

**Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum  
held at 1.30 pm on Thursday 9 March 2017  
at Bedford High School.**

**Present:**

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

**Observers:** K. Winard and M. Atkins.

**LA Officers:** A. Lindsay (Assistant Director) C. Pealing (Service Manager) C. Myers (Finance Group Manager) and F. Gore (Clerk)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from D. Winstanley, K. Pilkington, A. Isherwood, R. Lewis, P. McGhee and T. Warren (members) and from Cllr J. Platt and M. Wilkinson (observers); and from J. McDonald (Strategic Finance Manager)

**2. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION UNDER AOB**

- Capital Allocation.

**3. MINUTES**

**It was agreed:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2017 be approved as a correct record.

**ii Matters Arising**

None.

**4 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA:**

**a. Response to Consultation**

Further to the discussions at the last meeting a copy of the draft response to the on-going consultation on a proposed National Funding Formula (NFF) had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Members endorsed the draft response, highlighting the lack of funding within the school system as a whole; the importance of developing a Funding Formula that included a basic entitlement that reflected the actual costs schools were required to meet; and the continuing inequality in funding by adopting a 3% funding floor.

**It was agreed:** (1) That the response be submitted to the DfE.

(2) That the response be circulated to all schools in the Borough and they be asked to submit an individual response to the NFF consultation seeking revisions to the current proposals on the basis agreed at (1) above.

## **b. Letter to parents**

In accordance with the decision taken at the last meeting a copy of a letter from the Schools Forum for distribution to parents via schools had been circulated prior to the meeting. The letter informed parents of the financial implications for Wigan schools if the proposed National Funding Formula was adopted and encouraged them to make representations to the DfE and their local MP seeking a change in the formula.

Members reported that schools had distributed the letter, either as submitted or with additional information relating to their school.

**It was agreed:** That schools be thanked for their support in this matter.

## **5. High Needs Block : Funding Formula Consultation**

Further to the discussions at the last meeting, a copy of the draft response to the on-going consultation on proposed changes to the High Needs Funding Block had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The changes and increased funding had generally been welcomed and in response to questions from members Mr Myers reported that:

- There was no link between how funding was allocated under the new National Funding Formula and for High Needs;
- From 2019-20 funding could be moved from the High Needs Block to the Schools Block but not the other way;
- There was greater flexibility in moving funds between Blocks up to 2018-19 but the DfE was awaiting the outcome of the consultation before determining the level of flexibility.

Mr Myers reported on information gained at a recent National Conference on school funding. There had been significant interest shown in how schools facing financial difficulties could manage their budget and the use of “best practice” models as recommended by the DfE. These would be investigated further and where possible shared with schools.

**It was agreed:** That the response now submitted be endorsed and submitted to the DfE.

## **6. AOB**

### **6.1 Capital Allocation.**

Ms Pealing reported that the DfE had made an award to the LA of £500,000 (over a three year period) to support the capital cost of additional SEN provision in the Borough. It had been estimated that approx. £24M was required to provide essential special school and other SEN provision to meet the growing demand for places in the Borough. Currently there

was £3M of funding available and a business case would be prepared for submission to the LA for further capital funding on an invest to save basis.

A decision was still awaited on the application to the DfE to establish a Free School for SEN pupils and it was recognised that urgent progress was now required in order to meet the demand for places.

**It was agreed:** That the report be accepted.

**7. Future Meetings:** (meetings to commence at 1.30 p.m.)

11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 - at Hawkley Hall High School

29<sup>th</sup> June 2017 - at Hawkley Hall High School

Meeting closed at 2.20 p.m.