

Schools Forum

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2019 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Neil Baker (Chairman), Aileen Bates, Andy Bridewell, Rebecca Carson, Michelle Chilcott, Sam Churchill, Phil Cook, John Hawkins, Mel Jacob, Lisa Percy (Vice-Chair), John Proctor, Giles Pugh, Nigel Roper, Fergus Stewart and Catriona Williamson

Also Present:

Grant Davis, Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager), Cllr Jane Davies (Portfolio Holder, Education and SEND), Kieran Elliott (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Helean Hughes (Director, Education and Skills), Louise Lewis (Head of School Effectiveness), Marie Taylor, (Head of Finance, Children and Education), Judith Westcott (Head of Special School Transformation)

60 Apologies and Changes of Membership

Apologies were received from Cllr Pauline Church, Mark Cawley, Jon Hamp, Graham Shore, Cllr Ross Henning, David Whewell, Charlotte Corfield and Trudy Srawley.

It was noted that Graham Shore from Holy Trinity Academy in Calne would be the new Primary Academy representative in place of Lindsay West, and that a new Primary School Governor representative from the WGA to replace Sue Jiggins had not yet been appointed.

61 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2019 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

That subject to spelling corrections under minute numbers 53 and 54, to approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

62 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements.

63 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations.

64 **Updates from Working Groups**

The Forum received the update from the Working Groups. In particular an update was received regarding charging fees for admission appeals, to cover local authority overheads. It was reported that the council was looking into the possibility of providing a subsidy for the cost.

There was an update regarding the Ministry of Defence education support funding for 2020, where only £0.054m had been awarded, partly as a result of successful large bids for support funding in previous years.

It was reported that budget roadshows would be incorporated within the briefings for Headteachers, and it was being explored if this could be extended to School governors.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the update from the working groups.

65 **DSG Expenditure - Wiltshire Virtual School**

A report was received from Kathryn Davis, the new Head of the Virtual School, in relation to forecast expenditure on Looked After Children for the financial year 2020/21. The Forum received details of the past years' expenditure and anticipated needs for the following year. It was noted costs for full time alternative education provision during 2019/20 were broadly similar to costs incurred during 2018/19, and with no expectation that the need would decrease it was requested the same level of funding be allocated for 2020/21.

The Forum welcomed the details of the report, and at the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the expenditure forecast at the end of 2019/20 and to consider the request made for 2020/21 at the time of setting the 2020-21 budget in January 2020.

66 **Dedicated Schools Budget Consultations - Update 2020-21**

A report was received in relation to three separate consultations which had taken place in Autumn 2019.

The Schools Block De-delegated budget consultation sought information from schools on which services maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools would wish to be de-delegated. There had been a limited number of responses, however those responses had been significantly in favour of

retaining the de-delegated arrangements in respect of HCSS Software Licence, Trade Union facilities costs, maternity costs, ethnic minority achievement service, Traveller education service and behaviour support service. It was agreed by members that the de-delegation of services would remain unchanged from 2019-20 and that the budget allocations would be determined at January's meeting.

The Transfer of Schools Block to support the High Needs Block consultation followed a decision by the Forum in January 2019 to transfer up to 1% from the Schools block to support the high needs block, which was approved by the Secretary of State.

The consultation responses supported removing excess growth from the DfE's growth fund where practicable to do so, with a mixture of responses on the level of transfer with a majority selecting a transfer of £1.5m, 67% of respondents believed children with EHCPS could be supported with reduced funding, and comments were made regarding alternatives to a per pupil reduction model, and two schools volunteered to be part of a working group to look at this issue.

The final consultation was a DfE consultation on clarifying the specific grant and ringfenced status of the Dedicated Schools Grant. This was stated to be a potentially significant change to the partnership funding approach currently in place between Wiltshire council and Schools Forum if confirmed in 2020 guidance as expected, as the consultation seems to suggest placing the responsibility of any High Needs Block overspend with Schools Funding block alone reducing the risk that covering DSG deficits from general fund reserves could require local authorities to make spending reductions in other services.

Resolved:

Schools Forum noted the report on local consultation responses and would take them into account when making the required decisions in relation to the schools delegated budget for 2020-21 at the January 2020 meeting. The maintained primary and secondary representatives were in support of maintaining the de-delegation for all the listed services.

Schools Forum noted the DfE consultation regarding Block movements and would consider the impact when making the required decisions in relation to the schools delegated budget for 2020-21 at the January 2020 meeting

67 **Dedicated Schools Budget - Budget Monitoring 2019/20**

A budget monitoring report was received for 2019/20. An overspend of £6.429m was currently projected against the overall schools budget, which included an underspend of £0.247m on the schools block budget, £0.995m overspend on the early years budget, and an overspend of £5.685m on the high needs budget. This would take the cumulative deficit over the 1% DfE threshold to require a recovery plan to be created.

Details were provided of recovery plans in place to stop or delay any uncommitted spend not linked to safeguarding, elections, trading or longer-term transformation or savings plans.

Details were sought on comparisons with statistical neighbours in relation to numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) growth in year. It was clarified that this is only collected nationally annually but that the latest SEN2 dataset would be shared when available.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the budget monitoring position at the end of October 2019 alongside;

- a) the recovery action plan presentation later in the agenda**
- b) Reports on the various Autumn consultations – de-delegated services, transfer of schools block to high needs block and the DfE’s consultation on treatment of the DSG as a ringfenced grant in the local authority’s accounts**
- c) To share SEN2 comparative data when it becomes available.**

68 High Needs Recovery Planning

Helean Hughes, Director of Education and Skills, delivered a presentation in relation to High Needs Recovery Planning. The volunteering of two headteachers to form part of a working group to look at the issue was welcomed, recognising schools and the council would need to work together to address cultural and other issues to address the increased demand.

Project streams had been established to look into specific areas such as post 16 transition, inclusion and school effectiveness, enhanced learning provision and resource bases, in order to target specific areas for change and support.

The Forum discussed the presentation, noting that no schools had responded to a previous consultation on post 16 transition and encouraging this to be done, although there had been engagement with Heads at earlier stages. In response to queries it was stated upskilling mainstream schools to support children was essential in order to transition pupils back to mainstream settings.

It was also noted that even with all the potential savings identified through the recovery plan there was still projected to be an increased overspend, so further work with schools would be needed to make further cost saving measures.

The Forum noted the presentation and the continuing work that remained to progress the recovery plan.

69 **Schools Block - National Funding Formula 2020-21**

A report was received on the national funding formula for the schools block for 2020/21, noting that whether the result of the General Election there was not likely to be sufficient time for any changes to the formula from the DfE for the 2020-21 year.

The Forum discussed the main changes to the formula, including minimum per pupil funding levels, a 4% increase in the core factors of the formula except for free school meals which would be increased by inflation, and introduction of a new formulaic approach to the mobility factor. It was stated that Wiltshire had not applied a mobility factor before, and under the new formula Wiltshire would receive just over £0.500m, with military service areas with the largest impact.

The Forum also considered the overall allocations as compared to previous years, with an increase of £19.79m,

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the report.

70 **Allocation of Funding for Pupil Growth 2020-21**

A report was received on a proposed methodology for allocating funding for pupil growth from the school's block growth fund in 2020/21. Although there had been a change in the methodology of being awarded the funding, the Forum was not required to adjust how it allocated the funding.

The Forum discussed the new funding methodology and the criteria to apply for allocation of growth funding. It was discussed that the Forum had not previously established an optional Falling Rolls fund for a number of reasons, and that DfE criteria required that if established this funding could only be provided to Good or Outstanding schools. The Forum debated the proposed methodology for allocation, and after discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- a) **To approve the criteria for allocating pupil Growth Fund in 2020-21, unchanged from 2019-20.**
- b) **To agree that the budget for the Growth Fund to be set at its meeting in January 2020, when the full DSG is known for the 2020-21 year.**
- c) **To not establish a Falling Rolls Fund**

71 **Confirmation of Dates for Future Meetings**

The dates of future meetings, all to start at 1.30pm, were confirmed as follows:

16 January 2020
26 March 2020
11 June 2020
15 October 2020
10 December 2020

72 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.40 - 3.15 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott, Tel 01225 718504 or email kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

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