

Schools Forum School Funding Working Group

25 February 2013, 8:30am, Stoate Room, Shurnhold, Melksham

Minutes

Present: Liz Williams, Martin Watson, Steve Clark, Neil Baker, John Hawkins

Apologies: Catriona Williamson, Andy Bridewell, Phil Cook, Tim Gilson

1	<p>Minutes from Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting had been considered by Schools Forum and there were no matters arising.</p>	
2	<p>Controls on Surplus Balances – outcome of consultation with schools</p> <p>EW presented a report detailing the outcome of the consultation with schools on the proposed changes to the Controls on Surplus Balances Scheme.</p> <p>A total of 58 schools had responded to the consultation, 57 of which were in favour of the proposed changes.</p> <p>The working group agreed that the proposal to amend the funding scheme to withdraw the control mechanism on surplus balances with effect from the 2013/14 financial year be supported.</p>	
3	<p>School Budget 2013-14 Update</p> <p>EW updated the working group on progress to date with school budgets for 2013-14:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirmation had been received from the EFA that the Wiltshire formula was compliant with the new rules.• Budgets had been recalculated following the last Schools Forum meeting to reflect a 0.35% reduction in per pupil funding. Deprivation funding rates had also been reduced by 0.35% but lump sums and SEN funding elements had been left unchanged.• Recalculated figures had been circulated to Schools Forum members as agreed• It was anticipated that budgets would be issued to schools by the end of the week• Delegated budgets would not include top up payments for high needs pupils or funding from the pupil growth fund. Schools receiving these elements of funding would be notified by separate schedule which would be included in the budget packs.• Initial copies of the forward planning software (FPS) had been sent out to schools and a patch would be issued with the new funding rates once budgets had been finalised and sent out.• 5 budget roadshows had been held across the County in addition to a specific roadshow for staff and governors from Special Schools <p>EW outlined the guidance and information that would be issued to maintained schools with their budgets. MW requested a copy of the</p>	EW

	<p>information pack that was being sent to maintained schools.</p> <p>EW circulated the funding rates for the mainstream funding formula and for top up rates for special schools, resource bases and enhanced learning provision (ELP). She explained that per pupil and other funding rates were stated gross of all new delegation and that an adjustment would be included on the funding certificate to deduct the funding for budgets to be de-delegated. For any in year adjustments to school budgets this meant that reduced funding rates would need to be used to ensure de-delegated budgets were not included.</p>	
4	<p>Schools Funding Reform – Review of 2013-14 arrangements (DfE consultation attached)</p> <p>EW drew member’s attention to the consultation document issued by the DfE <i>Review of 2013-14 School Funding Arrangements</i>. The final date for responses is 26th March 2013. The document picked up on many of the issues that Wiltshire had raised in the response to the initial consultation on the new funding arrangements including issues relating to small schools, rurality, service pupils and the use of thresholds for funding pupil mobility.</p> <p>The key issues for Schools Forum were discussed and it was agreed that the following information would be helpful to assist Schools Forum in responding to the consultation, in particular the issues around “necessary” small schools and rurality/sparsity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Benchmarking information on the sizes of schools in similar rural counties; 2. Per pupil funding for different sizes of schools within Wiltshire under the old and new formula, pre and post MFG 3. Data on the nearest second school for pupils attending small rural schools. <p>The group discussed whether a joint response from the LA and Schools Forum should be made or whether separate response would be more appropriate. It was considered that for some of the questions the responses may differ and so separate responses may be required.</p>	EW
5	<p>Free School Meal Pooling Scheme</p> <p>EW presented a report on the estimated balance on the Free School Meal Pool at the year end. It was projected that a balance of £80,096 would remain at the end of 2012-13. Claims in the current year had been higher than in 2011-12 and reflected an increase in the number of pupils eligible for and accessing free school meals.</p> <p>EW recommended that this balance should be retained in full within the pool and that no cash back should be distributed in the current year. It was agreed that this recommendation should be made to Schools Forum.</p>	EW
6	<p>AOB</p> <p>No AOB was discussed</p>	
7	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Next meeting to be held on 13th June, 8.30am at Shurnhold</p>	