

# **Minutes of the Meeting of the Schools Forum**

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at 1.30 p.m.  
at Bedford High School**

## **Present:**

**Members:** A.P. Hardy (Chair) E. Loftus, E. Ellis, M. Ridsdale (deputizing for F. Quinlivan) V. Birchall, G. Hayes, H. Phillips, A. Birchall, A. McGlown, R. Halford, P. McGhee, T. Warren and A. Wells.

**Observers:** Cllr J. Bullen and M. Atkins.

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

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from F. Quinlivan, D. Winstanley, A. Isherwood, R. Lewis, J. Holland and from M. Wilkinson and K. Winnard and Mr J. McDonald.

### **2. Items for inclusion under AOB**

None.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 2 November 2017**

**It was agreed:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2017 be approved as a true and correct record.

## **Matters Arising**

### **School Contract Standing Orders (minute 6 refers).**

It was reported that the draft contract standing orders had been revised to reflect that schools were required to seek quotations for purchases above £10,000, as requested by Forum members. This revision had been considered by the Council's Statutory Officer's Group and the £10,000 threshold for quotations had been agreed. The Standing orders would be presented for adoption at the Governing Body business meeting in the autumn term 2018.

**It was agreed:** That the decision be welcomed.

### **4. Schools Block Budget 2018-19 (National Funding Formula):**

#### **(a) Minutes of the meeting of the Forum Working Group held on 7 December 2017**

The minutes of the Forum Working Group appointed at Minute 5 of the last meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Working Group had agreed that the Schools Forum be recommended as follows:

- 1 To adopt the National Funding Formula from 2018-19.

2. That the report to the Schools Forum on 11 January 2018 include reference to the issues discussed at this meeting, in particular the primary:secondary funding ratio under the NFF and the factors included in the NFF that can support school budgets when set against the reduction in the AWPU
3. That the factors relating to Looked After Children be removed as this would now form part of the PPG plus allocation.
4. That a sum of £0.6m be allocated to the growth fund in 2018-19 and to note that further modelling would be required in order to identify the additional funding needed to meet the projected cost of continuing to fund growth.
5. That approval be given to top-slicing £0.5m from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to the High Needs Block to reflect the contribution met from school balances held by the Council in 2017-18.
6. That the recommended level of de-delegation of services, including the transfer of the former ESG retained rate in respect of statutory functions, be approved; and that a breakdown in staff costs included in the de-delegated services be given to Schools Forum.

**It was agreed:** That the minutes of the Working Group be noted.

**(b) Report on the projected impact of the recommendations of the Working Group**

Mr Myers presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation for 2018-19. The report referred to the recommendations made by the Forum Working Group (see 4 (a) above) and set out the implications for schools of adopting the approach recommended by the Working Group. The report also responded to questions raised by the Group. Appendices to the report gave a detailed projection of the impact on individual school budgets of adopting the alternative funding models and the recommendations of the Working Group.

Details of the National Funding Formula pupil led funding, school led funding and geographic funding factors were reported. These included:

Pupil led funding: A basic per pupil entitlement (mandatory)

The NFF age weighted pupil unit for 2018/19 was;

Primary £2,747

Key Stage 3 £3,863

Key Stage 4 £4,386

Although these rates were lower than the current rates the formula now included a minimum per pupil funding level. The minimum funding level rates for 2018/19 would be:

Primary £3,300 (2018/19) £3,500 (2019/20)

Secondary £4,600 (2018/19) £4,800 (2019/20)

All schools would attract the minimum funding above for each pupil  
(based on all funding factors)

School Led Funding: Lump Sum

This would be set at £110,000 for all schools. Wigan currently allocated the same lump sum for primary and secondary schools of £150,000

Forum members welcomed the information provided in the report and clarification of the issues raised at the Working Group and also noted that the adoption of the National Funding Formula and the recommendations of the Working Group had resulted in the primary:secondary funding ratio remaining at 1:1.29 as in 2017-18.

**It was agreed:** (1) That the LA be recommended to adopt the National Funding Formula for the funding of schools in Wigan LA for 2018-19, with any minor adjustments required to balance to the total funding available made through amending the Basic Entitlement rates.

(2) That the Forum agree:

- a. To agree to top slicing £0.5m from the Schools Block for 2018/19 to support High Needs
- b. To move £100,000 from the falling rolls fund to support growth.
- c. To increase the allocation of £500,000 for Growth by a further by £100,000 and any unspent funds to be carried forward and added back to the Funding Formula in 2019/20.
- d. That the following centrally provided services be de-delegated.

| De-Delegated Service based on estimated NOR   | Budget 2017/18<br>£ | Proposed Budget 2018/19<br>£ |
|---|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Contingencies (including schools in financial difficulties and deficits of closing schools) | 300,000             | 300,000                      |
| Behaviour Support Services Staff Primary Only -   | 665,650             | 665,650                      |
| Support to underperforming ethnic groups & bilingual learners                               | 455,817             | 455,817                      |
| FSM eligibility checking  | 16,803              | 16,803                       |
| Insurance   | 6,095               | 6,095                        |
| Staff Costs - Trade Union Public Duties   | 271,349             | 271,349                      |

|  |           |           |  |
|--|-----------|-----------|--|
|  | 1,715,714 | 1,715,714 |  |
|--|-----------|-----------|--|

- e. That the Central School Services Block (CSSB) as now reported be approved (note that for Wigan the CSSB is £1.421m for 2018/19 but as the baseline is only £0.610m the LA will only receive a rise of 2.5% to £0.625m.

(3) That the LA be asked to write to schools as soon as possible confirming their indicative budgets based on the decisions taken above in order that schools can take timely action in respect of their planned budgets for 2018-19 and their longer-term budget strategies.

## **5. High Needs:**

### **a. Budget 2018-19**

Ms C. Peeling (Service Manager) presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on the High Needs DSG allocation for 2018-19 and the proposed budget allocations. The report also gave an update on the budget pressures on the High Needs Block and the actions being taken to address the continuing increase in demand for special education provision. Appendix A to the report gave a detailed breakdown of the significant areas of the High Needs Budget and the specific pressures on those elements of the budget and actions being taken to address those.

Members were reminded of the decision taken by the Forum to meet the projected shortfall in the 2017-18 High Needs budget and the further action required to address the projected shortfall in 2018-19.

Particular reference was made to proposals to establish three Engagement Centres, to be funded by the Council and which would require significant capital funding by the LA: a planned bid for investment for special school expansion in the Borough, linked to a planned reduction in out-of-borough placements; a review of the banding system and funding for special schools; and other measures aimed at reducing costs.

Reference was also made to recent consultations with the secondary sector on the adoption of the principle whereby in addition to the transfer of the AWPU allocation for the individual pupil, schools would be charged for placing pupils in alternative provision (including the Pupil Referral Units) when such placements were on a permanent basis. Members were asked to consider alternative approaches regarding the level of charges to be adopted for primary and secondary age pupils and the timing of the introduction of payments.

Q. how was the cost of such placements currently met?

A. through a top-slicing of all school budgets; which was seen as unfair on those schools that did not refer pupils.

Q. within the primary sector, referrals were usually for a limited period (often for 6 weeks or less); would the charges apply in those cases?

A. where a pupil was re-integrated to school only the AWPU element would apply; there would be no "one-off" charge as in the case of a permanent removal from the school roll.

Q. would any planned costs associated with referrals based on medical reasons be reviewed.

A. yes; such referrals could be placed outside the scope of the scheme.

Q. would charges be applied for those pupils permanently excluded and referred to alternative provision?

A. yes.

Members recognised the implications of setting a future date for the introduction of charges and the difficulties schools would face if retrospective charges were adopted; a phased approach was also discussed starting from 1<sup>st</sup> January with full costs being introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.

**It was agreed:** (1) That the report be accepted and the detailed information provided be welcomed.

(2) That approval be given in principle to the introduction of charges (as well as the transfer of the AWP) for pupils permanently moved off roll and referred to alternative provision.

(4) That further work be carried out on the detail of the proposed charging policy, including the level of charges for primary and secondary aged pupils.

(5) That Schools be informed that from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 there will be charges introduced for alternative placements; those charges to be subject to consultations with the primary and secondary school sectors.

(6) That reports continue to be presented on the High Needs Block and the development of a cohesive budget strategy in line with the outcome of the on-going independent review of SEND.

## **b. Funding Survey**

The outcome of a recent survey of the Association of Directors of Children's Services on their assessment of the impact of the increasing pressures on the High Needs Block had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The majority of Local Authorities reported that in 2016-17 they were overspent on the High needs budget and that the High Needs Block allocation was insufficient to meet local need.

Nationally there were four major budget pressures, they were:

- An increased number of pupils with SEND;
- Increasing complexity of need;
- A lack of capacity within mainstream education to meet the needs of SEND pupils;
- The extension of support to cover children and young people from 0 - 25.

**It was agreed:** That findings of the survey be noted.

## **c. Update on High Needs Strategy**

**It was agreed:** That an update on the outcome of the independent review of SEND be presented to the next meeting of the Forum.

## **6. Early Years Budget 2018-19**

Mr Myers presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on the Early Years DSG allocation for 2018-19.

Members were reminded that it had been agreed that a new early years national funding formula for 3 and 4 year olds would be introduced from 1 April 2017 and to pass through the maximum 95% of the funding from this date as per the guidance. Under the new formula funding for the most disadvantaged 2-year olds was allocated on a formulaic basis (£5.30); and there were no changes to funding for Early Years Pupil Premium, which remained at £0.53 per hour.

The formula included a minimum funding rate of £4.30 per hour to Local Authorities, which would give Local Authorities the scope to pay providers an average funding rate of at least £4 per hour.

It was now proposed that the current rates agreed last year (see the table below) remains the same at £4.04 across the sector and that the current Deprivation rate be retained. The FSM Supplement is proposed to rise from £2.15 to £2.30. Maintained Nursery Settings would be protected until the end of this Parliament (2020). This protection would help settings in terms of the transition to the lower base rate.

| <b>2018-189 EYSFF Block - Rates / Payments Three and Four Year Olds</b> |                             |                   |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Payment</b>  | <b>Recipient</b>            | <b>£ per Hour</b> |
| 15 Hrs Free Entitlement 3 & 4 year old                                  | Maintained Nursery Schools* | 4.04              |
| 15 Hrs Free Entitlement 3 & 4 year old                                  | Maintained Nursery Classes  | 4.04              |
| 15 Hrs Free Entitlement 3 & 4 year old                                  | PVI's                       | 4.04              |
| FSM Supplement **   | Maintained                  | 2.30              |
| Pupil Premium   | All Sectors                 | 0.53              |
| Deprivation Supplement  | All Sectors                 | 0.33              |

*\* Maintained Nursery Schools are protected to the end of Parliament and a separate allocation is calculated by the DFES which will be passed to both the settings.*

*\*\* Increased from £2.15 to be in line with the national rate*

The retained 5% funding would continue to support staff within the Early Years Teams and would cover:

- quality
- training
- speech and language
- safeguarding
- SEN inclusion fund (3 / 4 year olds)

In addition to the centrally retained fund, the LA currently top sliced 10p from the hourly rate from 2 year old funding to help fund SEN support. The rate paid to providers was £5.20 per hour. The LA also received disability access funding of £615 per child, which was awarded to children in receipt of DLA (Disability Living Allowance).

**It was agreed:** (1) That the report be accepted.

(2) That the rates set in 2017/18 be maintained for 2018/19 for 2, 3 and 4 year olds; and that the 5% retention for central services; the top slice of 10p from the 2 year old funding; and the increase for free school meals be approved..

**7. AOB**

**None.**

**8. Mr John McDonald:**

**It was agreed:** That the deepest condolences of the Forum be extended to Mr McDonald and his family on the sad loss they have sustained.

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

22 March 2018 - at Bedford High School

10<sup>th</sup> May 2018 – at Hawkley Hall High School

21<sup>st</sup> June 2018 - at Bedford High School

Meeting closed at 2.35 p.m.