

SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2018

Present: Jonathon Chishick, Councillor Lynne Doherty, Antony Gallagher, Keith Harvey, Reverend Mary Harwood, Angela Hay, Alan Henderson, Jon Hewitt, Lucy Hillyard, Councillor Mollie Lock, Patrick Mitchell, Chris Prosser, Graham Spellman (Vice-Chairman), Suzanne Taylor and Charlotte Wilson

Also Present: Wendy Howells (Finance Manager: Schools), Ian Pearson (Head of Education Service), Annette Yellen (Accountant for Schools Funding and the DSG), Suzy Mugford (Accountant) and Jessica Bailiss (Policy Officer (Executive Support))

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Reverend Mark Bennet, Councillor Anthony Chadley, David Ramsden and Bruce Steiner

(Graham Spellman (Vice-Chairman) in the Chair)

PART I

16 Minutes of previous meeting dated 16th July 2018

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2018 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 Actions arising from previous meetings

July18 – Ac1, unspent funding in the Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund: Ian Pearson reported that this had been discussed at the Heads Funding Group on the 2 October 2018 and it had been agreed that it would be appropriate to apply a £200k cap on the fund.

Ian Pearson reported that Jane Seymour had provided a written update on the following two actions as follows:

July18 – Ac2a, High Needs Block – Invest to Save Proposals, SEN Equipment for children attending nursery schools and resourced units: It was agreed at the previous meeting of the Schools' Forum that, although mainstream schools were now expected to fund their own Special Educational Needs (SEN) equipment, £10K would be set aside for funding equipment at nurseries as they did not have delegated SEN budgets and also at resourced schools. (It would not be fair to expect schools which hosted resourced units to fund all SEN equipment as they were taking children from across the local authority area and would have disproportionate equipment costs compared to other schools). This funding was being well utilised. There was a risk that demand might exceed the £10K budget so this would need to be considered when setting the 19-20 High Needs Budget.

July18 – Ac2b, High Needs Block – Invest to Save Proposals, Setting up on line forum for SENCOs: £1,600 was set aside for this, which was the balance left from the £100K allocated for invest to save projects once the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Training and Behaviour projects had been funded. The most logical way to set up an on line forum for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) would be through the Council's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Local Offer website as this

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was where all SEND information was held and effort was being made to encourage parents and professionals to use it more.

The software provider for the Local Offer website was a company called Open Objects. The price they had quoted was £3,900 to set up the on line forum, which exceeded the available budget of £1,600. There would be no ongoing running costs. It was suggested that the Schools' Forum might wish to defer consideration of this until the budget setting process began for the 2019-20 HNB.

July18 – Ac2c, High Needs Block – Invest to Save Proposals, Review of resourced school funding: An initial report on this would be brought to the next round of meetings in November/December 2018.

18 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

19 Membership

Jessica Bailiss gave the following updates regarding the Membership for the Schools' Forum:

- Mark Bennet would replace Mary Harwood from December 2018, which would leave an Academy Governor vacancy. Consultation was taking place with the relevant forum to find a new representative.
- Gary Upton had replaced Keith Watts as Trade Union Representative from October 2018.
- Jacque Davies' Term of Office had come to an end in October 2018 and she had confirmed that she would continue for a further three years.
- Angela Hayes' Term of Office would end in December 2018. Angela had been contacted and was consulting the Primary Executive Group.
- Charlotte Wilson's Term of Office had come to an end in October 2018 and she had consulted the Secondary Heads' Forum and they had approved that she would continue to be the Academy Headteacher representative on Schools' Forum for a further term.
- There was a Primary School representative vacancy and a response was due from the Primary Executive Group, to confirm who would fill this position
- There was still a Secondary Governor representative vacancy and consultation was taking place on this.

20 De-delegations 2019/20 (Amin Hussian)

Ian Pearson introduced the report (Agenda Item 6), which set out the details, cost and charges to schools of the services on which maintained school representatives were required to vote whether or not they should be de-delegated. Ian Pearson added that it was a decision that needed to be taken by the Schools' Forum on an annual basis.

The report gave further detail on each service including a table showing the budget and estimated unit charge. The Heads Funding Group (HFG) had reviewed each area including what the change in cost would be for each service in 2019/20. There were some areas where further justification had been required. One particular area of interest had included Health and Safety under the Statutory and Regulatory Duties (Table 6). There had been concern raised that the cost of Option 1 had increased from £3.52 in 2018/18 to £8.19 in 2019/20. It had been agreed that the Health and Safety Manager should be invited to the next meeting of the HFG to justify the reasons for the cost increase.

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Ian Pearson reported that in previous years the Schools' Forum had acknowledged that the HFG was looking into the de-delegation proposals in great detail and would submit a recommendation to the December Schools' Forum meeting, which it could then chose to approve or not.

Keith Harvey referred to the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service and noted that there was a change in the amount per pupil with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Keith Harvey asked if this included pupils with EAL in the early stages, as some schools had children who could speak English fluently and did not require support. It was possible an increased amount was required for pupils with EAL. Ian Pearson stated that de-delegations were restricted by Education and Skills Funding Agency rules and he would need to investigate in more detail to see if there was any flexibility in relation to the point made.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report, it would return to the Schools' Forum in December 2018 for final decision.

21 DSG Budget Overview 2019/20 (Wendy Howells)

Wendy Howells introduced the report (Agenda Item 7) which set out the changes to the calculation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2019/20, and the implications of the changes on the Schools Budget. Wendy Howells reported that the report was for discussion only.

Schools Block

Wendy Howells explained that section 4.2 of the report set out how the Schools Block funding for 2019/20 was calculated. For primary schools, the minimum per pupil funding level in 2019/20 was set at £3,500, and for secondary £4,800. The allocations for every school in the local authority were added up and divided by the October 2017 pupil numbers.

The total allocation excluding the Growth Fund was distributed to schools through the formula, by setting the formula funding rates and a minimum funding guarantee and funding cap on gains. The Growth Fund was now calculated separately to the funding formula using the October 2018 Census and therefore the final amount to be received was uncertain.

The method of distributing the funding would need to go out to consultation with all schools and be agreed by the Schools' Forum in December 2018, before being approved by the Council's Executive in January 2019.

With the agreement of the Schools' Forum and subject to consulting with all schools, up to 0.5% of the total schools block funding could be transferred to the high needs budget of other funding blocks. This was something that needed to be considered on an annual basis.

Jonathon Chishick asked if there would be specific funding available for the teacher pay award. Wendy Howells confirmed that this funding was separate to that being discussed and would be based on a per pupil amount. It would be available as a separate grant from September 2018 and it was unknown if the amount available would cover the amount required by each school.

Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

A new formula was in place to determine funding allocations for local authorities. As the funding being received did not cover the ongoing costs in the CSSB (a shortfall of £335k) proposals to balance the block had been considered by the Schools' Forum in January 2018. The funding yet to be confirmed for the CSSB was £992,560.

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Keith Harvey noted the significant shortfall and asked how this was being managed. Ian Pearson confirmed that plans to manage the shortfall would include actions that had been taken the previous year as a starting point.

Early Years Block (EYB)

The new Early Years formula was introduced in 2017/18 however the funding for the EYB would not be finalised until the result from the January 2019 census was available. There was a planned deficit of £84,186 for the EYB.

The High Needs Block (HNB)

The basic structure of the High Needs formula was not changing in 2019/20. The formula used a number of proxy factors, but with 50% allocated on the basis of historical spend, and a basic entitlement for the number of places in special schools.

Section 7.4 of the report illustrated how the funding for the HNB was calculated including import and export adjustments. In 2018/19 these had been included in the overall High Needs Funding Formula however, it was proposed for 2019/20 that import and export funding be ring-fenced. The issue was that fewer children had been imported so far in 2018 and this had placed pressure on the HNB.

Wendy Howells drew attention to the table on page 50 of the report, which confirmed that there was a planned overspend of £646,253 for 2019/20.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

22 Schools: deficit recovery (Wendy Howells)

Wendy Howells introduced the report (Agenda Item 8), which provided an update on the work being carried out with the schools that had set a deficit budget in 2018/19. This was something that had been requested as a standing item at each Heads Funding Group and Schools' Forum meeting.

Wendy Howells explained that the report provided an up to date position. All schools except one had now submitted their Period Five reports, however, it had been agreed that the Willows Primary School would not submit their Period Five Budget Monitoring Report due to reasons set out in the report. Wendy Howells suggested that going forward the Schools' Forum should receive exception reports only for schools in deficit.

A support meeting had already taken place with the John Rankin Schools Federation and were set to take place with each of the other schools in the near future.

Graham Spellman highlighted that the draft content for the Self-Check of schools financial position for 2019/20 was included in Appendix B.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

23 DSG Outturn 2017/18

Wendy Howells introduced the report (Agenda Item 9), which set out the actual deployment of the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG) in 2017/18 and proposed the amount to be carried forward to 2018/19. Wendy Howells added that the report had come to the last meeting of the Schools' Forum however, by omission some of the recommendations within the report had not been voted on and therefore needed to return for consideration.

Wendy Howells explained that Table 1 showed the year end position for 2017/18 and that the actual over spend at year end was £13,549.

Section 5.2 set out proposals that the Schools' Forum were required to vote on. All recommendations were the same as what had been submitted to the July Schools' Forum meeting apart from the recommendation for School Improvement. It was proposed

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that £5,960 of this budget be used to offset the overspend in the Statutory and Regulatory Duties budget and to correct the £37k over allocation of the under spends from last year.

Jonathan Chishick asked how the decision to cap the Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund at £200k affected the recommendation concerning the budget under section 5.2. Ian Pearson confirmed that schools would not be asked to contribute to the fund in 2019/20 or until the fund dropped below £200k.

Keith Harvey asked if the decisions required were based on the current year's budget rather than 2019/20 and it was confirmed that this was correct. It was noted that the following items were for decision by maintained secondary and primary schools only.

- 1) Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty: It was recommended that the unspent budget of £259,099 be added to the funding available in 2018/19 to help meet restructuring costs for schools in deficit – this would provide a total budget of £379,120. It was noted that this was a decision for maintained primary school representatives only.

RESOLVED that: the Schools' Forum agreed the recommendation.

- 2) Support to Ethnic and Minority and Bilingual Learners – it was recommended to use the amount of £35,170 to offset the cost to schools for this service in 2019/20 (this will be an approximate reduction of £50 per pupil).

RESOLVED that: the Schools' Forum agreed the recommendation.

- 3) Behaviour Support - It was recommended that the amount of £4,500 be added to the current year budget and utilised in 2018/19.

RESOLVED that: the Schools' Forum agreed the recommendation.

- 4) Growth Fund - It was recommended that this money be rolled into the budget already set for 2018/19 thereby increasing the budget to £277,710.

RESOLVED that: the Schools' Forum agreed the recommendation.

- 5) School improvement: £73,410 – it was recommended that £5,960 be utilised to offset the over spend in the Statutory and Regulatory Duties budget and to correct the £27k over allocation of the under spends from last year.

RESOLVED that: the Schools' Forum agreed the recommendation.

- 6) Statutory and Regulatory Duties: It was recommended that the amount of £5,960 be covered by the school improvement under spend above.

RESOLVED that: the Schools' Forum approved the recommendation.

24 Schools Funding Formula 2019/20 (Wendy Howells)

Wendy Howells introduced the report (Agenda Item 10), which set out the changes and requirements for setting the primary and secondary school funding formula for 2019/20 and to set out the funding proposal to go out to consultation with all schools.

In 2018/19, as agreed by the Schools' Forum, the National Funding Formula (NFF) had been followed. In 2019/20 the NFF would operate as a 'soft' system, which meant that the Local Authority would receive a total allocation and then allocate this out to schools according to the local formula. In the summer of 2018, the Government announced that this 'soft' formula would be extended until 2020/21.

Wendy Howells reported that it was being proposed that a top slice be applied. Wendy Howells drew attention to the supplement pack which had been circulated, which contained the consultation document which would go out to all schools.

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Table 1 detailed the National Funding Formula Rates and Annex A contained the funding factors and allocations for each school before the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), funding floor or cap on gains were applied. Two proposed formula allocations would be sent out to consultation and these could also be viewed under Annex A.

One of the proposed formula allocations would cause 16 schools to lose funding and the other (recommended) option, would cause two schools to lose funding by around £200 each.

Wendy Howells stated that the consultation document suggested that there should be an allocation of £400k from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block (HNB) and this needed to be firmed up to specifically ask schools if they agreed that a top slice should be applied.

The current funding regulations allowed for a few exceptional circumstances to be funded outside the formula and be top sliced from the DSG. For each fund the Schools' Forum would need to agree the amount set aside and establish clear criteria setting out circumstances in which a payment could be made (Agenda Item 11). The two funds falling within this remit were the Growth Fund and funding for schools with a disproportionate number of high needs pupils which could not be reflected adequately in the formula funding.

Keith Harvey asked what the amount of £400k for the HNB was based on. As far as he was aware, the maximum amount that could be transferred was 0.5%, which equated to around £500k. Wendy Howells stated that the amount quoted was lower because she had excluded rates however, if preferable the amount could be rounded up to £450k. Keith Harvey was of the view that the maximum amount should be applied for.

Ian Pearson summarised that there were two funding options for consideration along with whether funding should be transferred into the HNB and if so how much. If the decision was taken to transfer money into the HNB, then this would not become an annual commitment.

The Schools' Forum was required to take a view on whether to put both formula allocation options out to schools for consultation or alternatively just one. Jon Hewitt reported that special schools were heading towards a deficit and the number of children with high needs was increasing. He was therefore of the view that it would be sensible to transfer the maximum amount possible to the HNB from the Schools Block. This would help to support invest to save initiatives going forward.

Patrick Mitchell felt that it was important that schools were provided with a consultation rather than a recommendation. He also felt that supporting the HNB needed to be a priority.

The Chairman invited the Schools' Forum to vote on whether one or both funding options should be submitted for consultation with Schools and it was agreed that both options should go out to consultation.

The Chairman invited the Schools' Forum to vote on whether transferring funding into the HNB from the Schools Block should be included in the consultation with schools and it was agreed that it should be included.

Jon Hewitt stated that it was important to note that more than 0.5% could be transferred from the Schools Block to the HNB however, an application would need to be submitted to the Secretary of State for this.

Charlotte Wilson suggested that it would be useful when the information was sent out to schools to include information from other local authorities for comparison along with numbers of high need pupils. Jon Hewitt commented that benchmarking in the sector

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was particularly difficult. Charlotte Wilson queried if there was a specific trend in West Berkshire that was causing the deficit in the HNB.

Wendy Howells added the caveat that the information was going out to consultation on the 16th October 2018.

Councillor Lynne Doherty stated that there was a South East Leaders piece of work taking place which involved South East benchmarking. A report would be made available in the near future however, it would not in time for the consultation.

Ian Pearson suggested that an email be sent out to all schools after the consultation had commenced to provide schools with some background and comparison information for the high needs area. He confirmed that he would speak to Jane Seymour regarding this. Councillor Doherty highlighted that some of the information was already contained within the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy.

Ian Pearson added that there was an underlying issue in the way local authorities were funded to support children with special needs. Charlotte Wilson stated that if more money was required for pupils with high needs, then Headteachers should be provided with a reason for why this was.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Both funding options should go out to schools for consultation.
- 2) The option to transfer the maximum amount of funding from the Schools Block to the HNB should be included in the consultation with schools.
- 3) Ian Pearson would liaise with Jane Seymour regarding providing information on high needs in West Berkshire for schools. This would accompany the consultation document.

25 Additional Funding Criteria 2019/20 Wendy Howells)

Wendy Howells introduced the report (Agenda Item 11) which set out the current criteria and budgets for additional funds, for review by members of the Schools' Forum to ensure they were still relevant and fit for purpose.

Wendy Howells reported that there was very little change in the criteria and budgets for additional funds since 2017/18. She explained that in 2017/18 the decision had been taken by the Schools' Forum to remove the falling rolls fund because only one school in four years had qualified for a payment. The Growth Fund, Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund and Additional High Needs Fund had all been retained.

The value of the Growth Fund would change in the next report to the Schools' Forum in December 2018 because there had been a change in its value and how it was allocated out to schools.

The Chairman asked Members of the Schools' Forum if they were happy for the Criteria and Budgets for Additional Funds 2019/20 to go out to schools for consultation and this was agreed.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum agreed that the Criteria and Budgets for Additional Funds 2019/20 could go out to consultation.

26 Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty - Bid for Funding: Lambourn Primary School (Wendy Howells)

Ian Pearson introduced the report which summarised a bid that had been received from a school in deficit to access funding for the Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty De-Delegated Fund.

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Ian Pearson reported that Headteacher of Lambourn Primary School, Rachael Duke, had presented the bid to the Heads Funding Group (HFG) at its meeting on the 2nd October 2018 and the HFG had recommended that the Schools' Forum agree the bid. The amount (£18,833) was to cover the cost of staff restructuring and a retirement ill health payment.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum approved the bid from Lambourn Primary School as set out in section 2.1 of the report.

27 DSG Monitoring 2018/19 Month 6 (Ian Pearson)

Ian Pearson introduced the report (Agenda Item 13), which set out the current financial position of the services funded by the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG).

Ian Pearson explained that the area that required discussion was the High Needs Block (HNB). Table 1 summarised the budget position for each of the four blocks. Table 2 showed the forecast under or overspend position at the end of August 2018. The total overspend position against expenditure was £247k with a further £87k under achievement on High Needs funding due to a reduction in the import/export adjustment. Ian Pearson confirmed that no other variances were predicted for the other three blocks.

Section eight of the report looked at the HNB in more detail. Table 6 set out the current position of the block and the final revised budget was £547k. The total over spend forecast against the block was £881k, giving a net variance of £334k. Consideration would need to be given to where spending could be scaled back and savings identified. The report identified the main variances against expenditure under section 8.4 of the report. The largest areas of variance related to the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

Keith Harvey asked if the variances were based on a six month period or a whole year and Ian Pearson confirmed that they were based on the year end position.

Jonathan Chishick asked what percentage permanent exclusions had increased by. Ian Pearson stated that figures around permanent exclusions presented a challenge. If viewing the number of exclusions for the current year they were far less than the previous year. Therefore the increase in spending did not relate to an increase in actual numbers of children being permanently excluded but was more likely related to the cost of the higher level of support they required. This required further investigation.

Regarding the PRU, the number of pupils requiring a place at the provision was lower than what had been anticipated. Because schools were now being asked to subsidise the cost of pupils attending the PRU, schools were choosing to look at alternative provision. This in turn reduced the budget for the PRU and a review needed to be undertaken into the size and staffing levels required going forward.

Angela Hayes commented that the cost expected from schools was prohibitive and was a particular pressure for primary schools and small secondary schools. Ian Pearson commented that changes to charging for PRU placements had been enforced as part of a cost cutting exercise however, this needed to be reviewed.

Patrick Mitchell felt that reversing the decision to increase the costs to schools placing pupils at the PRU would be a mistake however, the proportion of cost provided by schools needed to be revisited.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

28 Forward Plan

It was noted that a report would be brought to the next round of meetings in November and December 2018 regarding a review into School Funding Transfers for Mainstream Exclusions and Fresh Starts.

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RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the Forward Plan.

29 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

30 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting would take place on Monday 10 December 2018, 5pm at Shaw House.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature