

Schools Forum Meeting

Held on Thursday 17th October 2019 at Hawley Hall High School Training Suite

Meeting opened: 1.30pm

Members Present:

E.Ellis	Primary Representative
F.Quinlivan	Primary Representative
G.Hayes	Primary Representative
T.Cunningham	Primary Governor
A.Birchall	Secondary Representative
H.Phillips	Secondary Representative
A.McGlown	Secondary Representative
A.Hardy	Secondary Governor
E.Loftus	Special Schools Representative
J.Buckley	Academy Representative
M.Atkins	Union Representative
M.Wilkinson	Authorised Observer

In Attendance:

J.McDonald	Wigan Council – Finance
A.Meehan	Wigan Council – Finance
C.Pealing	Wigan Council – Assistant Director Education
V.Lowe	Wigan Council – HR
K.Turner	Wigan Council – SEND
M.Larkin	Governor Services – Clerk

MINUTES

1	Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2019-20 The Clerk welcomed nominations for the position of Chair and Vice Chair of the Schools Forum. It was agreed: (1) Mr A Hardy be appointed as Chair for 2019-20 (2) Mr A Birchall be appointed as Vice Chair for 2019-20 The Chair welcomed Members and noted a member of the Press was in attendance at this open meeting.
2	Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from: C.Whiting K.Winnard Cllr J Bullen
3	Agreement of Any Other Urgent Business to Be Added To The Agenda There were no items of any other business presented.
4	Previous Minutes It was agreed: the minutes from the forum meeting held on 26th June 2019 be approved as a true and correct record

	<p>Matters Arising: The Chair provided an update for Members in relation to the draft letter regarding School Funding and the decision taken not to circulate until further information received from the Government.</p>
	<p>It was agreed that Item 9 be discussed at this point in the meeting as a Confidential Matter it was noted the member of the Press was asked to leave the room for this item</p>
9.	<p>Term Time Calculations</p> <p>This item was discussed and recorded confidentially.</p>
	<p>The member of the Press returned to the meeting</p>
5	<p>Membership Updates</p> <p>It was noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) There remained a vacancy for an Early Years PVI Representative (2) K.Parkin had replaced A.Grice as the NEU Authorised Observer (3) K.Turner was on secondment from Adult Services to support the Assistant Director in accelerating the SEND agenda
6	<p>High Needs Financial Position Update 2019-20</p> <p>A briefing paper had been circulated prior to the meeting outlining the latest financial position for 2019-20.</p> <p>Mr McDonald highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government had announced further funding would be made available for the next three years • The cap had been removed and provisional allocations from the ESFA showed an increase of £4.7m for the borough • The Government had announced a major review of SEND, the Forum had submitted the responses discussed at the previous meeting for the Call for Evidence • A breakdown of the GM Authorities collective overspend was included in the report • Local budget pressures had been included in the report • There had been an increase in top-ups for EHCP's in comparison with the same time last year • There was some extra capacity in Special Schools, but this also incurred additional costs • Following the increase in special school placements there was an adverse effect on the council's transport costs and there was an estimated overspend of £800k for 2019-20, which was not met from the Schools Budget • An appendix to the report outlined some actions and plans identified to address the financial pressures within the high needs block • Consultants were reviewing the sensory service provision, the EHC pathway and resourced provision <p>Ms Pealing explained although the permanent exclusions figures had shown an increase this was not significant as in previous years the managed transfer system had been used and had masked the figures. It was noted that exclusions were being made much earlier in High Schools than in previous years.</p> <p>Ms Pealing reported the demand from parents for special provision had increased and the LA were not in a position to challenge this until a secure alternative offer was available. Concern was raised with regard to schools not welcoming children as they did not feel fully equipped and parent's awareness of their children's needs had increased.</p>

A member of the Forum challenged Ms Pealing stating that pressures schools faced around the curriculum and accountability framework were making it increasingly more difficult for schools to be inclusive.

Ms Pealing responded, stating the new framework should provide more scope for inclusion and the consideration of an alternative to EHCP's with a focus on school support and funding without a plan.

A question was raised about any additional top-slice being requested.

It was explained significant investment was needed to ensure provision in schools was more effective therefore there remained a need to request an increased top-slice from all schools until such time as this investment was in place and delivering for pupils.

The amount requested was discussed and it was noted that Forum Members had assumed that due to the increased funding from the Government a contribution would not be requested this year.

A breakdown of the current projections resulting in a £2.7m deficit so far this year had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was highlighted the additional £750K agreed in the current year was included in these figures.

Concern was raised that the Government had set a minimum funding amount per pupil and if schools were to make the requested contribution this would result in a reduction in per pupil funding below the minimum set by the Government.

Concern was also raised that as the majority of school budgets were allocated to staffing costs, a reduction to this staffing maybe the only option for some schools to balance their budgets.

Following discussion, it was concluded:

- Members noted the increase in funding from the Government
- Some of this additional funding had been allocated to the overspend
- A working group would be arranged to consider, inter alia, a contribution from the DSG

7 Schools DSG Funding Formula 2020-21

Mr Meehan spoke to the briefing report circulated prior to the meeting which outlined the current information available about the Schools Funding Formula for 2020-21.

Mr Meehan highlighted:

- The provisional funding allocations had been received later than in previous years and the technical guidance had still not been released
- A summary of the provisional formula had been included in the report
- An extra £2.6 billion for 2020-21 had been announced by the Government
- The 2020-21 formula included mandatory requirements – minimum per pupil funding levels
- It had been identified schools in areas of deprivation would benefit from models looked at
- A new formulaic approach to the mobility factor would affect less than 1% of the borough school population
- Teachers pay and pension grants would continue to be paid separately this year and from 2020-21 would be included in the formula

Concern was raised that the additional funding that was being announced and provided now was not guaranteed in subsequent years; failure to consolidate this funding would

	<p>mean that this additional funding would be swallowed up into teachers' pay and pension contributions. Also, the lack of clarity in this respect meant that schools would begin to make budgetary savings next year which may not ultimately be required.</p> <p>It was acknowledged this would impact on school's three-year budget plans.</p> <p>In order to advise the Forum at its meeting on 28/11/19 in respect of distributing the DSG a working group would meet on 14/11/19 at St Peter's High School. Messrs. McGlowan, Hayes would attend with staff from the Finance Department.</p> <p>Mr Meehan added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LA funding formula would remain soft for this year • There was some flexibility around the minimum funding guarantee • The MFG adjustments would be discussed with the working group on 14/11/2019 • Final allocations would be shared with schools' in December
8	<p>Growth Report</p> <p>A briefing paper about Growth Funding had been circulated prior to the meeting, Mr McDonald highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth funding had been updated; this was the first year of the formulaic approach • Approximately £1m would be received this year • Wigan's agreed method of allocation had been included in the report • The report outlined there was a wide variation of practice across LA's in terms of criteria and rates awarded; contact had been made with DfE to ascertain if there were plans to standardise this in the future. The DfE confirmed this would be something they intended to address <p>Growth was discussed and individual examples shared. Members commented positively on the support received from the LA.</p> <p>Concern was raised about the approval of a Free School within the Borough; it was felt this was unnecessary and would have a negative impact on the growth of local schools.</p>
9	<p>Any Other Urgent Business</p> <p>No items of any other business had been raised.</p>
10	<p>Future Meeting Dates</p> <p>28th November 2019 – at Hawkley Hall Suite</p> <p>23rd January 2020 – Bedford Training Suite</p> <p>5th March 2020 – Bedford Training Suite</p> <p>7th May 2020 – Bedford Training Suite</p> <p>18th June 2020 – Hawkley Hall Suite</p>

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 2.55pm