

## SCHOOLS FORUM

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### MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2017 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

#### Present:

Ms L Percy, Mr N Baker (Chairman), Mrs A Bates, Miss Tracy Cornelius, Mr J Hamp, Mr J Hawkins, Mrs S Jiggins, Mr J Proctor, Mr N Roper, Mrs C Williamson, Mr G Croxford, Mr P Cook, Mr M Cawley, Paul Daniel and Ms J Hughes

#### Also Present:

Cllr Philip Whalley

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#### 45 Apologies and Changes of Membership

Apologies were received from Michelle Chilcott.

Due to the retirement of former Vice- Chairman Martin Watson, nominations were sought for a new Vice Chairman to the Committee. George Croxford nominated Lisa Percy, which was seconded by Catriona Williamson and approved by the Forum.

#### 46 Minutes of the previous Meeting

##### **Resolved:**

**To approve and sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.**

#### 47 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 48 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman gave thanks Carolyn Godfrey- Corporate Director, for her contributions over the years, in assisting the work of Schools Forum.

The Chairman also advised that report 11 was a duplicate of reports 11c/d. Consequently, agenda item 11 would be re-ordered, so that reports could be considered in the following order; 11- Schools Block; 11c- High Needs Block; 11d- central Schools Block; and 11a- Overview of National Funding Formula for Schools & High Needs.

49 **Children and Young People's Trust Board Update**

There were no updates from the Trust Boards, as there had been no meetings since the last Forum meeting.

50 **Budget Monitoring**

Liz Williams- Head of Finance introduced the reports, which outlined the budget monitoring information for the Dedicated Schools Grant for the financial Year 2017-18.

Attention was drawn to Appendix 1, which outlined the budget monitoring summary, as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017. It was highlighted that there was an overall projected underspend of £0.223 million against the overall schools budget. Particular mention was made of the projected £0.100 million overspend in the High Needs budget. It was also confirmed that the budgets for the free childcare entitlement for 2 and 4 year olds, were assumed to be on target to break even, however, there was not enough data to indicate the new take up of the additional entitlement to 30 hours.

**Resolved:**

**To note the budget monitoring position at the end of August 2017.**

51 **Reports from Working Groups**

**Report from the School Funding Working Group and SEN Working Group**

Liz Williams- Head of Finance introduced the update report, referring Forum members to the papers and minutes included in the agenda.

It was explained that the working group considered a report on the financial compliance statements, currently sent to maintained schools confirming compliance with deadlines for financial returns, and that it was agreed that the compliance statement should cease and that consideration of the financial returns to be completed by schools be included in the work of the Design and Task Group, reporting in to the Education Transformation Board.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That Schools Forum notes the minutes of the School Funding Working Group and SEN Group meeting.**
- 2. That Schools Forum confirm the recommendation of the working groups that consideration of the financial returns to be completed by schools be included in the work of the Design and Task Group reporting in to the Education Transformation Board.**

## Verbal update from Early Years Reference Group Joint Meeting of School Funding

A verbal update was received from John Procter who explained that the free entitlement to 30 hours childcare was taking effect and that charitable nurseries were facing the greatest threat. He also advised that the focus of the Early Years Board was now on bringing all agencies together to work towards school readiness of 0-5 year olds.

### 52 **Virtual School - Funding Overview and Proposed Pupil Premium Arrangements**

Chris Whitfield- Virtual School Headteacher gave a presentation, which detailed the statutory role of the Virtual School. The Forum were advised that there are 7 Virtual School Officers in Wiltshire, each having their own geographical area. It was explained that the Virtual Head teacher is responsible for the allocation and oversight of the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) for Children and Young People in Care, and that all expenditure must be used to benefit educational outcomes for individuals and groups within this cohort.

The Pupil Premium Proposal, as detailed in the report was highlighted, whereby a base amount of the PPG would be allocated to schools in 3 payments over the Academic year. It was explained that the PPG for looked After Children (LAC) would be increased from April 2018, from £1900 to £2300, and that the allocation would need to be reviewed at that time. The Forum were advised that the remainder of the funds would be retained by the Virtual School to support extra support requests, cumulative packages, transition support, attendance oversight and specific support initiatives. It was emphasised that the proposal would allow for future planning of schools, being aware of the amounts to be allocated, and provide greater clarity and oversight.

In following questions, the Forum sought clarity on the existing arrangements of the PPG and Virtual School. It was explained that currently Virtual School retained all the PPG LAC funds and allocated it out, according to need and requests. It was explained that some schools have not been requesting the funds. The group expressed their support and approval of the proposed changes.

#### **Resolved:**

**To support the Pupil Premium Proposal, as outlined in the attached report.**

### 53 **Schools Revenue Balances 2016-17**

Jane Ralph- School Strategic Financial Support Advisor introduced the report, which outlines the position of revenue balances of maintained schools in Wiltshire, as at March 2017.

Attention was drawn to the tables contained in the report, which displayed the movement in revenue balances over the past 3 years, namely that between 2015-16 and 2016-17, there was an overall decrease of 25.79% in school balances. It was explained that a table included the gross balances, which had been included for transparency. This showed a surplus balance of £9,984,963 for 2016-17 and a deficit balance of £-3,584,844. Appendices 1-5 were also highlighted, which further analysed the overall schools revenue balances.

The Forum were advised to note the key issues of the report. Particularly, as shown in Appendix 4, that 5 schools have been in deficit of 2.5% or more for each of the last four years. This equates to 3.3% of Wiltshire Schools as at March 2017 and could, potentially, trigger further enquiry from the DfE, as the benchmark threshold is 3%.

In following questions, it was confirmed that the Education Transformation Board was looking at ways to improve revenue oversight but it was confirmed that the Local Authority had limited power in addressing the large deficit and surpluses of individual schools, but was working with all schools in deficit towards successful recovery plans.

**Resolved:**

**To note the contents of the report.**

54 **TU Facilities Time Budgets 2018-19**

Grant Davis- Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager introduced the report, provided an overview of the current Trade Union Arrangements for Wiltshire Schools and set out a proposal for funding the professional associations in representing their members.

It was explained that the LA has formal recognition agreements with recognised teachers' Trade Unions and Professional Associations and support staff unions to enable schools and academies to claim backfill costs where accredited representatives undertake facilities duties. The background information behind Facility Time costs was explained, including the activities requiring trade union representatives. It was explained that the total budget for the claim for the release of Trade Union Officials had been set at £50,000 for a number of years. However, it was explained that during the financial year 2016-17, the budget was overspent by £4,789, which must be recovered from the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Forum were advised that if the current Trade Union arrangement was to be viable, it would require additional funding.

**Resolved:**

**To continue to support the concept of county-wide representation by the teacher and support staff unions and professional association, ensure the appropriate level of funding of a central Facility time budget to meet legal obligations under Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act**

**1992, The Employment Act 2002 and the ACAS Code of Practice on Time Off for Trade Union Duties and Activities.**

**To increase the funding to the Trade Union Facilities Time budget from £50,000 to £60,000.**

55 **Schools Block**

Grant Davis- Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager introduced the report, which provided members with an overview of the key headlines from the recently published policy document – ‘The national funding formula for schools and high needs’.

The Forum were advised that the government had conducted two consultations in 2016 on the new formula and had announced their final decisions on the formula which would be introduced in April 2018. It was explained that the new formula would split the Dedicated Schools Grant into 4 blocks; Early Years Block, Schools Block, High Needs Block and Central Schools Services Block. Members were advised that from 2018-19 and 2019-20 there will be a soft formula, which will enable Schools Forum to determine the distribution of funding for schools. However, from 2020 onwards, it will be the hard formula, details of which have not yet been published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency..

Additionally, members were advised that the funding blocks would be ring-fenced from 2018-19, but that a maximum of 0.5% of the total could be transferred between blocks. Attention was also drawn to a slight increase in the minimum funding levels from the National Funding Formula (NFF) with an additional £1.3 billion of funding over the next two years, with minimum funding levels of £4,600 per secondary pupil in 18-19 (and £4,800 in 19-20) and minimum funding of £3,300 per primary pupil in 18-19 (and £3,500 in 19-20). It was also confirmed that the majority of school funding will be delivered through the pupil-led factors and for the NFF this will account for 90.7% of school funding. Furthermore, in regards to school-led funding, the NFF has confirmed that there will be no differential between primary and secondary phases and that all schools will receive a flat rate lump sum of £110,000. Finally, in relation to the transition to the NFF, it was explained that gains would be capped at 3% until at least 2020, unless funding fell short of the NFF.

In discussion, a general disappointment was expressed at a failure of the NFF to address additional rising cost pressures of schools and deliver a ‘fairer’ funding solution.

**Resolved:**

**To note the contents of the update report.**

56 **High Needs Block**

Liz Williams- Head of Finance introduced the report, outlining the government's proposals for high needs funding in 2018-19 and 2019-20 and potential implications for Wiltshire.

It was explained that the policy document issued 14 September 2017 outlines the government's intention to allocate funding for high needs via a national formula. The Forum was advised that Wiltshire will be protected from losing funding under the formula, and will instead see minimum increases of 0.5% per head in 2018-19 and 1% per head in 2019-20, compared with planned spend in 2017-18. The key elements of the formula were explained as; basic entitlement, historic spend factor, proxy factors and area cost adjustment, with further adjustments being made in regards to the funding floor, import/exports adjustments and transfer to the schools block.

The Forum were presented with the position for Wiltshire schools, with an estimated high needs funding for 2018-19 is £45.020 million, but with a planned high needs spend in 2017-18 is £47.070m. If this is adjusted for the transfer of £2.368m back to schools block then current planned spend is £44.702m for comparison.

**Resolved:**

**To note the content of the reports.**

57 **Central Schools Block**

Liz Williams- Head of Finance introduced the report, which was a report on the government's proposals for Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) funding in 2018- 19 and 2019-20 and potential implications for Wiltshire.

The Forum was advised that the CSSB is to be created from two existing funding streams: the DSG funding that is held centrally by the LA for central services, and the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG). It was explained that due to transitional arrangements Wiltshire would gain 1.9% compared with the 2017-18, rather than the 3.6% provided for by the new formula. Members were informed that the estimated CSSB for Wiltshire in 2018-19, based on October 2016 pupil numbers, is £2.497m compared with a 2017-18 baseline of £2.450m.

**Resolved:**

**To note the report.**

58 **Overview of National Funding Formula for Schools & High Needs**

Liz Williams- Head of Finance introduced the summary report to provide guidance on the government's proposals for a national funding formula for

schools and high needs from 2018-19, and to identify the key issues to be considered by Schools Forum in agreeing a local funding formula for 2018-19.

It was explained that there are key criteria that will need to be reflected in the local formula and that these were detailed in the separate report on the national funding formula for schools. Specifically, a new requirement for a minimum per-pupil funding level of £3,300 per primary pupil and £4,600 per secondary pupil in 2018-19 (increasing to £3,500 and £4,800 respectively in 2019-20), considering all the pupil led funding factors within a local formula.

The Forum was advised that to meet the required timescales and ensure an agreed formula for 2018-19, they needed to agree some key principles to enable modelling to begin and consultation to be drafted. Members were advised that any consultation would need to take place in the autumn in order that proposals for the formula can be brought back to December Schools Forum for recommendation to Cabinet.

**Resolved:**

**To agree the proposed approach as outlined in paragraph 16 of the report:**

- a. Movement between funding blocks – any movement between funding blocks will require consultation with all schools. Schools Forum proposed that there would be no movement between blocks.**
- b. The local formula for 2018-19 – it is proposed as a starting hypothesis that Wiltshire should look to move as close to the national formula as possible. If we take this as a starting point it will reduce the many different options/models that could be required for consideration and it is clear that the national formula is the required end point by April 2020. It is possible that we will not be able to move completely to the national formula in one go as there will need to be consideration of issues such as affordability of the growth fund (which will be funded at historic levels) and consideration of the required formula for de-delegated services (note de-delegation will need to form part of any consultation). There may be other issues that arise during the modelling process.**
- c. Consultation – the operational guidance requires consultation with all schools including demonstration of the impact of each option. This consultation will need to take place over the autumn terms and will need to be conducted over a relatively short period. We will need the data and modelling tool to be issued by the ESFA in order to produce any impact statements. A steer is sought on the consultation process but at this stage it is recommended that we have a short consultation in late October/early November and build in a number of consultation roadshow meetings to share information and support head teachers, governors and business managers in responding.**

## 59 **Projecting Demand for Special School Places**

Susan Tanner- Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning introduced the update report, to advise Schools Forum on the work being undertaken to understand future demand for special school places.

The Forum was informed that an Independent Consultant had produced a report, covering a wide range of issues and looking into demand for special school places. It was explained that the report makes recommendations for addressing short term issues of policy and practice, medium term issues including making the most of what we have and longer term issues, including securing new provision. It was explained that the overall conclusion was that the current provision of special school places is not aligned to current and future needs. It mandated that existing provision needs to be reconfigured to meet current demand, and that new provision is required to meet future demand.

It was explained that there are three key factors, increasing the number of children and young people in Wiltshire who have Special Educational Needs (SEN); the impact of reforms – (2014 Children and Families Act and overall changes in education policy); military re-basing; and growth in population. Members were advised that 2.9% of Wiltshire's children and young people had an EHCP, just slightly above the national average of 2.8%. Furthermore, it was predicted that by 2026, there would be an additional 661(5-16 year olds) with an EHCP, in addition to the 2276 EHCP's, (5-16 year olds) currently in the county; and that this meant that approximately 220 additional special school places (for 5-16 year olds) would be required by 2026. A further 88 pupils are projected to need a specialist 16–25 educational provision. Similarly, in Early Years, it is projected that a further 59 specialist nursery places are likely to be required. However, the Forum was advised that it is more difficult to predict demand for these age groups.

Susan Tanner advised that a report would be presented to the November Cabinet, seeking permission to go to consultation on proposals to address both the issue of demand, and securing a better geographical distribution of provision, in relation to in area special school places

**Resolved:**

**To note the contents of the report.**

## 60 **Confirmation of dates for future meetings**

The dates of future meetings were confirmed as:

- 7 December 2017
- 8 January 2018
- 22 March 2018



61 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 3.46 pm)

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