

**Meeting of the Schools Forum  
Tuesday 7 May 2013 at 1.30 p.m. at Progress House, Wigan**

**Minutes**

**Members:** , A Hardy (Chair), P Dahlstrom, V Birchall, G Lloyd, G Hayes, L Fox, R Ward, J Shanahan, R Halford, R Lewis, T Frost, P McGhee and A Wells.

**LA Officers:**

K. Nelson (Head of Service – Education)  
M Rotheram (Strategic Finance Manager)  
E. Baulcombe (Service Manager – Commissioning)  
F. Gore (Clerk)

**Observers:** Councillor S. Loudon (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)  
T. Warren (Liverpool Archdiocese)  
M. Atkins (Wigan NUT)  
S. Wilson (NASUWT)

**1. Apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence were received from S. Darbyshire, D Donaldson, K Pilkington, A Isherwood and A. Goldsmith

**2. Items for inclusion under AOB - none**

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2013 were **AGREED** as a true and correct record.

**Matters Arising from the Minutes**

**Secure Cash Collection in Schools (Minute 3 refers):**

Mr M. Rotheram reported that the current contract was in place until August 2013 and a report would be submitted to a future meeting on the new contract.

**4. Proposals for the Allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Retained Growth:**

Mr M. Rotheram submitted a report (circulated prior to the meeting) reminding members that the Forum had agreed to top slice £100,000 from the Dedicated Schools Grant to create a fund to support growth in pupil numbers and to meet basic need. The Schools Forum was required to agree a criteria to determine how the fund was used and the report set out guidance from the Department For Education on appropriate criteria for the allocation of funding. The report set out suggested criteria and a number of options on an appropriate trigger level, together with details of the financial cost of adopting different threshold levels.

The Chair expressed concern that if precise and fixed criteria were adopted there would be potential for the fund to be significantly overstretched and for schools that had the resources to

fund pupil growth to gain access to the fund rather than the fund be used to support those schools in greatest need. It was suggested that a set of principles be adopted that would meet the DfE guidelines and provide the flexibility to ensure the funding was appropriately targeted.

Members supported this approach whilst emphasizing the need to ensure the principles were fair and transparent.

**It was agreed:** (1) That the Head of Service – Education be asked to establish an appropriate set of principles to determine applications for funding to be met from the Growth Fund, that would ensure funding was targeted to those schools that were required to provide an additional class through class size regulation as a result of growth in pupil numbers and who did not have the resources to meet those additional costs.

(2) That the Head of Service – Education be delegated authority to determine applications from schools for funding from the Growth Fund based on the set of principles to be agreed.

(3) That an annual report be presented to the Forum showing the schools supported through the Growth Fund in that year.

## **5. DfE Review of 2013–14 School Funding Arrangement – Comparative Data.**

In accordance with the decision taken by the Forum at its last meeting (minute 6 refers) Mr Rotheram submitted a report (circulated prior to the meeting) giving an analysis of the information provided by the DfE on how Local Authorities nationally had allocated their Schools Funding Block and how Wigan's funding arrangements compared to the national data.

The report also included a copy of Wigan's response to the consultation paper issued by the DfE on the School Funding Arrangements 2013-14.

The data showed that for 9 of the 18 categories of spend Wigan's spend was in line with the national median, although this could change as more up to date information was made available.

The data would be used as part of the information to be presented to the Forum as part of future discussions about the 2014-15 Schools Budget Formula.

**It was agreed:** That the information be noted.

## **6. Final Schools Budget 2013-14.**

Mr Rotheram submitted a report (circulated prior to the meeting) reminding members that the Forum had approved DSG allocations for 2013-14 in the sum of £227,484,000. Following the return of the final pro-forma to the DfE in late January 2013 the Department had identified the academy recoupment figure and the DSG allocation to the Authority had been revised to now be £202,497,000. This revision could further change as financial information was updated throughout the financial year.

It was also reported that the Young People's Learning Agency had confirmed the 16-19 final funding statement for the 2013-14 academic year and the Deanery High School and St Mary's Catholic High School had been informed of the impact of those allocations on their budgets.

Mr Rotheram reported that following the issuing of school budgets on 15 March a number of workshops had been held for schools to help them understand their individual budgets and to answer questions on the allocations. These had been well received by schools.

The Chair referred to the planned opening of the University Technical College (UTC) and the potential impact on future funding available for schools with 6<sup>th</sup> Form provision.

Ms K. Nelson reported that a number of Local Authorities in the Region planned to review their School Funding Model in light of responses by schools to the revisions made in 2013-14. She asked members of the views of schools in Wigan to the changed model that Wigan had adopted. Members believed that schools were generally content with the changes and understood why the changes had been made, although issues concerning the funding of special needs provision could become an issue as the year progressed.

**It was agreed:** That the report be accepted and information on the potential impact of the establishment of the UTC be considered as part of the future review of the Wigan Funding Model and if necessary a meeting of the Finance Sub-Group be called to consider any specific funding issues.

## **7. High Needs Block Update**

Mr Rotheram submitted a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing members that the Education Funding Agency had published a funding matrix setting out the arrangements for funding high needs from April 2013 (details of which were appended to the report). The matrix gave the different funding arrangements in place for each type of provision and revised arrangements for post 16 provision from August 2013 and changed arrangements for mainstream academies opened prior to April 2013.

He reported that further work had been done to understand the impact on schools if they were not fully occupied and in order to help special schools plan their budget, assurances had been given on the minimum level of funding to be provided irrespective of pupil numbers. Details of the individual special school budgets were given in the report. This had resulted in increased overall funding by £165,000.

Members referred to the criteria used to determine funding at the various settings and asked for clarification on Wigan's approach to funding for "additionality" which appeared to be contrary to the principles agreed by the Forum at the Sub-Group meetings that had discussed the new funding formula. As per the matrix attached to the report the first £6,000 of additional need had been delegated within the funding formula using the low cost high incidence SEN factor. This was over and above the AWPU allocation applicable to every pupil. Ms E. Baulcombe confirmed that any assessed additional need over and above the first £6,000 would be funded as a top up from the High Needs Block (for example if a child required additional support to the value of £11,000 the school would receive £5,000 top-up funding). The approach adopted had been explained in a letter to schools circulated in February 2013 but she agreed to resubmit this information in order to avoid any further confusion. Ms Nelson

suggested this would help clarify a number of questions schools had raised with her regarding funding of special needs and the perceived discrepancy between the figures of £6,180 and £6,000 for special needs support.

Ms Nelson referred to the Authority's Pupil Referral Unit proposals which would be part of a comprehensive group of alternative education services. It would be important to include budget information for the PRUs in future reports to the Forum so there was clarity and transparency in the PRU funding arrangements. A member raised the question of adopting Key Stage funding arrangements within the PRUs and Ms Nelson reported this would need detailed consideration.

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

(2) That PRU budget information be presented to the Forum in line with the information presented in respect of mainstream and special schools.

(3) That the Authority again write out to schools clarifying the approach to the funding of special needs provision in schools.

#### **8. Date and time of next meeting.**

Thursday 4 July 2013 at 1.30 p.m. at Progress House.

Meeting closed at 2.15 p.m.