

**Meeting of the Schools Forum
Thursday 28th January 2016 at 1.30 p.m.
at Hawkley Hall High School**

Members: A.P. Hardy (Chair) E. Loftus , S. Bruen, F. Quinlivan, D. Winstanley, G. Hayes, H. Phillips, A. McGlown, A Birchall, R. Halford, A. Isherwood, R. Lewis, J. Holland, P. McGhee, V. Birchall and A Wells.

Observers: C. Gore (UNISON) and M. Atkins (NUT)

LA Officers:

K. Rufo - Service Manager
J. McDonald (Strategic Finance Manager)
C. Myers (Group Finance Manager)
L. Lea (HR Business Manager)
F. Gore (Clerk)

1. Appointment of Vice Chair for 2015-16

It was agreed: That this item be deferred.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from V. Birchall, K. Pilkington, T. Warren (members) and Cllr J. Platt (observer).

3. Items for inclusion under AOB

Representation on the Forum

4. Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 8 October 2015: enclosed.

It was agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2015 be approved as a true and correct record subject to an amendment to Minute 8 to show that “many schools in the primary sector wished to move to a funding ratio of 1:1.27” (i.e. not “all schools”)

Matters Arising

School Funding Formula 2016-17 (minute 8 refers)

Reference was made to the discussion and recommendation made at Minute 8 that the ratio of spend in the primary and secondary sectors be 1: 1.29 and that the Portfolio Holder had subsequently agreed a ratio of 1:1.30. Members acknowledged that the final decision rested with the Portfolio Holder and the decision had been made having heard the discussion at the meeting. However representatives were concerned at the way in which that decision had been communicated to schools and the lack of information concerning the rationale and basis for the decision.

Ms Rufo acknowledged the concerns expressed and confirmed that the Director for Children and Families had written to schools to apologise and to assure them that future decisions would be communicated in a more appropriate way.

It was agreed: That information be noted.

5. Schools Funding - Budget Allocation 2016-17:

Mr Myers presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing members of the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) allocation 2016-17 and confirming the approach taken with regard to the submitted funding pro-forma (these were set out in detail at Appendix A to the report).

Due to the increase in pupil numbers Wigan's total DSG Schools Block allocation had increased to £194,921,469, with a total Funding For Schools Block of £194,192,433 after reductions to meet approved centrally retained services.

Appendix B to the report gave the indicative budgets for each school for 2016-17 subject to approval of the pro-forma tool by the DfE.

It was reported that the DfE had re-issued the tool containing the updated information in relation to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and as a consequence some schools would be placed in a new band.

It was also reported that the government had given a commitment to introduce a national funding formula from April 2017 but details of the proposed formula and the consultation process were awaited. When that information was available it was suggested that a Sub-Group of the Forum be convened to assess the impact of the planned changes and agree a response to the planned consultation.

It was noted that the current funding formula deprivation factor reflected a 50:50 split between the IDACI and Free School meals and a member asked how the changed IDACI would impact on that? The detailed impact had yet to be assessed but this could be discussed in detail at the Sub-Group meeting to consider the proposed national funding formula.

A question was asked about the cost of administering the Forum and it was reported that this was a centrally held budget based on past practice and it would be more appropriate to move this cost allocation to the Supplementary Fund.

A question was asked about the proposed changes to the national funding formula recommended by the F40 Group (of which Wigan was a member) and if the proposed changes would disadvantage Wigan? The DfE had not given any information on the likely impact of the proposals but had indicated that any changes would take a number of years to implement. Preliminary figures suggested that Wigan schools would receive a reduced DSG if the current proposals were implemented however the Authority wished to remain in the F40 Group so that it could contribute to the debate.

It was agreed: (1) That the report be accepted and the submission of the funding pro-forma as set out at Appendix A be confirmed.

(2) That following publication of the government's proposals for the introduction of a national funding formula, members of the Forum be invited to attend a Sub-Group meeting to discuss the proposals and its impact; and agree a response to the planned consultation.

(3) That the costs associated with funding the forum be met from the Supplementary Fund.

6. High Needs Block - Budget 2016-17:

Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing members that the Department for Education (DfE) had now issued the 2016-17 DSG allocation for the High Needs Block. The allocation for Wigan had been £26,473,000 compared to £25,938,000 in 2015-16. This included Post 16 funding paid direct to institutions, resourced units and alternative provision in academies.

The increased allocation had been due to an additional £92.5 million of funding which had been distributed across all Local Authorities, using a methodology based on 2 to 19 year old population data. Wigan had been granted an extra £535,000 for 2016-17.

It was reported that this block of funding would be under considerable strain in future years, particularly with regard to Post 16 provision, where a significantly increasing number of students were opting for educational placements, and the high increase in independent school fees. Accordingly a working group had been established of all relevant stakeholders to address this issue.

Reference was made to the High Needs Funding Factors –Alternative Provision and Resourced Provision – and if the number of SEN pupils placed in special schools was increasing and the number in mainstream schools was reducing? It was confirmed that was the case. An explanation was also given on how “top-up” funding was calculated.

A member asked if the LA was in the process of reducing the support services available to schools? It was reported that they were under review.

A member asked what would be the impact on schools of reduced support services and had the LA consulted schools on the proposals? It was reported that a number of services were under review and there was a planned consultation with schools on proposals to provide a more integrated approach to support services in line with “The Deal”. Schools would be consulted shortly.

A member reported that as a consequence of the planned changes a number of staff had been issued with redundancy notices earlier this month in readiness for a move from service provision based on 5 localities to 3 localities.

The Chair emphasised the importance of the LA consulting schools at an early stage so that they could inform the service review process and prepare for any planned changes.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted.

7. Early Years Block - Budget 2016-17:

Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing members that the Department for Education (DfE) had issued the (DSG) allocations for the Early Needs Block 2016-17.

The allocation for Wigan was as follows:

Early Years Funding	2016/17
Unit of Funding	£3,386.94
FTE Numbers	2,961
Pupil Number Funding 3 & 4 years old as per DfE	£10,025,768
Funding for early education places for 2 year olds from lower income households	£2,877,930
Pupil Premium (3 & 4 yrs olds)	£273,525
Total Early Years Block	£13,177,223

It was reported that the following rates would remain the same as for 2015-16:

- the amount per pupil for the early years free entitlement
- the amount per child for disadvantaged two-year-olds
- the amount per pupil for the early years pupil premium.

Each year the Authority conducted a review of rates and there was a recognition of the extra financial pressure on PVI providers in particular. The Forum was asked to consider an uplift for general inflation (1.2% as per the Council's MTFP). This would cost £91,200 and would be met from the Early Years Reserve Account if required dependent on the volatility of numbers.

A representative reminded members that although the rates were higher for maintained provision they had significantly higher costs; also EY provision in the maintained sector faced significant pressures (e.g. increase in the minimum wage) and their budgets would be under strain. It was reported that PVI providers in Wigan received lower funding than the national or regional average.

The table below showed the current rates and central payments.

2016-17 EYSFF Block - Rates / Payments		
Payment	Recipient	£ per Hour
15 Hrs Free Entitlement 3 & 4 year old	Maintained Nursery Schools	4.95
15 Hrs Free Entitlement 3 & 4 year old	Maintained Nursery Classes	3.93
15 Hrs Free Entitlement 3 & 4 year old	PVI's	3.32
15 Hrs Free Entitlement 2 year old	All Sectors	4.90

FSM Supplement	Maintained	2.00
Pupil premium	All Sectors	0.53
Deprivation Supplement	All Sectors	0.33
Other Allocations (top sliced)		£ per annum
Quality Supplement (HT Lump Sum)	Maintained Nursery Schools	130,000.00
Nursery School MFG	Maintained Nursery Schools	46,673
Salaries x 3 posts	Childcare Sufficiency Staffing	105,000.00

Mr McDonald reported that a Sub-Group made up of all relevant stakeholders would review the rates when information became available on a national funding formula, that would include funding for early years (EY) providers.

It was agreed: (1) That the report be accepted and a report on the findings of the Sub-Group established to review future funding EY arrangements be submitted to a future meeting of the Forum

(2) That the rates for PVI providers be increased by 1.2%; and all other rates remain as at 2015-16.

8. Supplementary Funding 2016-17 and Revisions to Redundancy and Early Retirement Benefits:

A. Supplementary Funding 2016-17

Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing members of the proposed Supplementary Funding process for 2016/17.

In 2015/16 the entire fund had been utilised (£1.9m) and the Forum was asked to decide how much should be allocated to the Fund from reserves. Members were reminded that the Fund was made up of the following elements:

- Contingency – De-Delegated DSG
- School DSG Reserves – Accumulated Underspends on Centrally Retained DSG
- Growth Fund (Top Sliced from DSG)
- Falling Rolls (Top Sliced from DSG)
- Disproportionate SEND (High Needs Block)
- Redundancy – Local Authority (ESG)

Guidance was provided on the process and the submission of a business case, including information on the contribution by the LA to redundancy costs (see (B) below)

Members discussed the pressures on schools to meet the demands placed on them by increasing school rolls over the longer-term whilst in some cases having to budget for falling number in the short-term.

Members discussed the work required to submit an application and if the guidance would help schools assess their chances of success? Ms Rufo emphasised that this was a means-tested process and applications would be assessed against the risks to the school; these could be a financial risk; a risk to future educational attainment; and the longer term risk to the future of the school.

A member asked if special schools could bid for funding and it was confirmed that they could not, however they could bid for additional funding from the High Needs Block.

A member asked if nurseries could bid for funding and it was confirmed that they could not, however the LA would clarify if it was possible for a nursery to apply against the Early Years Block.

A member reminded the LA that a number of school Bursars/Business Managers had offered to help the LA in preparing the information to be sent to schools on this process.

It was agreed: (1) That the proposed use of the Central DSG Reserve Fund as now reported be endorsed.

(2) That a sum of £250,000 per annum over the next 3 years commencing April 2016 be transferred from the [Closed Schools Reserve Account](#) to the Central DSG Reserve Fund.

(3) That the timeline for submission of bids by 4th March with a view to decisions being made by 11 March 2016 be approved and the LA be asked to circulate information on the bidding process and criteria as soon as possible.

(B) Revisions to Redundancy and Early Retirement Benefits:

Ms Lea presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing Members that the Local Authority has been requested to clarify the position with regards to responsibility for redundancy and early retirement costs. Each Local Authority was required to have a policy, which should be discussed at Schools Forum.

The current guidance adopted by the Local Authority was set out in the report. It was also reported that the Education Services Grant (which was used to help meet the costs of redundancies in schools) would be reduced by 75-80% from 2016-17.

Members discussed the implications of the proposed revised policy, particularly with regard to premature retirement costs and redundancy costs; and the discretion that schools and the LA had with regard to such payments.

A question was asked about enhancements to staff taking early retirement and it was reported that these proposals did not relate to enhancements (i.e. the discretionary award of additional years' service).

The factors to be considered when the LA determined if it would contribute to the cost of redundancy and early retirement were set out in the report. It was

recommended that the second criteria in the list of those where the LA would not consider funding the costs should be removed as it was likely all applications would have at least one of the reasons listed.

Reference was made to the staffing implications of the LA's current policy regarding Children's Centres and that it would be unfair on those Centres if, as a consequence of past and current LA policies, they were required to meet any redundancy/early retirement costs. It was confirmed that because of their particular circumstances the LA was now considering the most appropriate approach.

it was also reported that if the revised policy was adopted from May 2016 there could be schools that were facing budget pressures and were in the process of reducing staff numbers. There was therefore a possibility that those staff could have been given information on their capital and other payments that was now out of date. Ms Lea confirmed there were no staff in that position and that any staff likely to be affected by redundancy/early retirement from September 2016 were being given information based on the revised policy.

It was agreed: That the revised policy be noted and the LA be asked to remove criteria 2 as discussed above.

9. National Funding Formula:

Mr McDonald reported that LAs had been invited to attend a Conference to learn about plans for the introduction of a national funding scheme however there was no information available about the basis of the scheme or the consultation process.

It was agreed: That the lack of information be noted.

10. AOB

Representation on the Forum

Ms Rufo reported that questions had been raised at a meeting of the Primary Headteachers regarding representation on the Forum and in particular the position relating to representation on the Forum by the Heads of the Three Towers Alternative Provision Academy and the Hawkley Hall High School Academy, which were both members of The Rowan Learning trust.

The respective members reported that academy schools had voted for a secondary school representative on the Forum; and that Three Towers operated as Pupil Referral Unit for Learners from KS2 to KS4. Both sectors were therefore entitled to be representatives for those sectors.

Members also referred to the growth in Multi Academy Trusts and the potential impact that might have on future representation.

The Chair referred to discussions in 2015 on representation and the decision taken at that time and suggested that it would be good practice to continually review

representation to ensure it met the needs of schools and reflected the changes that were going on in nationally in terms of MATs and School Federations etc.

It was agreed: That this matter be discussed at a future meeting.

11. Dates and Time of Future Meetings:

10 March 2016 at Bedford High School

12 May 2016 at Hawkley Hall High School

7 July 2016 at Bedford High School

meeting closed at 2.50 p.m.