

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 12 June 2019 at Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present:

A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
R. Spriggs, Financial Management, HBC
K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery Representative
E. Wright, Secondary Academy Representative
K. Albiston, PVI Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
E. Haver, Special Academy Representative
A. Sheppard, VA Schools Representative
H. Austin, Community Special Schools Representative
I. Critchley, All Through Schools Representative
L. Roberts, Small Primary Representative
C. Liko, Community Primary Representative (Sub for A. Brown)
S. Rimmer, Divisional Manager Traffic, Risk & Emergency Planning and Health & Safety, HBC (SCF3)
L. Pennington-Ramsden, Principal Health & Safety Officer, HBC (SCF3)

Action

SCF1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Amanda Brown and Thalia Bell.

SCF2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2019 were agreed subject to the following amendments:

SCF29 – FORECAST OVERTURN FOR 2018-19 –

The second paragraph, second sentence should read:

Members were reminded that a balanced budget was only achieved due to the 0.5% transfer of funding from the Schools Block and the transfer of underspend from Central Services School Block (CSSB) to High Needs in 2018/2019.

SCF31 – EARLY YEARS BLOCK FUNDING FOR 2019-20 – Third paragraph, word *reduced* should be removed.

SCF3 HEALTH & SAFETY DE-DELEGATION 2019-20

The Forum received a report from the Senior Finance Officer on the Health and Safety de-delegation for 2019-20.

It was noted that this item was deferred from the 20 March 2019 meeting of the Forum as Members requested further information was supplied to them, to assist with their decision on whether to support the Health and Safety de-delegation.

It was reported that since then, work had been completed to identify the support provided to schools outside of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for which DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) funding was sought. A copy of the SLA was attached at Appendix A and the Principal Health and Safety Officer and Divisional Manager for Health and Safety were in attendance to answer the Forum's questions.

The Health and Safety Officer advised that the statutory duties were to carry out health and safety audits; to report accidents under RIDDOR and assist with accident investigations; to provide health and safety policies and procedures; and to analyse accident/violence statistics and maintain records/information for this. The provision of a Radiation Protection Officer for Secondary Schools was a non-statutory function.

After further explanation was provided, representatives from the maintained group of schools agreed to support the de-delegation, but requested to know how the breakdown for each school was calculated (referring to the paper on the March Agenda where a list of costs to maintained schools was provided). This information would be sent out as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum

- 1) notes the report; and
- 2) maintained school representatives agree that the Health and Safety de-delegation for 2019-20 be supported.

Financial
Management,
HBC

SCF4 DSG OUTTURN 2018-19

The Forum received the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position for 2018-19 and the amount of DSG being carried forward into the 2019-20 financial year. This

was as follows:

The DSG available for distribution in 2018-19	-	£76.2 M
The DSG expenditure in 2018-19	-	£75.9 M
Unspent DSG from 2018-19 brought forward into 2019-20	-	£0.3 M

The report provided commentary on the above figures explaining how they were arrived at, however the Forum requested more detail. It was confirmed that this would be provided for the October meeting as there was insufficient time to prepare this for today's meeting.

RESOLVED: That the amount of unspent DSG from 2018-19 of £347,563 being carried forward into the 2019-20 financial year be noted by the Forum.

SCF5 SCHOOL BALANCES 2018-19

Forum Members received the levels of funding brought forward from 2018-19 by Halton's maintained schools.

It was noted that whilst balances were still reported to the Schools Forum, no excess surplus balance limits were in place. However, the Forum retained the right to require schools to provide further information as to how their balance would be spent, should they so decide. The Forum was requested therefore, to decide whether any further information was required from any schools that were carrying forward high balances this year.

Members noted the differences in balances for each maintained group of schools for this year compared to last year, as explained in the report. Appendix A showed the balances for each maintained school, along with their 2017-18 balance for comparison. Appendix B showed the devolved formula capital grant balances, along with their 2017-18 balances for comparison.

It was noted that collectively, schools balances had increased from last year's £3.7m to £4.5m this year, and the possible reasons for this were discussed. With regards to schools with very large surplus balances, it was suggested that they could be asked how these would be used. Concern was expressed by a number of representatives that the information available only related to schools maintained by the Local Authority and did not include Academy

balances. Although the financial year was different for Academies, it was suggested that the level of balance for each one should also be reported and scrutinised by the Forum.

Further, a suggestion was made with regards to monies awarded by the Forum's sub groups to schools in financial difficulty; if they then showed a healthy balance at the end of the year, could this amount be returned to the contingency for use elsewhere.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the report and the schools balances as referred to in Appendix A.

Financial
Management,
HBC

SCF6 INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HIGH NEEDS IN HALTON

The Forum received a presentation from Ann McIntyre (Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and Provision) which summarised the High Needs Strategic Planning Review which was undertaken by *Peopletoo*, and funded using a revenue funding grant provided by the Department for Education (DfE).

The first phase of this work took place between May and October 2018, so had now been completed. Participation included children and young people, parents and carers, resource bases, special schools, the PRU, primary and secondary headteachers, key inclusion officers, colleagues from health and strategic managers, who all helped inform the review.

The presentation provided: a summary of the aims of the review; understanding the SEND population; findings relating to special schools, resource bases, the pupil referral unit (PRU), out of borough placements and exclusions; and contributions from health practitioners. It also outlined the key findings and recommendations of the review.

The Forum was presented with the next steps to be taken to improve the offer and the outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Halton to ensure good, quality sustainable support, that allowed pupils to be educated within their own community and alongside their peer groups.

It was noted that Executive Board had since approved the recommendations and *Peopletoo* had been commissioned to undertake the next phase of the project.

The Forum highlighted the problems with the high numbers of permanent exclusions being given in Halton to

pupils with persistent disruptive behaviour, without any fixed term exclusions occurring before. It was suggested that Governor training needed to take place around the procedures of excluding children. The Forum also discussed the gaps in identification of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD's) and other conditions in early years.

Officers advised that an update would be provided for the next meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and update on the first phase of the review be received and an update on the progress of the review be provided at the next meeting.

Meeting ended at 6.05 p.m.