

SCHOOLS FORUM

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 27 JUNE 2013 AT THE USHER SUITE - CIVIC CENTRE, ST STEPHENS PLACE, TROWBRIDGE. BA14 8AH.

Present:

Mr N Baker (Chairman), Mrs Aileen Bates, Mr Steve Clark, Mr Tim Gilson, Jan Hatherell, Mr J Hawkins, Mr M Keeling, Mr J Proctor, Ms I Sidmouth, Mr Martin Watson (Vice-Chair) and Mrs C Williamson

Also Present:

Ken Brough, Julia Cramp, Stephanie Denovan, Cllr Richard Gamble, Dr Tina Pagett and Liz Williams

27 Apologies and Changes of Membership

Apologies were received from:

- Dr Peter Biggs
- Mrs Julia Bird
- Mrs Sue Jiggins
- Mr Robert Rees
- Cllr Laura Mayes
- Rev. Alice Kemp

Changes to membership

Mrs Aileen Bates replaces Rev Alice Kemp as SEN Governor (schools member). Rev. Alice Kemp remains an SEN parent governor representative with observer status.

Mr Robert Rees replaces Dr Tina Pagett as a representative of the 14-19 partnership.

Kenneth Brough replaces Neil Owen as the primary governor representative with observer status.

Cllr Laura Mayes, the new cabinet member for children's Services and Cllr Richard Gamble, portfolio holder for Schools, Skills and Youth, were welcomed, both with observer status.

28 **Minutes of the previous Meeting**

The Chairman drew attention to the minutes found on pages 1 to 7 of the agenda.

A proposal to amend the wording in the SEN working group in minute no 19 to read:

'Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report and minutes from the SEN working group. She highlighted the recommendations which requested a review of Top-Up Rates for 2013-14 and recommendations for the response to the Review of School Funding Arrangements 2013-14 consultation'

was accepted.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to approve and sign as a correct record the minutes from the meeting held on 24 January 2013, subject to the amendment detailed above.

29 **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

30 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

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

Julia Cramp, Service Director – Commissioning and Performance provided updates on the following:

Pathfinder – SEN and green paper

What was set out in the green paper is now set out in the draft Children and Families Bill, expected in September 2014

Next steps were to work with schools on the "My Plan" paperwork replacing the old statutory SEN paperwork at all levels of the SEN code of practice as well as for children with statements. 90 schools stepped forward to volunteer to work on this and 22 were chosen. Work was ongoing on the 'local offer' – the range of services offered locally and schools needed to have an input to this.

Early Intervention Strategy

A draft was currently being worked on, with key objectives being how to reduce reliance on more expensive, specialist services through good early intervention services and how to get it right for children and families. It also related to CAF, with the possibility of it being called an early assessment tool and there was a link to complex families.

32 Final Outturn Report 2012-13

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report which outlined the final financial position for the dedicated schools budget.

The Forums attention was drawn to the reporting changes in budgets for high needs placements in 2013-14 and the new responsibility for funding post-16 placements.

The underspend of £1.493m showed a favourable movement of £0.888m since previously reported, explained by two one off effects, a review of rates by property services and an overestimation on academy conversions. From 2013-14 reductions for academy conversions would be easier to estimate as funding was delegated through the formula.

In response to questions the following points were clarified:

- Rates were delegated and values were estimated each year. They were excluded from the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG).
- If a school is forced to convert to an academy then any deficit is kept by the LA. If they choose to convert then any deficit is taken with them.
- In future it would be difficult to use any DSG underspend to pay off the deficit balances from closed or converting schools.

Clarification from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) confirmed that balances may be moved into the Early Years / High Needs block in 2013-14, however they could not be used within the schools block without a proposal to delegate, involving a consultation with schools and, as budgets cannot be re-determined in year, a potential start date of 2014-15.

In response to questions the following points were made:

- There was a need to add a new line for facilities costs to account for backfill, due to the increased amount of time the LA required heads to attend meetings or consult with them
- There was a need to look at how to support special schools through the transition given the difficulty in planning and the potential cumulative effect of the new funding mechanism, and to get a more sustainable system through place plus

Work was planned to benchmark against other authorities and analyse high needs spend with a report to come back to the Forum's meeting in October. Should evidence support it the ability to make one off payments was available, in addition to the possibility of setting top up rates to allow protection against turbulence, rectifying in year from the high needs allocation and looking at band values.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed

- a) to note the outturn position for the Dedicated Schools Budget in 2012-13;

- b) i. to recommend that the net deficit balances from closing schools be written off against the overall DSG reserve for 2012-13;
- ii. to investigate whether it is within the regulations for the LA to also retain surplus balances from sponsored academy conversions;
- c) to note the remaining level of the earmarked DSG reserve available to roll forward to 2013-14;
- d) to provide an analysis of the spend against the high needs block along with the outcomes of the discussions with Special Schools on benchmarking, band values, etc to the Forum's October meeting to enable discussions on a fund to support special schools in financial difficulties; and
- e) to leave funding from the existing de-delegated contingency as is.

33 Reports from Working Groups

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, introduced the reports and minutes from the Schools Funding working group, SEN working group and the Early Years reference group.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed

- a) to note the reports and recommendations
- b) for Caroline Wells and Sarah Ward to join the Early Years reference group as a voluntary sector representative and maintained nursery representative respectively

34 Top Up Payments for non-Wiltshire Pupils in Mainstream Schools

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report which detailed issues relating to the payment of named pupil allowances (NPA's) for out of county pupils in Wiltshire mainstream schools and drew the Forum's attention to the options for consideration.

The Chairman declared an interest as his school was named in Appendix 1 to the report, however he confirmed he would participate in the debate and vote with an open mind.

In response to whether the recoupment position could be maintained in the future it was explained that it would be helpful it is continued as it provided information as to where pupils are and negotiating with individual schools would be harder to maintain.

As the impact was considered too great for Bradon Forest School it was agreed that the impact percentage be changed to 0.75% of budget to allow them to receive a transitional payment.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to implement Option C with a figure of 0.75% of budget, to read:

‘Wiltshire continues to operate a recoupment function and pays NPA top ups for all non-Wiltshire pupils on the same basis as Wiltshire pupils but with 50% transitional funding (for one year only) to schools for whom the impact is greater than 0.75% of budget. Financial risk is shared between individual schools and the central High Needs budget.’

35 IURB Monitoring 2011-12

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report which updated the Forum on the use of revenue reserves carried forward from 2011/12 in respect of those schools that exceeded the permissible thresholds.

The usefulness of the report was noted and alternate proposals, following the withdrawal of the Controls on Surplus Balances Scheme from 2013/14, would be brought to a future meeting.

Resolved:

The Forum noted the report.

36 Funding Changes for 2014-15

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report and noted that the proposed changes incorporated a lot of the feedback from rural LA's, especially those with necessary small schools.

It was agreed that existing formula factors, agreed following consultation in the previous year, would not be revisited other than where affected by the introduction of any new factors.

The three new or revised formula factors were considered in turn. Where possible the impact on individual groups of schools was considered against the potential impact on all schools of taking funding out of the Age Weighted Pupil Unit funding in order to fund the new factor.

Pupil mobility

It was noted that the proposed mobility factor only identified pupils that moved in to a school during the year and so did not pick up turbulence caused by reductions in pupil numbers. Potential duplication/overlap with funding for growth would need investigation. In general the impact of the mobility factor would be seen in service schools – 63 primary and 2 secondary schools would be eligible if the factor was adopted, There was also concern that the data reflected past patterns of pupil movement but that the future pattern for military schools would be one of growth as families are moved back to Wiltshire but of

more stability in terms of in year turbulence. As a result it was felt that the existing growth fund was a more flexible way of reflecting that position.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed not to include the pupil mobility factor in the Wiltshire funding formula.

Sparsity

The ability to change the DfE thresholds was noted and a number of options were modelled at the meeting. Discussion centred on the principles of the sparsity factor (to support necessary small rural schools) and therefore on whether in Wiltshire there were schools that could be considered so remote that no alternative options, such as amalgamation/federation, could be considered.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed not to include a sparsity factor in the Wiltshire funding formula.

Lump Sum

The ability to set different lump sums for primary and secondary schools was welcomed by the Forum. It was agreed that the maximum allowable lump sum of £175,000 should be modelled for secondary schools and a lump sum of £85,000 should be modelled for primary schools. School Funding Working Group will meet in July to consider the outcome of the modelling of the lump sum changes and to sign off the consultation with schools.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to model a variable lump sum for consultation in September.

37 Confirmation of dates for future meetings

The following dates were noted:

3 October 2013
12 December 2013
13 March 2014

It was agreed that the Schools Forum meeting scheduled for 23 January 2014 be moved to 16 January 2014.

38 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

39 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved:

The Forum agreed that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the

business specified in minute no. 40 because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

40 Procurement of Financial Forward Planning Software from April 2014

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, introduced the report which detailed a proposal for the procurement of financial forward planning software for maintained schools from April 2014.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to approve a new three year agreement as set out in the report.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 3.45 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kirsty Butcher, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713948, e-mail kirsty.butcher@wiltshire.gov.uk

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