

SCHOOLS FORUM

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2015 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Mr N Baker (Chairman), Mr M Watson (Vice-Chair), Mrs A Bates, Mr A Bridewell, Ms A Burnside, Ms M Chilcott, Miss Tracy Cornelius, Ms J Hatherell, Mr J Hawkins, Mr J Proctor, Mrs D Rock, Mr N Roper, Ms I Sidmouth and Mrs C Williamson

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Gamble

28 Apologies and Changes of Membership

Apologies were received from:

Judith Finney
Rosemary Collard
Sue Jiggins
David Whewell

29 Minutes of the previous Meeting

Disappointment was expressed by Catriona Williamson regarding regarding the recent letter received relating to the increased cost of some of the traded services, prior to a full review of the costs of the individual services.

Resolved

To agree and sign the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting held on 12 March 2015 subject to the following amendment:

Attendance:
“Cllr Richard Gamble”

30 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

31 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements

32 **Proportionality Review of the Wiltshire Schools Forum**

Adam Brown, Democratic Services Officer, was in attendance to present the report.

The report recommended that the Wiltshire Schools Forum agree to pass a recommendation to the relevant Cabinet Member that two additional membership spaces be created for a Primary Academy and a Special Academy representative through delegated authority.

The recommendation came as a result of a review which looked at the October 2014 numbers on roll (NOR) data and national guidance for Schools Forums. National guidance for Schools Forums stated that where there is at least one school in a particular category, there must be at least one representative for that group on the forum. It was clarified that there were two special academies in Wiltshire.

Mr Brown stated that after looking at the NOR data it was noted that primary academies in Wiltshire have 10.947% of pupils on roll. As such it was recommended that with this taken into account, that they should have representation on the Schools Forum.

The Forum considered how representatives would be elected. This was noted as being through the Primary Heads Forum (PHF) or WASSH. It was also noted that it was up to the proprietors of academies to elect and nominate representatives.

It was noted that representatives did not have to be Head Teachers.

The table in the report detailing numbers of members on the Wiltshire Schools Forum and who they were representing was noted as being incorrect. It was requested that Post-16 be included, and that the numbers match the membership table on the Schools Forum agenda front sheet. It was noted that clarification was needed on who each member was representing.

Resolved

- 1. To agree in principle that two additional places on the Wiltshire Schools Forum be created for a Primary Academy and a Special Academy should receive representation**
- 2. To recommend to the relevant Cabinet Member that two additional membership spaces be created for a Primary Academy and a Special School Academy representative through delegated authority.**
- 3. To recommend that representatives be made through the Primary Heads Forum and WISSC and that only academy members are allowed to vote on appointments.**

33 **Trust Board Update**

Susan Tanner, Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning, was in attendance to deliver a verbal update.

Wiltshire College had undergone an Ofsted inspection and were expecting a report to follow in three weeks.

Recommissioning work at the Children's Centres was currently ongoing with a wide consultation on service specifications and framework. Within Children's Services it was noted that getting in early on was a key factor for consideration.

The "14-19 Training Strategy Provision" had been completed. Within the strategy strengths were noted as including: collaborative approaches, and expanding provision within the sector. Improvements were noted as being needed within: the tracking of young people and their destinations; re-engagement of young people aged 18 into work and training; and the monitoring of schools, colleges, and other education providers.

It was noted that the government had promised a significant injection of funding. It was being looked into where this could be used. Children's wellbeing was explained as being a major issue. Revamping the healthy schools programme, and commissioning online counselling for youth were also noted.

Resolved

To note the update.

34 Budget Monitoring

Grant Davis, Strategic Financial Support Manager, was in attendance to present the Budget Monitoring report.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was overspent by £2.001 million at the end of the 2014-15 financial year. This had been an increase of £0.397m compared with the forecast at the end of January 2015.

The final budget for 2014-15 has been adjusted to reflect all academy recouplement through the year, including part year adjustments for in-year converting schools. This reduced the overall budget from £304.941million reported to the March meeting, to £193.168million as a final DSG allocation, prior to adjustments for the Early Years block.

The Early Years budget was explained and is adjusted annually based upon the January census data, the results of this don't get verified until April or May, in the following financial year. After verification of the January 2015 census data a further allocation of £0.153million was made to Wiltshire's Early Years Block, which increased the total DSG allocation for 2014-15 to £193.321million.

Within Early Years the budget for 3 & 4 year olds demonstrated a minor overspend of £0.041million compared with the previous forecast of £0.088million. The budget for free entitlement for 2 year olds was underspent by £0.476million, more than the forecasted underspend of £0.299million. The Early Years & Childcare team budget underspent by £0.123million during 2014-15.

Within the High Needs Budgets there was an underspend of £0.586million against expenditure on Independent Special School placements. Top up budgets in schools were overspent by £1.4million. The budget for Named Pupil

Allowances was overspent by £0.808m, and the top up budget for post-16 was overspent by £0.692million.

Other variances were noted as including an overspend in maternity costs amounting to £0.076million. The budget for Contingency and the Growth Fund was also noted as underspent by £0.369million benefiting from a significant number of back-dated Business Rates revaluations.

It was noted that any under or overspend against the Dedicated Schools Grant is carried forward to the following financial year. The total £2million overspend this financial year had to be funded from within the DSG reserve.

The potential full year cost outstanding for term time only back-pay was included as a figure of £0.2million, but was subject to further changes as there were still a number of outstanding arrears to be paid.

It was requested that within appendix one, that the Early Years section be separated in the future.

Resolved

To note the Budget Monitoring report.

35 Reports from Working Groups

a) School Funding Working Group (SFWG)

The minutes of the 3 June 2015 SFWG meeting were presented to the Forum.

The Working Group had considered a report on the pressures within the High Needs Block for 2015-16.

It had been agreed by the SFWG to recommend that the Schools Forum continue to fund and recoup at the rate of £10,000 per place with regards to the provision of additional place-funding and recoupment of place-funding. This funding would be applied proportionately on a monthly basis.

Resolved

- 1. To note the minutes of 3 June 2015 School Funding Working Group meeting.**
- 2. To note the recommendation in respect of the use of the place funding at £10,000 for both additional place funding and for recoupment.**

b) Special Educational Needs (SEN) Working Group (SENWG)

A verbal update was provided.

It was noted that much of the work of the SENWG fed into the High Needs Budget 2015-16 report, detailed in minute 36.

Resolved

To note the verbal update.

c) Early Years Reference Group (EYRG)

The minutes of the 15 May 2015 EYWG meeting were presented to the Forum.

Cost pressures on the Early Years budget were discussed and a debate ensued regarding changes to the Early Years funding rates took place.

It had been requested that costings be provided to central government, following the proposed changes and that the first 30 hours of child care be provided free of charge. It was noted that the only ways that nurseries could do this was through charging more for additional hours.

Resolved

To note the minutes of the 15 May 2015 Early Years Reference Group meeting.

36 High Needs Budgets 2015-16

Grant Davis introduced the High Needs Budgets 2015-16.

The High Needs Budgets report was presented to the Forum in March along with measures to contain and reduce the impact of spends within the high needs sector.

The RAG Rating of Savings was considered by the Forum.

- Recycling the funding for unfilled ELP places was considered to be too late to implement in July and would therefore come out of the August payments.
- The opening of Greentrees Resource Base had been postponed by 12 months.
- Savings to within SEND Support Services had been confirmed.
- The option of not topping up the Hard to Place Pupils budget had been implemented.
- Renegotiating prices with Independent Providers was currently being explored, but it was noted that it was not known how the independent sector would respond.
- TIPS funding had been withdrawn

Progress on these savings is to be reported on at the next Schools Forum meeting.

It was asked if there were any schools within Wiltshire that needed recouping and would not have any places as a result. The mechanism for recoupment was explained as being delivered in a schedule to the school which detailed future funding amounts. The future funding would be reduced to balance out recoupment figures.

Concern was expressed from special school governors regarding budgets. It was noted that the problem was that the high needs element of the DSG was not sufficient to meet the High Needs requirements within Wiltshire. Many MP's had been contacted about this issue, and should be contacting the Department of Education regarding it.

It was explained that the Schools Forum was able to allocate DSG funding as deemed appropriate. It had been decided that the DSG should be ring-fenced into its particular allocations and not used to cross-fund other areas.

It was commented that many mainstream secondary and primary schools in the south of Wiltshire were experiencing pressure to admit children who were not suited to mainstream schools. This was explained as possibly resulting from pressure on special schools and cutbacks to their budgets. Mainstream schools were increasingly accommodating SEN children due to a lack of increase in special school places and special schools.

Resolved

- 1. To note the report.**
- 2. To confirm that the RAG monitoring of the savings proposals be adopted for identifying the impact of the savings measures for 2015-16.**
- 3. To agree that the first tranche of ELP and Resource Base recoupment should commence from the August top up payments.**
- 4. To confirm that additional place funding should be awarded and unfilled place funding be recouped at the annual rate of £10,000 per place, awarded and recouped on a monthly basis. Where recoupment would cause particular hardship, for example through a temporary drop in pupil numbers, then schools could submit a case to the SFWG for their consideration.**

37 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

38 Confirmation of dates for future meetings

It was noted that in 2014 one meeting was held in November to replace the September and December meetings. It was suggested the September and December meetings be combined into one November meeting in 2015, unless a consultation is released regarding a new National Funding Formula.

Resolved

- 1. To cancel the Thursday 8 October 2015 and Thursday 10 December 2015 Schools Forum meetings.**
- 2. To hold a meeting of the Schools Forum on Thursday 12 November 2015.**

39 **Urgent Items**

A paper on redundancy situations for over 55's was circulated to the Forum. This was explained as bringing Wiltshire in line with the rest of the South West authorities. The plan was hoped to be in place by September 2015.

A report on Virtual Schools Financing was requested for the next meeting.

40 **Schools Management Information Systems**

Grant Davis introduced the Schools Management Information Systems report.

As a local authority it was explained that there were economies of scale of purchasing the annual licences for the MIS through the LA on behalf of maintained schools.

The report detailed that Wiltshire is considering its procurement options.

The report was noted as being included for information only. It was included under part two due to the procurement nature of the topic.

Resolved

To note the update report.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 3.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Adam Brown, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718038, e-mail adam.brown@wiltshire.gov.uk

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