

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 21 June 2017 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present:

A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N. Unsworth, Financial Management, HBC
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
L. Feakes, Primary School with Nursery Unit Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
K. Landrum, Primary Representative - VA School (In the Chair)
J. Vincent, All Through Schools Representative
S. Ainsworth, Special Schools Representative (Sub)

Action

SCF1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor T. McInerney, John Rigby, Richard Collings, Marjorie Constantine, Syd Broxton, Karen Lawton and Kathryn Albiston.

SCF2 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the meeting held on 22 March 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF 35 – Update – the data validation exercise was successful and officers would advise nursery schools once the final funding future was known.

SCF3 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Forum was provided with an update on the Membership as follows:

- The vacancy for a Primary Representative for Small Schools still existed;
- The current Chair, John Rigby, would retire at the end of the summer term which left a vacancy for the Chairmanship role as well as his Secondary Academy representation;
- Emlyn Wright would replace John Rigby as the Principal at OBA; it was proposed that he be invited to take up John's Secondary Academy representation

- in September 2017; and
- The four year terms for Jim Wilson, Richard Collings, Karl Landrum (Vice Chair) and Amanda Brown were ending at the end of June 2017.

The procedure of the renewal of Forum Members representations were discussed in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5; these were agreed by the Forum.

Karl Landrum and Amanda Brown confirmed that they were happy to continue their membership from June 2017 and Richard Collings advised, via e-mail, that he would be happy to continue his. Jim Wilson would be contacted to discuss his representation. Once the renewals had been confirmed, the Forum would elect its Chairperson at the next meeting.

On behalf of the Forum, the Chair recorded his thanks to John Rigby for his commitment to the Schools Forum since he had joined. A letter of thanks would be drafted and sent to him, on behalf of the Forum.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) note the current membership and approve the arrangements for recruiting to the vacant positions; and
- 2) approve the arrangements outlined in paragraph 3.4 and 3.5.

SCF4 OUTTURN 20-16-17

The Schools Forum received the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position for 2016-17, and the amount of DSG carried forward into the 2017-18 financial year.

It was noted that all local authorities (LAs) were required to submit a Section 251 Outturn return to the Department of Education (DfE) each year. This is taken from the total income and expenditure for the previous financial year, so 2016-17.

Members noted the information contained in paragraphs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 and that the amount of unspent DSG from 2016-17 was £1,636,322, which will be carried forward into the 2017-18 financial year.

Officers advised that regular monitoring meetings would continue over the course of the year to identify areas

of concern and in order to put in place ways of minimising any overspends; as this method was successful in managing the overspend expected last year.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes that the amount of unspent DSG from 2016-17 of £1,636,322 be carried forward into the 2017-18 financial year.

SCF5 SCHOOLS BALANCES 2016-17

Further to the agreement at the Schools Forum meeting in January 2013, the excess surplus balances were to be monitored by the Forum despite the removal of the limits previously imposed.

The Forum was presented with the level of balances brought forward from 2016-17 by Halton's Schools and were referred to:

- Appendix A which detailed the Individual School Budget balances with comparison to the previous year; and
- Appendix B which detailed the Non-LMS (Devolved Formula Capital) balances brought forward into 2017-18.

The Forum noted that the Primary sector balances had decreased by £961,785 over the past year, as explained in paragraph 3.3. Due to time constraints the pro-forma had not yet been sent out to schools for completion. The Forum asked that an exercise is completed to look at how much of each school's carry forward balance was being used to balance the new year's budget.

Officers confirmed that the academies could share similar information, as they had done before.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) agrees that an exercise be carried out to look at how much of each school's carry forward balance was being used to balance the new year's budget; and
- 3) that the academies be contacted to provide their carry over balances.

SCF6 SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING - FORMER EDUCATION SERVICES GRANT (ESG)

The Forum received a report which provided a summary of the services previously supported from the Education Services Grant (ESG) General Duties Fund.

Members were reminded that on 23 January 2017 Schools Forum received a report from the Financial Management Team on the Schools Block Funding 2017-18 former ESG. The Forum agreed that the retained duties element of the former ESG of 0.29 m, could be funded from the DSG.

Further, for 2017-18, the maintained school members of the Forum agreed that the costs of the services previously supported through the General Duties Fund (£1,118,469) would be covered by £400,491 transitional funding, £97,094 new School Improvement Grant, and the de-delegation of £127,110 Dismissal budget, with the remaining balance covered by the 2016-17 DSG centrally retained carry forward.

The current level of funding for General Duties for 2017-18 was £1,118,469; this was noted by Members.

It was also agreed in January that so the funding options for 2018-19 onwards could be established, a 'Task and Finish Group' from maintained school representative be set up to consider the services previously funded from the General Services Grant, and recommend to the maintained members of the Forum the most appropriate future funding options.

The Forum discussed the English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision; the service and demand for the service, and suggested that the Group look at this as well. The following Members of the Forum volunteered to participate in the Group: L. Feakes; K. Landrum; S. Ainsworth and J. Vincent. Any absent Members who would like to join should contact Ann McIntyre.

RESOLVED: That a Schools Forum Task and Finish group be set up to consider the services previously funded from the ESG General duties.

Operational Director -
Education, Inclusion
and Provision

SCF7 SCHOOLS FORUM SUB GROUP MEETINGS UPDATE

The Forum received an update of the funding allocated to schools in financial difficulty by the Schools

Forum Sub Committee.

It was noted that the Schools Contingency Fund for 2016-17 was set at £217,010 and was the de-delegated contingency which was available only to those community primary and secondary schools maintained by the LA.

The circumstances by which a school could apply for funding was outlined in the report with the procedure for doing this. The Forum was presented with the funding allocated to three schools that applied in 2016-17.

Officers wished to thank the following Members for volunteering their time to sit on the Sub Groups: I. Kirkham; L. Feakes; J. O'connor; K. Lawton; K. Albiston; R. Collings; and J. Coughlan.

It was suggested that the *Licensed Deficit Policy* be included on the next Schools Circular. Additionally, it was suggested that the Circular also included a link to the Schools Forum agendas as they are published.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note the funding allocated to date and the increasing level of demand on this budget.

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SCF8 SEN UPDATE

The Forum received a presentation from Ann McIntyre, which gave an update on the SEN review which looked at the following areas:

- Enhanced Provision and Transport Review – the new policy was explained and would take effect from 1 September 2017;
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health Provision – two bids had been made to the LCR for funding but neither was successful;
- Behaviour Review – a review was currently being undertaken lead by the Head of the PRU to look at the challenges faced in the Borough and opportunities to resolve these; and
- Development of additional Alternative Provision – it was hoped that the Astmoor Vocational Centre would be developed to support this and it would be funded by schools buying into the service.

The Forum discussed the 9 funding factors in relation to the High Needs Block where it was stated that no authority would lose funding. Members were advised that

there was no indication of funding yet for next year, as this was usually received in the month of July.

Members were also advised that an all age review of SEND was to be commissioned utilising £54,000 grant received from the DfE. A further report would be submitted to the Forum.

It was noted that a Capital Grant of £500,000 had been awarded to Halton to implement any changes required following the review for SEN provision.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note the progress to date and request a further update at the October meeting.

SCF9 UNITED UTILITIES UPDATE

The Forum received an update on the Surface Water Drainage Charges by United Utilities.

It was reported that a letter was received from Mr Mogford, the Chief Executive of United Utilities, in early May, which set out their plans for charging schools in 2017-18 and 2018-19 onwards. The letter was presented in the report and Appendix A showed the calculations of the possible impact on individual schools.

It was noted that the North West LMS Finance Officers' Group was looking to meet before the end of the summer term to consider the total impact of this change on the North West region and whether it was fair and reasonable. An update would be brought to the Forum after this meeting.

Thanks were conveyed to Councillor Thompson who was very supportive in raising awareness of this and Mr J. Williams from Sefton Council who had dedicated a lot of his time on the issue.

It was commented that Officers would raise the same issues on behalf of the PVI sector in Halton at the next North West LMS Finance Officers' meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

Meeting ended at 5.40 p.m.