

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 20 January 2021 held remotely

Present: Councillor T. McInerney (Observer)
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
T. Bell, 16-19 Provision Representative
J. Wilson, (Vice Chair in the Chair) Secondary Governor Representative
J. McConville, Secondary Academy Representative
H. Austin, Community Special Schools Representative
I. Critchley, All Through Schools Representative (part)
L. Roberts, Small Primary Representative
T. Nairn, PVI Representative
E. Hall, All Through Schools Representative (part)
S. Fenner, Academy with a 6th Form Representative
One member of the press

Action

SCF14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Anne Simmons, Karl Landrum, Jackie Coughlan and Elaine Haver.

SCF15 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 14 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF16 PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE PAYMENT PROCESS FOR FUNDED 2, 3 AND 4 YEAR OLDS IN HALTON

The Forum received a report from the Strategic Director, People, which outlined proposed changes to the payment process for funded 2, 3 and 4 year olds in Halton.

The reported detailed the proposed changes together with the rationale which underpinned these proposals and provided the results from the consultation. It then made recommendations for the Forum to consider based on this consultative process, which took place from 26 November 2020 to 18 December 2020. Details of the consultation, which took place in two parts, were also provided in the report.

The PVI representative queried whether the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) could be paid mid-term rather than in the final month of term. Officers would refer this to the relevant team for a response and the Forum would be advised by email once this was known.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) approves, with effect from 1 April 2021 – Halton Borough Council will make the following changes to the way payments are made for funded 2, 3, and 4 year olds:
 - a) all providers to be paid monthly; and
 - b) providers will be paid 100% of their estimates, split evenly between the number of months in the term (as per Part 1 of the Consultation, Proposal 1);
- 2) approves, with effect from 1 April 2021 – Halton Borough Council will introduce cut-off dates for starters and leavers. Dates to be fixed in advance and shared with providers. After these dates, Halton Borough Council will only continue to fund starters and leavers in exceptional circumstances (as per Part 2 of the Consultation, Proposal 2);
- 3) would be advised by email of response to EYPP question.

Operational
Director -
Education,
Inclusion and
Provision

SCF17 DSG FORECAST OUTTURN 2020/21

The Forum received a report from the Operational Director, Finance which presented the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) forecast outturn for 2020-21.

The DSG allocation for 2020-21 was £122,099,358 and was broken down as follows:

Schools Block	£92,581,025
Central Schools Services Block	£665,450
High Needs Block	£19,004,582
Early Years Block	£9,848,301

The report provided commentary on the break down into each block and representatives were referred to Appendix A, which gave a detailed breakdown of the budgets, forecast outturn and variances. The Forum noted that currently the deficit of the DSG as at March 2021 was £1,109,876.

The following comments/queries were made:

- Despite the Schools Forum supporting the initiatives to reduce Out of Borough placements, the position was still the same. The Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent restrictions had set this back by 12 months, but it was hoped that it would improve going forward. It was noted that both Brookfields and Ashley Schools had increased their capacity and the Council was in discussions with other providers in the Borough so that more local provision could be offered;
- The overspend in top up funding was reflective of an 11% increase in EHCP's over the last 12 months – all neighbouring authorities had found themselves with a significant increase;
- It was also explained that the top up funding was also used to support the increased provision at Ashley and Brookfields, preventing further out of Borough placements;
- No transfer was made from the DSG to the High Needs budget in 2020/2021;
- A deficit pay back plan would be brought to the June 2021 meeting of the Forum as a decision would need to be made on when and how this would be paid back.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

SCF18 SCHOOLS FUNDING FOR 2021-22

The Forum considered a report from the Operational Director, Finance, which presented the schools funding for 2021-22.

It was reported that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement was announced on 17 December 2020, giving a total of £99,050,733 for the Schools Block for 2021-22, an increase of £6,469,708 on the 2020-21 settlement (it was noted that £4,082,348 was transferred from the Teachers Pay and Pension Grants into DSG).

The report outlined the current position in that the individual Schools Block budgets had not been calculated at the time of writing the report, however the indicative allocations were shared at the meeting, together with the

recommendation of the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied. The maintained School Representatives of the Forum were also requested to decide which de-delegated budgets they wished to fund for 2021-22; the services, per pupil amounts and totals for each school were tabled at the meeting.

It was noted that details of the High Needs and Early Years Blocks' budgets would be presented at the February meeting of the Forum, as explained in the report.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) note the report;
- 2) agree that the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block Funding Formula for 2021-22 be set at 1.29%; and
- 3) agree that maintained schools' representatives agree to fund the following de-delegated budgets in 2021-22 – School Contingency; Staff Responsibility; FSM Eligibility; Financial Management; Capital Works; Health and Safety; and Dismissals.

Financial
Management,
HBC

Meeting ended at 4.40 p.m.