

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Thursday, 16 October 2014 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: M. Constantine (Vice-Chairman) Special Schools Representative - In the Chair
Councillor Philbin, Portfolio Holder CYP&F (Observer)
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary School Representative
D. Stanley, All Through School Representative
S. Broxton, Primary School Representative
A. McIntyre, Children's Organisation & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
L. Feakes, School with Nursery Unit
A. Jones, Financial Services, HBC
R. Collings, Primary School Representative - Infant School
N. Unsworth, Financial Services
L. Rhodes, Riverside College, 16-19 Provision Representative
G. Monument, EFA Observer

Action

SCF13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from John Rigby, Lynne Fox, Jim Wilson, Kevin Smith (Lyn Rhodes attended as substitute), Karl Landrum, Andrew Keeley, Amanda Brown, Dianne Moran and Jill Berry.

SCF14 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 23 June 2014 were agreed as a correct record with the following amendment:

SCF11 – This should read, “Anne Jones advised the amount of £90,000 would be added to the contingency of £730.

Arising from the actions, the following updates were noted:

SCF 2 – Regarding the development of a Family Support Service, all identified schools had been contacted and the Family Support worker allocated to the cluster. With regards to the Early Years Funding 2014-15, notional SEN funding was not required as all fully funded by SEN.

SCF 9 – Hallwood Park and The Brow were contacted regarding their deficits. Hallwood Park had raised an invoice that was not paid on time and The Brow deficit was explained under Minute number SCF23.

SCF 10 – The meaning of *Dual Registered Pupils* was clarified to Members. It was noted that problems were still being experienced with parents not signing up to UIFSM.

SCF15 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Forum was presented with the current membership of the Schools Forum and advised that there were presently two vacancies: one for a small schools primary representative and one for a secondary academy representative. Despite attempts to recruit to these, no one had come forward. The relevant schools would be contacted again.

The upcoming Member retirements in early 2015 were noted and due to the difficulties in finding volunteers of late, existing Members were asked if they would consider standing again for another term. The Members would be contacted prior to the expiration of their respective terms to confirm this.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

SCF16 PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT FUNDING

The Forum was presented with a summary of the changes to the funding of pupil referral alternative provision (AP) from April 2015.

Further to the previous reports on funding for Pupil Referral Units on 19 March 2013, 21 January 2014 and 17 March 2014, the Forum was advised that a comprehensive strategic review of AP was now completed. It was noted that the key recommendations now being implemented were:

- One AP service with teams responsible for its delivery;
- A menu of provision that included full and part time programmes, outreach and CPD with clear entry routes and criteria and agreed exit outcomes and delivered by specialist staff;
- Appropriate funding streams to support the revised model identified; and
- A robust quality assurance framework for all AP.

The report detailed the LA commissioned provision and the Schools commissioned provision and requested the Forum to note the Local Authority's AP Top Up Funding Model proposals from April 2015 (for permanently excluded and IYFAP pupils). Members were also asked to approve the delegated AP early intervention funding from the high needs budget of £200,000, which equated to £25,000 per school, across the 8 high schools.

Members discussed the proposals and suggested that this formula for delegation be trialled for one year and then reviewed by the Forum. All Members agreed with this approach.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Local Authority's AP Top Up Funding levels are noted;
- 2) delegated AP early intervention funding from the high needs budget of £25,000 per school, across 8 high schools, is approved; and
- 3) AP Engagement Service offer is noted.

SCF17 INFANT FREE SCHOOL MEALS

A report was presented to the Schools Forum providing an update on the Universal Infant Free School Meal (UIFSM) Grant and the Free School Meal Service Level Agreement for 2014-15.

Members were reminded that the Education Funding Agency (EFA) announced last Autumn that a new grant would be introduced to fund Free School Meals for all pupils in Years Reception to Year 2. The conditions of grant were issued the following May and presented at the Schools Forum meeting in June. The first payment of the grant was received at the end of June which has now been fully distributed to eligible schools.

The report advised that the SLA charges were calculated before the end of the financial year to allow schools to make a choice of which SLA's they wished to purchase for the new financial year. As this calculation took place before the conditions of grant were issued, it was assumed that the grant would fund all infant pupils. Therefore the costs for these pupils were fully excluded from the SLA charges from September 2014.

Following clarity in the conditions of grant since then, the UIFSM is only payable for infant pupils who were not

currently eligible for Free School Meals, as they were funded for within the Schools Block funding formula. It was noted that due to the assumption made earlier in the year, this had resulted in a shortfall of charges for pupils currently eligible for FSM to the amount of approximately £220,000.

The Forum discussed the four options available to them on how this shortfall could be treated, as listed in the report. It was agreed that Option D would be the most suitable.

RESOLVED: That the Forum agrees to Option D being the most appropriate way to deal with the shortfall from the schools contingency.

SCF18 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FOR PVI SECTOR 2015-16

The Senior Finance Officer presented a report which requested an increase in the funding to the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Early Years providers in Halton.

The Forum was advised that since 2010-11 the level of DSG funding had not increased in real terms. Although this had put a strain on all areas, the PVI providers of Early Years free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds had been particularly hit by the lack of increase in funding. In 2010-11 the minimum wage for a person aged 21 or over was £5.93 per hour. From 1 October 2014 this increased to £6.50 per hour, an increase of 9.61%.

The numbers of children taking up the free entitlement hours had increased over the same period from 743.11 full time equivalent (FTE) children to 812.22 FTE; a 9.3% increase.

It was noted that although the total funding allocated to the PVI sector had increased (from £2,465,488 in 2010-11 to £2,692,796 in 2014-15), an increase of 9.2% to keep up with the increase in participation, no account had been taken of the statutory increases in the minimum wage. Further, the new pension requirements coming into effect from April 2015 needed to be taken into consideration.

The Forum considered the proposal to transfer £100,000 from the Primary budget to the PVI budget to allow for a small increase in the amount per hour paid to staff, an increase of 3.7% in their total funding. The risks of not doing so were debated as discussed in the report. It was noted that a reduction of £100,000 represented just 0.25% of

Primary school funding.

Members acknowledged the increases in costs as explained in the report and supported the request to increase funding provision by £100,000 for 2015-16.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

- 1) notes the report; and
- 2) acknowledges the increase in costs in the PVI sector and the requirement to increase the overall funding provision by £100,000 for 2015-16.

SCF19 UNITED UTILITIES SURFACE WATER & HIGHWAYS DRAINAGE CHARGES

The Forum received a report from the Finance Officer regarding the excessive water charges in place across the North West in comparison to other regions.

Members were advised that Sefton Council had been investigating for some time after noticing that schools in the North West were charged a significantly higher rate for sewerage and water services when compared to other areas in England. The Authority received an email from Sefton detailing their findings and the process they were now taking in order to try and reduce these costs.

It was reported that Sefton Council found that water service companies were able to charge differently for different parts of the bills they sent out. In the North West a method that was proportional to the surface area of the school was used – in some of Halton's schools this could be a considerable amount. Although it was legal to charge in this way, it seemed unfair that North West schools should be charged at a much higher rate than those of other areas in order to maintain the running of their schools.

An example was provided: in 2012-13, North West schools paid about £27,000,000 for the year, whereas in the South East, where they had similar number of schools and pupils, they paid only £11,000,000, a difference of £16,000,000 more in water fees.

The Forum was advised of the letter template produced by Sefton for the attention of United Utilities. It was however suggested at the recent North West LMS Officers meeting that letters should be sent to OFWAT instead. Officers prepared the template for each Halton

school, as shown in the attachment, so that each school could personalise and send to OFWAT.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum:

- 1) agrees that all schools be encouraged to write to OFWAT regarding the excessive water charges using the template; and
- 2) agrees that a letter be sent to OFWAT from Schools Forum signed by the Chairman.

SCF20 CAPITAL BASIC NEED

A report was presented which provided an update on the allocation of Basic Need Capital and sought approval for a bid process for Responsible Bodies on Strategic Needs.

The report informed that the Basic Need allocation supported the capital requirements for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools, free schools or academies and by establishing new schools. In Halton the pupil forecast data was used to determine if there was a need to provide additional school places in order to meet demand by comparing forecast data with school capacity data. Examples of how Halton used this funding since 2011-12 was provided.

Following recent analysis of forecast and school capacity, data showed that there was not an immediate pupil Basic Need issue to address within Halton. From the funding available up to 2015, it was agreed by the Executive Board of the Council on 4 September 2014, that funding of £1.4 million would be allocated towards meeting the building and organisational issues at the newly combined Fairfield Primary School; £474,818 would be set aside to allow the other Responsible Bodies to submit applications to the authority to address their strategic building needs and the £936,409 2016-17 allocation would be reserved to respond to pupil place planning/demographic issues arising in each primary or secondary sectors.

The report went on to inform the Forum of the bid process and conditions, and presented an example of the form '*Bid for Basic Need Capital 2014/15*' at appendix A. Members agreed that they were happy to support the bid process as presented.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum approves the bid process outlined in the report for Responsible Bodies based

on Strategic Needs.

SCF21 FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE

The Forum was presented with the decisions required for the Schools Block funding formula for the financial year 2015-16.

It was noted that the Education Funding Agency (EFA) had issued guidance on the Schools Block Funding Formula requirements for 2015-16. This included how the EFA would distribute an additional £390m to the least fairly funding local authorities. The changes made to the funding factors for 2015-16 in relation to 'Sparsity Factor' and 'Lump Sum' were also noted.

An update on information regarding the DSG funding for 2015-16 and the draft funding formula was noted, as was the consultation questionnaire and responses, attached at appendices A and B respectively.

Officers also provided information relating to the cash values of funding factors; pupil number variation; additional lump sum allowance; primary/secondary ratio; minimum funding guarantee; notional SEN; de-delegated funds; centrally retained service; pupil growth fund and the funding factors to be considered.

The Forum debated the formulas for the year 2015-16 and agreed as mentioned below.

RESOLVED: Schools Forum agrees that:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) the use of one value for Primary, one value for KS3 and one value for KS4 pupils as per the 2014-15 formula be continued;
- 3) a mix of FMS6 and IDACI with differing cash values between the primary and secondary phases continues to be used;
- 4) the factor for both primary and secondary phases with the old EYFSP framework for Years 3 – 6 at 73 point or less be continued;
- 5) the Looked After Children factor continues;
- 6) the retention of the cash value at the same level

reducing another factor to fund the overall increase or keep the overall budget for LAC at the same level and reduce the cash value – no decision was made so will be carried forward to the January meeting.

- 7) the EAL factor continues not to be used;
- 8) the Pupil Mobility factor continues not to be used;
- 9) the Lump Sum factor continues to be used at the same level as 2014-15;
- 10) the Split Site factor continues to be used at the same level as 2014-15;
- 11) the funding of LA Rates on the latest estimate of actual cost available be continued;
- 12) the PFI factor continues at the same cash value per pupil as previously agreed;
- 13) the setting of Notional SEN at 5% of each funding factor used be continued;
- 14) maintained primary schools would de-delegate the same items as last year for 2015-16;
- 15) maintained secondary school would de-delegate the same items as last year for 2015-16;
- 16) the centrally retained services as detailed in paragraph 3.13 be continued;
- 17) the Pupil Growth Fund be continued at the same level as for 2014-15 with the same eligibility criteria.

SCF22 GRANT ALLOCATIONS FOR 2014-15

A report was presented to Schools forum which provided an update on the grant allocations relating to schools for the 2014-15 financial year as follows:

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – Halton had received a total amount of £101,744,000. This included an amount of £22,111,186 that was distributed directly to Academies leaving a remaining balance of £79,662,414 for central services and maintained schools. With the carry forward from 2013/14, there was a total available grant of £83,498,651.

Pupil Premium (PP) – Halton was receiving £8,491,035 which included FSM6, Post LAC, Service Children and LAC. The LAC element was £209,000. Of the remaining, Halton would receive £6,643,435 for the other elements, with the balance going directly to the Academies.

Sixth Form – This funding was received for St Chad's, Saints Peter and Paul, Ashley and the 6th form in non-maintained schools and independent schools. The grant for this financial year was £1,484,960. Noted that the grant was allocated to schools for each academic year, but would be paid to the schools and recorded on a financial year basis.

Additional Grant to Schools (AGS) – Two elements to this grant and so far only the Primary PE and Sports Grant had been received, totalling £175,082. No news in relation to Secondary PE Teacher Release Grant funding.

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) – First payment of £724,742 received and devolved out to schools.

NCTL – This grant was payable to The Bankfield for part of the last financial year 13/14 and £56,982 had been received this financial year. No further payments due under this grant.

Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) – Allocation for this financial year was £278,180 which was for the 18 non-voluntary aided schools. It was noted that the DFC required schools to spend the allocation within 3 financial years of receiving it. Financial Management Team monitored the balances and alerted schools if they thought they may not meet the deadline.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF23 APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ann McIntyre advised the Forum that a request for financial assistance had been received from The Brow School for £34,151.

Due to the timing of the request a Schools Forum Sub Group had been set up to determine the request and after consideration, it was agreed that funding of £34,151 would be given to support the school.

Members were advised that the two pro-formas discussed at a previous meeting had now been put in place to assist with the determination of such requests. Examples

of these were tabled for Members' information and were named:

- a) Applications for Financial Assistance; and
- b) Applications to Schools Forum for Financial Assistance – Checklist for Applications.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

Meeting ended at 5.48 p.m.