

Schools Forum Meeting
Held on Thursday 17th January 2019
At Hawkley Hall High School

Minutes

Members Present:

A.Hardy (Chair), L. Loftus, E. Ellis, , V. Birchall, G. Hayes, T. Cunningham, , A. McGlown, A. Birchall, A. Isherwood, K.Ward, R.Lewis, JA.Hewitt

Observers: M. Wilkinson, A. Grice, Cllr J Bullen, M.Atkins, K.Winnard

In Attendance: C. Pealing (Service Manager) J. McDonald (Strategic Finance Manager), C.Myers (Group Finance Manager), M. Larkin (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr T Warren, Mrs F.Quinlivan and Mrs H. Phillips

2. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION UNDER AOB

There were no items presented for inclusion under AOB

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2018 be approved as a true and correct record.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. HIGH NEEDS UPDATE FOR 2018-19 AND 2019-20

Mr McDonald (Strategic Finance Manager) presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on the High Needs DSG budget for 2019/20 and information on the position and financial plan.

Mr McDonald explained the position reported in October projected a £1.3m overspend. Since October there had been an increase in expenditure related to Independent School fees, taking these costs together with the additional £0.710m funding from the Government, the overspend is now £1m. A projected adverse variation of £0.350m was made in October 2018 for independent school fees. This has now been updated with the SEND team and the projection is now £0.744m.

Although there is extra growth for 2019/20, £1m needs to be used to repay the deficit for 2018/19. This leaves £0.85m to fund growth however the full year impact of the increase in numbers on independent provision alone will remove any balances. Once

the numbers for special schools and EHC plans are updated for 2019/20 there will still be a need for significant savings to be made.

An updated detailed budget position will be available for the next Forum meeting once special school numbers are received. Special schools budgets would be circulated by the end of February.

Ms Pealing reported:

- a number of additional special schools places were needed
- the SEND capital consultation would begin next week
- staff were being recruited for the primary engagement centre, the opening of this facility had been brought forward
- additional places were being provided at Willow Grove.

Q. A question was raised with regard to where further savings could be made, Ms Pealing directed colleagues to the previous meeting where it had been proposed that, service, outreach and resourced provision reviews would take place.

Concerns were raised regarding the costs for independent provision, Ms Pealing informed colleagues that a new independent provider in Wigan had been sourced and costs for SCMH were the same as provided by the LA, and savings would be made with regard to transport costs.

Ms Pealing highlighted the need to increase capacity within schools in the Borough and provide support at an earlier age. Discussion took place with regard to funding being made available to support pupils without plans in mainstream schools and the support of expertise from special school staff.

Concern was raised that not all schools would be able to provide the space needed in mainstream schools to support the provision for some pupils and supported the importance of identifying and supporting needs as early as possible.

Ms Pealing reported the vision of the SEND transformation looked at how expertise could be used within the borough. Colleagues were reminded about the suggested 'task and finish' groups discussed at the previous meeting and it was agreed details for the groups would be re-circulated.

It was agreed: information about the 'Task and Finish' groups would be recirculated

Feedback had been received by Headteachers from their colleagues that they would not wish to be in this same position next year and it was highlighted that current accountability measures did not help support schools in being inclusive.

Q. Questions were raised about Health contributions and Ms Pealing stated services were joining together to provide support and work was ongoing in supporting 'a team around the school'.

Q. A question was raised about deadlines for the SEND transformation. Ms Pealing explained action plans were in place with specified timeframes, this was a rolling programme and further information would be provided at the next meeting. Ms

Peeling added it had taken two and a half years to unpick what was needed to support SEND needs in the borough.

Potential contributions from other agencies were discussed and suggestions were made to ensure that other agencies were aware of the pressures on funding within education to avoid any misunderstandings. It was acknowledged financial pressures for schools, was a national issue, and the LA shared schools frustrations with regard to the increase in recommendations being made by other agencies.

It was agreed: an update on the 2018/19 to be provided at the next meeting alongside the 2019/20 budget. This would hopefully capture the detail around numbers which was unknown at this time and also an update on the wider SEND transformation work streams.

5. SCHOOLS FORMULA 2019-20

A report was circulated prior to the meeting Mr Myers explained that, previously a sub-group of the Forum had met and discussed different options for matching funding, the group had considered changing the basic entitlement and modelling through MFG, three scenarios for each route had been presented. It had been agreed at the sub-group that the MFG route would allow for all schools to gain and a better spread of funds whereas changes to the basic entitlement would only allow individual schools to gain. This was endorsed at the October Forum meeting. Allocations had been redone following the October census allowing a 0.36% increase per pupil under MFG, it was noted some schools had triggered the minimum per pupil funding level.

Growth funding was now being allocated to LA's using a new formulaic method based on lagged growth data. The amount allocated for growth is £1.048m. The current projected cost of growth for next year is £0.7m any underspend would go back into schools.

The central school services block (CSSB) had remained the same for 2019-20 at £0.652m

Concern was raised that some schools would receive less than the £4800 per pupil minimum and that the increases to funding year on year did not meet the increases in expenditure costs year on year. Mr Myers explained how this had been built into the formula.

An appendix to the report had been provided to show the budgets for maintained schools post MFG and the relevant comparative figures. It was noted there had been no increases to de-delegation.

It was agreed: (1) forum agreed the formula factors, rates and method of allocation as per the appendices

(2) forum agreed the allocation of the central schools block for Local Authority statutory duties.

6. EARLY YEARS BUDGET 2019-20

Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on the Early Years DSG allocation.

The formula includes a minimum funding rate of £4.30 per hour to local authorities, which will give local authorities the scope to pay providers an average funding rate of at least £4 per hour. No increases had been made.

It was proposed that the rate remains the same at £4.04 across the sector and retain the current FSM and Deprivation rate. Under this model 98% of funding would be pass ported to settings which is 3% higher than the 95% required.

2019-20 Early Years Block - Proposed Rates / Payments Three and Four Year Olds		
Payment	Recipient	£ per Hour
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

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

(2) That the rates set in 2018/19 for 2019/20 for both 2, 3 and 4 year olds, be maintained, the retention for central services and the top slice of 10p from the 2 year old funding

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was acknowledged this would be the last forum meeting attended by Mr Myers in his current position as Group Finance Manager (Schools) as he moves on to a new position. The Chair expressed thanks to Mr Myers on behalf of the Forum for his work over many years in a range of capacities in the Wigan education sector, most recently endeavouring to translate the complexities of school funding into realities that we could all understand.

8. FUTURE MEETINGS (all meetings to commence at 1.30pm)

7th March 2019 – at Bedford High School

16th May 2019 – at Bedford High School

13th June 2019 – at Hawkley Hall High School

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 2.25pm