

Meeting of the Schools Forum Thursday 3 July 2014 at 1.30 p.m. at Progress House Wigan

Members: A Hardy (Chair), P Dahlstrom (Vice Chairman), J. Seddon, F. Quinlivan, V. Birchall, G Lloyd, L Fox, J Shanahan, R Halford, K. Pilkington, R Lewis, J. Holland and P McGhee.

LA Officers:

A. Goldsmith (Director, Children and Families)
K. Nelson (Assistant Director)
M Rotheram (Strategic Finance Manager)
C. Myers (Group Finance Manager)
F. Gore (Clerk)

Observers: M . Atkins (NUT)
T. Warren (Liverpool Archdiocese)

1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from G Hayes, D. Wood, A. Isherwood and A Wells; and also from S. Wilson, C. Gore and Cllr J. Platt.

2. Items for inclusion under AOB

- **Review of School Funding Formula 2015-16**
- **Membership of Schools Forum 2014-15**

3. Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 13th March 2014:

It was agreed: That the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 6th May 2014 be approved as a correct record.

3.1 Matters Arising from the Minutes

3.1 Supplementary Funding Submissions (Minute 6 (4) refers) -.

In accordance with the decision taken at the last meeting (minute 6 (4) refers) Mr Rotheram submitted information (circulated) giving details of the bids submitted by schools for supplementary funding in 2014-15 and the outcome of each bid. Information on the residual funding available following the determination of the bids was also given in respect of the Growth Fund; Contingency/Falling Rolls/Other funding and Disproportionate SEN funding.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted.

4. Pupil Referral Service – Budget Estimate Required for 2014-15 and Beyond :

Mr Rotheram presented a report (circulated) informing members that the Authority had received notification from the Department for Education that it had been agreed to issue an academy order for the Pupil Referral Service. Before a date for conversion could be agreed it would be necessary to set a realistic sustainable budget for the service

Details the budget and out-turn position for the Pupil Referral Service for the last two financial years were given. Appendices to the report showed an additional budget requirement of £0.214m for 2014/15 and that a budget of £2.876m would be required from 2015-16. Whilst this represented an increase of £0.249m on the Original Estimate it was a reduction of £0.013m on the 2013/14 approved budget, whilst at the same time enhancing the provision in order to improve student outcomes.

A member asked what elements were included in “third party payments” . Mr Rotheram and Ms Nelson gave information on potential elements and confirmed further information would be circulated with the minutes .

Note: subject to the meeting it was confirmed that 3rd party payments undertaken by the Pupil Referral Service related to student placements that required external sourcing with regard to vocational experience, training and development in areas such as car mechanics, hairdressing etc and specific Breakthrough Employability schemes with Groundwork North West.

A member commented that the Authority faced a potential reduction in funding within the High Needs Block as a result of places based funding relating to actual numbers not planned places. Mr Rotheram confirmed that this would impact on the Pupil Referral Service in the same way and that he had been in communication with High Needs Northern about the issue. They were proposing to say more about the High Needs funding arrangements by July this year, the proposals would come into effect at the commencement of the 2015/16 academic year and would be reported to the next meeting of Forum.

The Forum was reminded that it had previously agreed (minute 6 of May 2014 refers) that any underspend on the Disproportionate SEN allocation be returned to the High Needs Block. As such there was potential to fund the additional 2014/15 budget required from within this allocation. If it was subsequently evaluated that the £0.300m set aside for Disproportionate SEN was an over estimation of the actual funding required then the additional base budget requirement of £0.249m could be earmarked from the original allocation for future years.

It was agreed: (1) That report be noted and the recommended increase of £0.214m for the 2014/15 Pupil Referral Service budget be endorsed and the setting of a future base budget at £2.876m be agreed.

(2) That a report be submitted to the next meeting on the anticipated impact of the move to funding within the High Needs Block related to actual numbers not planned places.

5. School Balances Update

Mr Myers presented a report (circulated) informing members of the level of Schools balances held as at 31st March, 2014. The report showed the following movement of balances, analysed by sector in the 2013/14 financial year.

Balances	Nursery & Primary (£)	Secondary (£)	Special (£)	Total (£)
As at 31/3/13	9,341,093	4,770,672	830,228	14,941,993
As at 31/3/14	9,227,249	5,099,445	1,123,659	15,450,352
Annual Increase / Decrease (+/-)	-113,844	328,773	293,430	508,359
Annual % Increase / Decrease (+/-)	-1.22%	6.89%	35.34%	3.40%
Number of Schools	99	14	6	119
Average Balance 31/3/14	93,205	364,246	187,276	129,835
Average Annual Increase	-1,150	23,484	48,905	4,272

Academies and closed schools had been excluded from both March 2013 and March 2014 values to enable a fair comparison to be made.

The Department for Education had recommended using 5% of budget as a threshold for secondary schools and 8% for other sectors. Information on the number of schools exceeding these thresholds was given together with comparative information for the North West Region.

Members commented on possible reasons for the increase in balances held, particularly within the secondary sector where a number of school were facing a likely drop in pupil numbers and significant cost pressures on energy, national insurance and salary costs etc.

Ms Nelson emphasised that whilst schools should remain prudent in their financial planning and in budgeting for planned school developments, it was important that schools did not accrue excessive balances thereby denying current pupils access to funding that should be available for them.

It was agreed: That report be accepted.

6. AOB

6.1 Review of School Funding Formula 2015-16

Ms Nelson referred to recent discussion with primary school Headteachers at the variations at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 in the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) as set in the Wigan Schools Funding Formula 2014-15 and AWPU at national average. Representatives acknowledged the variations and the need to review the AWPU at each Key Stage but also to take the opportunity to review all elements in the current Funding Formula.

It was agreed: (1) That a Sub-Group comprising A. Hardy, P. Dahlstrom, R Halford, G. Hayes, H. Phillips, D. Wood, J. Seddon and LA officers be appointed to review the Schools Funding Formula for 2015-16 and in particular the AWPU at KS 2, 3 and 4.

(2) That the Sub-Group meet on 17 September at 12 noon and all members of the Forum be informed of the arrangements so that they may attend if they so wish.

6.2 Membership of the Schools Forum 2014-15

The Clerk reported that Councillor Joanne Platt had been appointed Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services and would therefore be invited as an observer at future meetings.

Mr J. Shanahan reported that his term of office as a Secondary Sector Headteacher representative would end at the end of this term and that Ms H. Phillips (Headteacher of Bedford High School) would be the new representative from September 2014.)

Ms L. Fox reported that this would be the last meeting of the Forum she would be attending as a Secondary School representative before leaving Wigan to take up a new post.

It was agreed: (1) That the best thanks of the Forum be extended to Mr J. Shanahan, Ms L. Fox and M's S. Loudon (former Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services) for their valuable services to the Forum.

(2) That Councillor Joanne Platt and Ms H. Phillips be welcomed as members of the Forum.

7. Dates and time of Meetings 2014-15

Members were asked to agree a schedule of meetings for 2014-15. Members suggested that it would be helpful to dovetail meetings of the Forum with the planned meetings of the Primary and Secondary Sector Headteacher meetings in 2014-15 in order to report on items discussed and consult Headteachers on items to be considered by the Forum.

It was agreed: That a recommended schedule of meetings for 2014-15 be circulated .

meeting closed at 2.10 p.m.