

Meeting of the Schools Forum
Thursday 9th October 2014 at 1.30 p.m. at Hawkley Hall High School

Members: A Hardy (Chair) P Dahlstrom, J. Seddon, F. Quinlivan, D. Hurst (deputising for V. Birchall), G. Hayes, H. Phillips, A. Dawson. D. Lythgoe, A Birchall (deputising for R. Halford) , K. Pilkington, R. Lewis, A. Isherwood, J. Holland, P. McGhee and A Wells.

LA Officers:

K. Nelson (Assistant Director of Education)
M Rotheram (Strategic Finance Manager)
J. McDonald (Strategic Finance Manager)
C. Myers (Group Finance Manager)
J. Hough (School organisation)
F. Gore (Clerk)

Observers: C. Gore (GMB), T. Warren (Liverpool Archdiocese) Cllr J. Platt (Cabinet Member)

1. Appointment of Chairperson

It was agreed: That Mr A. Hardy be appointed Chair of the Forum for 2014-15.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairperson

It was agreed: That Mr P. Dahlstrom be appointed Vice-Chair of the Forum for 2014-15.

3. Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from V. Birchall, R Halford, M. Atkins and S. Wilson.

4. Thanks to Former Members and Welcome to New Members

The Chair, on behalf o the Forum expressed his thanks to J. Shanahan, L. Fox, G. Lloyd and D. Wood, former members of the Forum, for their contribution to the work of the Forum.

The Chair also extended a warm welcome to H. Phillips, A. Dawson, D. Lythgoe and Cllr J. Platt who were attending their first meeting of the Forum in their respective capacities.

5. Items for inclusion under AOB -

Early Education
Leigh CE Junior School – School Organisation Proposal
School's Banking Provider

6. Minutes

It was agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd July 2014 be approved as a true and correct record.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

none

7. Minutes of the Forum Funding Sub-Group

It was agreed: That the minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Group held on 17th September 2014 be approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

see minute 8 below.

8. School Funding Formula 2015-16

The Forum received a report (circulated prior to the meeting) seeking agreement to the principles to be adopted with regard to the Schools Funding Formula 2015-16. The Forum was reminded of the principles agreed in September 2012.

Members were reminded that at the last meeting it had been agreed that the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) rates be reviewed for 2015-16 so that the primary:secondary ratio was more reflective of the national ratio of spend. Following discussions at the Funding Sub-Group (see minute 7) a number of options had been shared with primary and secondary Headteachers. These set out funding models based on variations in the allowable factors and changes in the AWPU spending ratios that reflected the regional and national ratios (Wigan's current ratio of primary:secondary AWPU being 1:1.35, the national average being 1:1.27)

Primary school representatives commented that:

- the long-standing imbalance in spending needed to be addressed without further delay;
- they would wish to retain the current MFG lump sum of £150,000;

Secondary school representatives commented that:

- there was a need for an incremental approach to any planned changes in funding between the respective sectors so there was sufficient stability to allow secondary schools to manage reduced budgets;
- the Authority could move towards the regional average (1:1.35) before seeking to move to the national average;
- a number of secondary schools would have to manage reduced budgets that reflected falling school rolls in the short term whilst retaining the capacity to respond to increasing rolls in the longer term.

The officers of the LA commented that:

- the options submitted reflected the previously agreed funding principles;
- it was important to be mindful of the previously discussed issues on prior attainment and supporting pupils/schools in greatest need;
- the LA would continue to target the use of supplementary funding to those schools in greatest need;
- whilst recognising the premise of the request by the secondary sector for an incremental approach to funding changes there would actually be a detrimental impact on secondary

schools of adopting such an approach because of the current funding and protection arrangements;

- it should be remembered that the most significant factor in determining school budgets was pupil numbers.

Following detailed consultations with schools in 2013 on the 2014-15 formula and in view of the fact the Education Funding Agency (EFA) had not proposed any significant changes for 2015-16 it was not proposed to carry out further detailed consultations on the 2015-16 formula.

The report identified the allowable factors set by the EFA and recommended for 2015-16 an increase in the basic needs growth fund from £100,000 to £250,000 and the establishment of a fund of £100,000 to support schools with falling rolls. There would be funding totalling £1.2M available to provide targeted support to those schools facing particular difficulties in meeting need or managing reduced budgets.

Mr McDonald reminded the Forum that it was the responsibility of Local Authorities to take the final decisions on the formula. However agreement was required from Forum on those services to be de-delegated and centrally retained. The recommendations of the Forum would be reported to the Cabinet for consideration before the final funding pro forma was submitted to the Department for Education in January 2014.

It was agreed: (1) That the Forum re-affirm its support for the funding principles agreed in September 2012.

(2) That the recommendations now submitted on the utilisation of factors and the principles for allocation be approved.

(3) That the proposals on the de-delegated and centrally retained services, including the increase to the growth fund and falling rolls provision be approved.

(4) That option 3 be adopted (whereby the primary:secondary spending ratio moves from 1:1.35 to 1:1.29) and that the ratio continue to be reviewed in light of changes to the national average.

(5) That further modelling be undertaken to show the impact on secondary schools of reducing the AWPU at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to the minimum level and re-allocating that money to provide an increased element for prior attainment; and that information be made available for a meeting of Secondary Headteachers on 15th October.

9 School Budget Out-Turn 2013-14

The Forum received a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on the provisional year end position of the Schools Budget 2013-14. Appendix 1 attached to the report highlighted the following:

- An increase in carry forward of £0.443m into school balances.
- Total uncommitted balances of £2.823m in respect of centrally held DSG balances.
- Of this sum £0.600m had been earmarked for allocating to schools during 2014-15 in response to budgetary pressures, as per previous Forum decision.
- A carry forward of £2.223m relating to contingency / central expenditure

An analysis of the Central Expenditure Budget (comprising Schools, High Needs and Early Years Blocks) had been provided with the report.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted and the underspend now reported be used support schools in meeting local needs and in targeting additional funding to ensure schools remained sustainable in the short term and capable of meeting increased demand for places in the longer term.

10 High Needs Budget 204-15

The Forum received a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on the High Needs Block budget allocation 2014-15, details of which had been reported to schools.

Members noted that for 2015/16 the EFA would use the planned places numbers rolled forward from 2014/15. It had previously been stated by EFA that the numbers may be based on information from the schools census and college records completed in the autumn of 2014.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted.

11 Any Other Business:

11.1 Early Education

The Forum received a report (circulated prior to the meeting) seeking approval for:

- The LA to request approval from the DfE to transfer £150k of the two year old trajectory funding to capital funding in order to develop capacity within two Primary schools. (Marsh Green Primary School (£50k) and St Peters CE Primary School Leigh (£100K))
- all two year old maintained nurseries to have the hourly rate of £4.90 even if the children transferred to the 3-4 year old provision in the nursery class as a rising three;
- the provision of a free school meal to eligible two year olds who accessed their early education before and after a lunch time period at a maintained nursery or at a private /voluntary nursery that operates seamlessly with a maintained nursery;

The report gave information relating to the reasons for the requests and the alternative actions considered. Members asked about the unexpected expenditure at Marsh Green primary School that had led to the request and to costs associated with the nursery proposals.

Ms Hough confirmed she would provide further information on the Marsh Green needs and that the cost of the nursery funding changes would be met from the Early Years Block. The LA had considered the potential impact on providers in the maintained sector and the PVA sector and was confident the budget could meet the required needs.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted and the proposals be approved and accordingly:

- the LA formally request approval from the Secretary of State to capitalise some of the trajectory funding.
- the LA finance procedures be amended accordingly;

- maintained nurseries be asked to encourage their parents to apply for a free school meal. (if the child is accessing their early education over the lunch time period.)

11.2 Leigh CE Junior School – School Organisation Proposal

The Forum received a report (circulated at the meeting) informing the Forum that in April 2014 the Cabinet had agreed to consultations to change the age range of the two infant only schools (Leigh CE Infant and Leigh St John's CE Infant) and one junior only school (Leigh CE Junior) in the Borough so that they became through primary schools. The report showed how it was planned to manage the changes and the support required to help Leigh CE Junior school meet the projected shortfall in its budget during 2017-20. More detailed analysis of the financial implications would be made as the planned changes took effect and the staffing needs and overall budget requirement of the school became clearer.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted and approval be given in principle to Leigh CE Junior School receiving funding from the DSG reserve fund of approximately £67,000 in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 academic years and of £153,000 in 2020 to support the transition to a through primary school.

11.3 School's Banking Provider from 2015

Mr Myers reported that the LA had entered into a framework agreement with Barclay's Bank to provide banking services to Wigan schools from April 2015. Further information on the revised banking arrangements would be given to schools in due course, including plans for on-line banking facilities.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted

12 Date of Future Meetings:

It was agreed: That the meetings of the Forum for 2014-15 be held as follows:

Wednesday 26th November 2014

Thursday 15th January 2015

Tuesday 10th March 2015

Tuesday 5th May 2015

Thursday 2nd July 2015

All meetings to commence at 1.30 p.m. at venues to be determined.

meeting closed at 3.05 p.m.