

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Tuesday, 18 June 2013 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: E. Cargill, Primary Representative
L. Bowles, Nursery Schools Representative
M. Constantine, Special School Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary School Representative
A. Keeley, Secondary School Representative
L. Feakes, Primary School Representative
J. Rigby, Secondary Academy Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Representative
D. Moran, Primary Academy Representative
C. Owen, Secondary Community School
A. McIntyre, Children & Enterprise
A. Jones, Financial Management
A. Jones, Democratic Services
N. Shafiq, Financial Management
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
M. West, Place Planning & Provision Lead Officer
A. Brown, EFA Observer

Action

SCF1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made around the table. Apologies had been received from Simon Clough, Cllr Philbin, Mark Dennett, Jamie Jardine and David Stanley.

The Chair introduced one new Member to the Forum, Jim Wilson, as a Secondary Governor Member.

The Chair also introduced Bev Thompson, who was a representative of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) attending as an observer. She was from the North West office based in Manchester and was visiting forums in the area. She advised that the team was led by Gavin Monument and their function was to support and offer operational guidance to Schools Forums, as well ensure that good practice was instilled and maintained within forums.

SCF2 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes from the meeting held on 19th March 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF41 – High needs criteria for additional funding – it was agreed that the sub group should arrange to meet in

September.

SCF42 – It was noted that the ‘amalgamation of the PRU’s’ consultation results were being considered by Executive Board on 27 June 2013.

SCF3 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE / APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR / TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Forum was advised of the current membership and was requested to elect a Chairperson from this membership. It was noted that nominations for the role of Chair had been requested in advance of the meeting and the following Forum member had put themselves forward:

- John Rigby

Since there had only been one nomination submitted, it was proposed that John Rigby, the current Vice Chair, assume the role of Chair for a two year term, this was voted for and agreed by the Forum.

Following this Marjorie Constantine was nominated as Vice Chair, also for a two year term, this was agreed by the Forum.

The Forum was also presented with the draft Terms of Reference which were attached to the report. The principle of having a named substitute was discussed and it was agreed that this would be beneficial to the Forum. Forum Members were requested to send their named substitute to the Clerk when known.

Schools Forum agreed that the Terms of Reference be approved and adopted.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

1. note the current membership;
2. agree that John Rigby be elected as Chairperson for a two year term of office;
3. agree that Marjorie Constantine be elected as Vice Chairperson for a two year term of office; and
4. agree that the draft Terms of Reference be approved and adopted.

SCF4 OUTTURN 2012-13

The Forum was presented with the level of balances brought forward from 2012-13 by Halton Schools and the Dedicated Schools Grant outturn position for 2012-13.

It was noted that at the Schools Forum meeting in January 2012, the excess surplus balance limits previously imposed on schools were lifted. However Schools Forum retained the option to review school balances and question any school regarding their balance. It was agreed that as this was the first year that the limits had been lifted, a review of the schools balances was too early, therefore would not be carried out. The Forum would however, give consideration for a review of the surplus balances next year.

It was stated that the level of balances in the individual School Budget held by Halton Schools brought forward into 2013-14 was £7,015,969. The Devolved Formula Capital balances (Non-LMS) was now £356,575. Of this balance approximately £50,000 was being spent on projects currently underway, approximately £105,000 had to be spent by 31 March 2014 and the remaining £201,000 had to be spent by 31 March 2015.

Details of the Individual School Budget balances with comparison to 2011-12; and details of the Devolved Formula balances brought forward into 2013-14, were provided to Forum members at Appendix A and B respectively.

It was noted that these balances were only for the community and voluntary aided schools and that it would be helpful if academies balances were included so that comparisons could be made across the board. The Education Funding Agency would be consulted on this.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

1. note the report; and
2. note that the amount of unspent DSG from 2012-13 of £2,749,158 is carried forward into the 2013-14 financial year.

SCF5 GRANT FOR P E PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

The Schools Forum was advised of the new funding for primary aged pupils for the academic year 2013-14.

On 16 March 2013 the Government announced

additional funding for primary aged pupils to “provide new, substantial primary school sport funding” for the two academic years 2013-14 and 2014-15. The funding would be given to primary school head teachers and could only be spent on sport and PE provision. Head teachers would however, have the freedom to choose how they did this.

It was noted that schools would be held accountable for how they spent the sport funding. OFSTED would strengthen its coverage of sport and PE within the Inspectors’ handbook and supporting guidance, so that schools and inspectors knew how sport and PE would be assessed in future as part of the school’s overall provision offered.

To enable parents to make comparisons between schools in this regard, it was reported that schools would be required to include details of their sporting provision on their school website, alongside their curriculum details.

Attached at Appendix 1 were the estimated grant figures for each school with primary phase pupils as at January 2013.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the report.

SCF6 DFE BENCHMARKING OF NEW FUNDING FORMULA

The Forum received an overview of the formula factor values chosen by local authorities to set their Schools Block funding formula for 2013-14.

Members were reminded that in January 2013 all local authorities were required to submit to the EFA their Schools Block funding formula as agreed with their Schools Forum. The formula was set in accordance with the new school funding regulations that came into effect from 1 April 2013. The EFA had published a report giving an overview of the funding formula submitted by each local authority. It provided charts and brief commentary on the ranges of unit funding amounts they had selected and the proportions of the Schools Block funding attributed under each of the permitted factors.

Attached at Appendix A was the report ‘*Schools Block funding formulae 2013-14 – Analysis of local authorities’ Schools Block funding formulae*’ by the Department for Education.

The Forum discussed the possibility of including the

schools' business managers again in discussions on the Schools Block Funding Formula. It was also suggested that two groups would be more useful: (1) primary and early years; and (2) secondary and special schools. Anne Jones would progress this.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Anne Jones

SCF7 REVISIONS TO SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

The Forum considered a report which informed of the changes to the Department of Education's guidance on local authority schemes for financing schools, effective from 1 April 2013.

Officers recommended that now the new guidance was in place, it would be prudent to undertake a comprehensive review of Halton's Scheme for Financing Schools. It was suggested therefore that a working group be set up, lead by the Financial Management Division, to include representatives from nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, plus others such as Schools Support and Internal Audit. Representatives from specific sections eg procurement, would also be required.

It was agreed that Anne Jones from Financial Management would email the schools in the first instance to progress this and request volunteers.

RESOLVED: That

1. the report be noted; and
2. a working group of nursery, primary, secondary and special school representatives is set up to review the Halton's Scheme for financing schools.

Anne Jones

SCF8 CAPITAL UPDATE - PRIORITY SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAMME

A report was presented to the Forum which provided details of the progress for the Priority School Building Programme, which was a privately financed programme to address those schools in the worst building condition.

Members were advised that to qualify for the programme local authorities and maintained schools must accept being part of a long term private finance arrangement where the building maintenance would be provided by a third party. The contract would be procured by the EFA and

for procurement purposes each school would be batched together with a number of other schools in the same geographic area. The procurement would be based on standard designs and schools would be required to make a contribution to the annual revenue payments of the private finance contract.

In May 2012 the DfE announced the names of the schools to be taken forward in the Programme; Halebank CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School was included in the list and had since been included in a North West group of nine local authorities covering fourteen schools, which would be taken forward as a single development package.

Prior to the submission of the required business case by the DfE to the Treasury, Halton was required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding, together with the Diocese of Liverpool and Halebank Primary School, which would authorise the Secretary of State (SoS) to manage the school's progression through the procurement of the project. Further, a Landowner Agreement was needed between the Diocese and the Council, as the Council were the land owners of the playing field site. It was noted that the form of this agreement was yet to be finalised by the SoS. Details were also provided in the report of the 'land swap' which would be required on completion of the new school. The report also discussed the financial contributions that would be made by the school and provided details of the operation of the pre-school and its importance to Halton's early years' provision in the coming years.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note:

1. the current position of the Priority School Building Programme in respect of Halebank CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School and the progression of the scheme as part of the Programme;
2. that the Strategic Director (Children and Enterprise) in consultation with the appropriate portfolio holder, to enter into the Memorandum of Understanding agreement with the DfE – all documentation to be to the satisfaction of the Operational Director (Legal Services); and
3. that the Strategic Director (Children and Enterprise) in consultation with the appropriate portfolio holder, finalise the Landowner Agreement – all documentation to be to the satisfaction of the Operational Director (Legal Services).

SCF9 CAPITAL UPDATE - BASIC NEEDS CAPITAL FUNDING

A report was presented which outlined the methodology used to prioritise the schools for Basic Need funding for 2013-14 and 2014-15. Agreement was sought by Schools Forum to the prioritisation process for the allocation of Basic Need Capital for 2013-14 and 2014-15.

It noted that Basic Need funding was allocated to local authorities in recognition of the significant pressures local authorities were facing to provide additional school places. It was announced in March 2013 that the two year Basic Need funding for Halton 2013-15 would be £1,203,445.

The Forum was advised that the model Halton used to allocate the 2011-12 and 2012-13 Basic Need funding had been applied again for 2013-14 and 2014-15 and that this model had been developed in order to objectively prioritise schools identifying those with the strongest case for Basic Need support. The key elements of the model were detailed in the report.

The report provided background information on the schools listed and the recommendations made in each case which were discussed by the Forum. Members then agreed with the prioritisation process outlined.

RESOLVED: That the prioritisation process outlined within the report be agreed.

SCF10 GROWTH FUNDING

A report was presented to the Forum which provided a summary of the pupil growth agreed to date, identified further schools for consideration and sought permission to review and revise the arrangements for pupil growth from 2014-2015.

The Forum was reminded it was previously agreed that contingency funding be centrally held for the purpose of meeting pupil growth. For 2013-14 it was agreed that consideration would be given to the level of carry forward balance of any school that met the criteria for growth funding. As the carry forward figures for schools were not available in March this report was rescheduled to this (June) meeting. However, as a number of schools contacted the authority to advise that they required a decision prior to 31 May in order to confirm their staffing arrangements for September 2013, permission was sought from the Vice

Chair to consult all members by email on the first set of schools which met the criteria and had already identified their balance commitments. Details of this were attached at Appendix A.

The responses received from Forum Members were attached at Appendix B. As the majority of the Forum supported Options A, B, C and D, each school had been notified of their approved allocation. It was also reported that £18,594 ghost funding was agreed for Pewithall following confirmation of the level of commitments for their 2012-13 balance.

Members were asked to note a further 13 eligible schools, listed in Appendix C. It was recommended that approval was given to funding the growth funding at the first nine schools that had identified the commitments for their 2012-13 balances. Contact was made on the remaining four schools however they had still not responded. Officers requested that these four schools be given additional time to respond. This was agreed and officers would pursue them.

Officers' requested that a small working group be formed to review the 2013-14 procedure and suggest a more appropriate basis for allocation in 2014-15. This was agreed by the Forum, members would be emailed to request volunteers following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

1. note the pupil growth agreed to date;
2. agree the further requests for growth funding; and
3. agree to a review of pupil growth criteria and requests a further report on this review at the October meeting.

Meeting ended at 6.30 p.m.