:** Where is the process up to with regards to the appointment to the two-year SEND Service Manager fixed-term post?

**Answer:** We are awaiting a DBS check. The individual, who is joining us from a school, will hopefully be starting in role after the half term break following receipt of her formal offer letter.

## **4. DSG OUTTURN 2021/22 AND SCHOOL BALANCES**

Members **received** the DSG 2021/22 Outturn, plus appendices, which had been circulated in advance. LA Group Finance Manager, Anthony Meehan shared the report on screen and provided a verbal overview.

- The purpose of the report was to update Forum on the financial outturn and consult regarding proposals for the use of Central DSG underspends.
- Appendix 1 – school balances increased by £0.586m in the current financial year (a proportion related to a school which was had academized in-year). Appendix 2 showed position without this school, showing an overall increase in balances of £0.4m for maintained schools. Significant reduction compared to previous year (£6m increase in balances last year) which was considered to be due to closures during Covid.
- Early Years block – underspend of £0.394m.
- High Needs block – overspend comparable to budget of £1.856m (included 1.7m recharge to offset historic deficit). £100,000 in-year overspend. £3.6m cumulative deficit. Appendix 3 provided breakdown in more detail by budget headings.
- Centrally retained DSG – large underspend (growth £0.7m, contingency £0.117m, retained balances £0.720m, couple of other central pots totalling £28,000). To consult with Members on use of underspend.
- Appendix 2 – school level detail.
- School Balances – overall decrease of £724,000 in Primary (considered due to fall in roll numbers), increase of £743,000 in Secondary, increase of £393,000 in Special Schools. Total increase of £412,000 in balances. Average balances included in report. School balances stood at £20.6m as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- Table – showed how schools compared with DfE prudent balance thresholds.
- Three schools reporting overall deficit at year end – totalling £125,000 (increase of one school which had a three-year recovery plan in place).
- Appendix 4 - academy balances as 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 reported (a few sets of accounts had not yet been published on Companies House site).
- Centrally retained DSG overall 1.6m underspend – areas of key risks had been provided as proposals for allocation of underspends. High Needs budgets one proposed area – received notification that growth in funding would not be to same level (potentially 3-5% as opposed to 11-12%). Regular meetings had taken place with High Needs Subgroup to review action

and provide updates. Allocations from underspends would reduce reliance on contributions from Schools block.

- Contingency – de-delegated. One proposal – school likely to academise under Order had significant deficit which would generally remain with LA. Approval sought to offset deficit of school. Remainder to support future requests on Contingency budget. £250,000 of £300,000 Contingency budget committed to-date.
- Other pressures – fall in roll numbers in Primary sector. Could be considered prudent to allocate proportion of underspends to support schools affected.
- Maintained Nursery schools – continuing to see significant pressures due to funding arrangements. Agreed the previous year to support using £100,000. Two maintained nursery schools did report a surplus of £30,000 in-year across both, however, would have seen a cumulative loss of £70,000 across the two nursery schools without support.
- Future growth – previous year’s £500,000 ringfenced funding not yet used. Could be considered prudent to ringfence more to support growth in future years.
- Report set out areas of key risk – Forum Member views on use of underspends also welcomed.

### **Recommendations of report**

- Members to note outturn and level of balances.
- Opportunity for Members to query information presented.
- Members to note information on Centrally retained underspends and agree usage.

**Member comment:** Important to work collaboratively across all phases and need to be mindful of protecting primary colleagues with falling rolls.

**Question:** Are there any suggestions of amounts to be distributed?

**Answer:** There are no specific proposed amounts at this stage. We are seeking agreement today regarding areas of support for use of underspend, the specific values can be applied for proposal at our next meeting once the key areas have been agreed.

**Question:** Do we need to agree a specific amount for the High Needs block today?

**Answer:** £1M from various sources was directed to High Needs last year. £750,000 has already been agreed for this year (£250,000 plus £500,000 from previous underspends).

A proposal was made to contribute a further £750,000 from underspends to High Needs and £117,000 from Contingency to academising school in deficit. Members **agreed in principle**, however, requested presentation of all figures for approval.

**Question:** Does all money need to be spent?

**Answer:** No, it can be kept as Contingency going forward, it does not have to be committed at this stage. Can retain a proportion and make decisions at a future point.

**Member Comment:** Understands pressure on SEN funding but necessary to have a sustainable picture for SEN going forward. Felt that further consideration was required.

A proposal was made for a further £100,000 contribution to the Maintained Nursery sector. Comment was invited from the Forum Nursery Representative. It was suggested that the same amount would be appreciated as the contribution would be preventing the representative’s nursery from going into deficit. There was also an awareness that it would provide stability to confirm a basic staffing structure in the budget for the other maintained nursery school. Members **agreed** £100,000 contribution to maintained nurseries.

**ACTION: LA Group Finance Manager, Anthony Meehan to produce figures including £750,000 to High Needs and other contributions for presentation to the next meeting.**

**Member comment:** Concern that a £1.5M contribution to High Needs becomes a precedent based on a £250,000 only contribution from schools, with the remainder from elsewhere.

LA representatives considered that the allocation would be ringfenced for the following financial year when drop in growth in funding was expected. The High Needs area was still growing at an exponential rate.

Members **noted** the outturn and level of balances.

Members **noted** the information on Centrally retained underspends and **agreed** usage as below:

£100,000 contribution to Maintained Nurseries **agreed**.

£750,000 to High Needs and £117,000 to offset deficit of academising school **agreed in principle** – contribution amounts to be approved on presentation of report at the next meeting.

*Nominated Observer, Mike Wilkison (Wigan NASUWT) left the meeting at 2pm.*

## **5. CENTRAL SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING 2022/23**

Members **received** the Central Funding report, plus appendix, which had been circulated in advance. LA Group Finance Manager, Anthony Meehan shared the report on screen and provided a verbal overview.

- The report was presented to Forum annually.
- Three centrally controlled budgets in relation to retained funds to which schools could submit applications for additional funding; Growth Fund, Disproportionate SEND Fund, Contingency.
- The LA opened the window for schools to submit business cases in February – requests assessed by Finance and Assistant Director with specific criteria to be met (criteria agreed historically by Forum).
- Requests totalling £1.7m had been received - £850,000 had been approved to-date from the three budget areas, with an additional £37,000 ringfenced (awaiting more detail from school to support application). Report contained information which had been included within the anonymised individual submissions.
- Growth Fund £622,000.
- Disproportionate SEND £200,000 - £238,000 committed (overspend from this area of £38,000). Considered necessary to spend above budget due to nature of requests in this area.
- Contingency £300,000
- Open for in-year requests, particularly on Contingency.

**Question:** Would it be sensible to leave balances to allow for any other requests?

**Answer:** Yes. The use of any underspends would be brought back to Forum at year end.

Forum Members **noted** the content of the report.

## **6. PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS CONTRIBUTION**

Members **received** the Permanent Exclusions Contribution report which had been circulated in advance. LA Education Assistant Director, Cath Peeling drew attention to the paper and provided a verbal overview.

- The current Permanent Exclusions Contribution agreement had been reached historically in 2018. Considered important to gain a new agreement as a number of new Headteachers were now in post and there were new Trusts in the LA.
- Proposal – to gain approval for schools who permanently exclude children to contribute £4,000 plus ARPU (in Money to Follow Pupils guidance). £4,000 relates to contribution towards AP.
- Every Wigan Secondary school had issued a permanent exclusion in the current year:
  - One school - issued nine
  - Two schools - issued seven
  - One school - issued six
  - Four schools - issued four
  - All schools had issued at least one - majority had issued two
- Alternative Provision places cost £17,500 (full year/full cost) – also a cost to the LA if there were delays/refusals for AP places.
- Without a contribution, there would be a need to request an increase in the top slice.

#### **Forum comments:**

- Generally supportive of payments.
- Could some Contingency be used to support places for excluded students?
- Secondary school budgets under increased budget pressure – example of significant unforeseen rise in energy costs provided.
- Increased pupil/student needs following the pandemic.
- Important to keep exclusions down and it was considered sensible that schools excluding more should be disincentivised.

#### **LA response:**

- Acknowledged increased pressures and increase in student needs.
- Aware that some schools not following the graduated approach – need to balance to ensure fairness across system.
- Intention to review £4,000 payment every year through the Schools Forum High Needs Subgroup.

Forum **agreed** to continue with the permanent exclusions contribution for the following year - to be reviewed by the High Needs Subgroup annually.

## **7. BRIEFING PAPER - CONSULTATIONS**

Members **received** the May 2022 Consultations Briefing Note which had been circulated in advance. LA Group Finance Manager, Anthony Meehan advised that the paper had been shared for information purposes only to make Forum Members aware of the outcomes of recent consultations.

The Chair invited questions – none were posed.

## **8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of AOB for discussion.

## 9. FUTURE MEETING DATES

- Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 at 11am – **revised date and time** (MS Teams)

The Chair thanked School Forum Members for their attendance and approach in supporting the LA in its endeavours.

*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 Schools Forum Clerk:

[m.collier@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:m.collier@wigan.gov.uk)