

## SCHOOLS FORUM

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### MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 9 MARCH 2017 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

#### Present:

Mr N Baker (Chairman), Mrs A Bates, Ms M Chilcott, Miss Tracy Cornelius, Mr J Hamp, Mr J Hawkins, Mrs S Jiggins, Mr J Proctor, Mr N Roper, Mr S White, Mrs C Williamson, Mr P Cook, Mr M Cawley and Miss Cathy Shahrokni

#### Also Present:

Cllr Richard Gamble

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#### 19 Apologies and Changes of Membership

##### RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the change in Membership as outlined in the Agenda.

#### 20 Minutes of the previous Meeting

##### RESOLVED:

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

#### 21 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations.

#### 22 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements.

#### 23 Children and Young People's Trust Board Update

Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning Susan Tanner gave an update for the Board, stating that an Early Year Board has been established, to ensure that children had the right help in Early Years and were school ready.

The Chairman also gave an update from the Education Transformation Board, stating that at the last conference, it was agreed that a Design Task Group would be established to represent all schools in Wiltshire. The Group would look at key issues such as leadership, viability, concerns and safeguarding.

24 **Budget Monitoring**

The budget monitoring information against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the financial year 2016-17 was presented by Head of Finance Elizabeth Williams.

The Committee was referred to Appendix 1 which contained the relevant data. Notably, it was highlighted that the current projected overspend is just within the level of DSG reserve rolled forward in to 2016-17, and that any increase in the level of overspend between now and the end of the year would result in an overspend being carried forward in to 2017-18.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee noted the report.**

25 **Reports from Working Groups**

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee noted the reports and minutes of the Working Groups.**

26 **School Budgets 2017-18 - Update Report**

Strategic Financial Support Manager Grant Davis introduced the report which sought to outline the key changes resulting from the schools funding formula for 2017-18. It was explained that the schools block was set at £260.78 million which is an increase of £4.68m on the 2016-17 funding level.

Attention was drawn to the tables in the report, showing changes in pupil numbers, "Per Pupil Funding" and other Elements. Changes to the Minimum Funding Guarantee and data surrounding the capped funding of schools were highlighted. It was explained that The Minimum Funding Guarantee ensures that schools are protected from a drop in their overall per pupil funding of greater than -1.5% but that schools seeing a gain in their level of per pupil funding are capped at 0.90%.

Appendix A of the report was referred to, showing the breakdown of top-up funding and the impact of increase agreed for 2017-18. Questions were asked surrounding the application of the Minimum Funding Guarantee to Special Schools and it was confirmed that there are different top up rates of Special Schools as a result of the minimum funding guarantee calculator.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee noted the report.**

## 27 **Analysis of Independent Provision Spend**

Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning Susan Tanner introduced the report, going through the Spend in detail. It was explained that the figures used on this report were based on full year costs not actual spend.

Notably, it was highlighted that there has been a significant reduction in independent specialist post 16 placement spend, alongside a significant increase in the number of post 16 learners, with a 57% increase in the number of post 16 SEN learners whilst spend is projected to decrease by 47%. It was explained that on average this meant a decrease of £56,000 to £24,000 per pupil. Consequently, the need to stop the flow of learners to independent provision was emphasised and that more need to be done to accommodate these learners internally.

The Officer also outlined the main reasons for placements in independent provision and the categories of spend for which the council may have been able to meet needs.

Questions were asked by Members as to the success rates at Tribunals. It was confirmed that a number of Tribunals have ruled against the Council and they have had to continue paying for the Independent Provider. The Officer said that the priority had to be stopping these places being taken up in the first place.

### **RESOLVED**

**The Committee noted the contents of the report.**

## 28 **Allocation of Funding from Schools Block 2017-18**

Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning Susan Tanner introduced the report which explained 5 proposals for the allocation of £800,000, as identified at the January Schools Forum meeting. It was agreed that the Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning be tasked with identifying proposals for the use of this one-off money to support the delivery of the SEN Supporting Schools Strategy

The 5 proposals were discussed and debated in detail. Namely:

### **Proposal 1 – Creation of specialist resource base provision (in-reach and out-reach) for SEMH KS1 &KS2 - £600k**

The proposed specialist resource centre was described as a Therapeutic Intervention. It was highlighted that these costs would be set up costs, making an investment, which aimed to reduce the reliance on Independent Provider Spend. The investment would develop initial places, with a view for the centres to be expanded and extended in the future.

The Committee asked a number of technical questions surrounding the provision of the centres. It was confirmed that Schools would be asked if they

were interested in providing these centres and that the Schools would then work directly with the Council to set up the centres.

#### Proposal 2 – Transition Funding £130k

The proposed funding was explained as looking to make funding available for all transition periods, including pre-school to primary and primary to secondary.

#### Proposal 3 – Funding to support development of peripatetic Hearing Impairment Service £20k

This fund was described as being a floating fund, to make equipment available to schools.

#### Proposal 4 – Allocate £10k to support minor developments in AP

To provide funding of £10k which, together with the LA £20k, can be used to provide support for developments in each of the three secondary cluster groups.

#### Proposal 5- Balance to support any further identified developments in Proposals 1-3

#### **RESOLVED:**

**The Committee approved all 5 Proposals, on the condition that Schools Forum will receive regular updates, including the transition process.**

### 29 **National Funding Formula for Schools - Draft Consultation Response**

The Chairman introduced the Draft Consultation Response and explained that the details had already been looked at in detail by the relevant working groups but that the proposed response needed approval by the Committee.

Head of Finance Care Elizabeth Williams took the Committee through the questions and responses of the Consultation, in Appendix V2 of the report. Additional comments on the responses were discussed and agreed. Namely:

- Question 8- Sparsity funding- Should be allocated a lower amount.
- Question 9- Growth Factor- That Wiltshire Council Core Strategy should be referred to in the response.
- Question 12- Funding Floor for Growing Schools- That the response must make clear that Wiltshire Council agrees with this Funding Floor as an exception, otherwise it may be seen to contradict the response to Question 10- Do you agree with the principle of a Funding Floor?  
Answer- No.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee approved the response to the Consultation, with the above comments.**

30 **High Needs National Funding Formula - Draft Consultation Response**

Head of Finance Elizabeth Williams introduced the Draft Consultation Response. It was explained that the response had already been considered by the relevant Working Group. It was noted that there were concerns of the for overall level of high needs funding and the use of proxy data for SEN that does not support the needs of pupils in a rural authority such as Wiltshire. It was also stated that Wiltshire disagreed with the use of historical spend.

The Chairman took the Committee through the proposals in Appendix V1 and all were approved with an additional comment on Question 8- Further Considerations- That the Formula does not recognise Special School Cost Pressures.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee approved the response to the Consultation, with the above comments.**

31 **Confirmation of dates for future meetings**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 22 June 2017.

32 **Urgent Items**

There were no Urgent Items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 4.05 pm)

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