

Schools Funding Working Group

26th February 2015, 8:30am, Salisbury Room, County Hall

Minutes

Present: Catriona Williamson, Martin Watson, Andy Bridewell, John Hawkins, Phil Cook, Jan Hatherell, Julia Cramp, Grant Davis, Liz Williams, Susan Tanner

Apologies: Neil Baker

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| 1 | <p>Minutes from Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes from the previous meeting were discussed and agreed.</p> <p>GD updated the Group on the progress in notifying schools of their delegated budgets for 2015-16. The EFA had confirmed Wiltshire's formula as compliant and the overall budget had received ratification by Cabinet in February. Delegated budgets had been issued to maintained schools during the week commencing 9th February and it was expected that Academies would receive their budgets by 28th February.</p> | |
| 2 | <p>Budget Monitoring 2014-15</p> <p>EW presented a summary of the budget monitoring position for the schools budget up to the end of January 2015. Since the previous Schools Forum meeting further work had been done to identify potential savings and the revised forecast showed a projected overspend of £1.604m. This was an improvement of £0.750m since the previous report.</p> <p>The report also showed the impact on the DSG reserve of this forecast position.</p> <p>EW noted that £0.6m had been provided within the DSG reserve to support the underpayments made to term time only staff. It was expected that the second phase of payments would not now be made until the next financial year and so some level of provision would be required in 2015-16.</p> <p>The projected balance on the DSG Reserve after offsetting the overspend in 2014-15 was £0.9m. It was agreed that this could allow the discussion on hourly rates for 2 year olds to be revisited at the next Schools Forum meeting however it was also noted that there would continue to be significant pressure on the high needs block for 2015-16 and therefore any decision would need to take this in to account.</p> | |
| 2 | <p>Early Years – hourly rates for Free Entitlement for 3 & 4 Year Olds</p> <p>EW presented a draft Schools Forum paper considering a proposal for a single hourly rate to be used in the Early Years Single Funding Formula for 2015-16. The affordable hourly rate was £3.81 and implementation of the rate would result in a decrease in funding for childminders and maintained nursery classes and an increase for Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers.</p> <p>The results of the consultation on the principle of a single hourly rate had been reanalysed to reflect the hours delivered by the different respondents. This indicated a clear preference for a single rate although the results varied by provider type. From a financial perspective it was also felt that the continuation of the current differential rates would impact on the affordability of the free entitlement in future years.</p> <p>It was agreed that the EYSFF should be changed to include a single hourly</p> | |

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| | <p>rate of £3.81 and that transitional arrangements needed to be put in to place for implementation. It was agreed to recommend implementation from September 2015 with 50% of the gain/loss implemented in year 1 and 100% in year 2.</p> | |
| 3 | <p>High Needs Budgets 2015-16</p> <p>EW circulated a draft Schools Forum paper outlining options to reduce costs within the high needs block.</p> <p>JH and MW noted the relative success that Wiltshire had achieved in the Exceptions Process for additional places but were still concerned that Wiltshire had not received the funding that was required in order to meet the needs of Wiltshire pupils. ST fed back from a recent meeting with the EFA at Springfields Academy at which the EFA had confirmed that places would not be funded in advance but that if additional places were occupied during the year, providing evidence of demand, then they could be funded in the following academic year.</p> <p>EW outlined the calculations of anticipated pressures for 2015-16 and the impact of the additional funding received for 2015-16. It was estimated that there were still pressures on high needs budgets of £1.9m. A number of short term savings proposals were discussed.</p> <p>It was agreed that the principle of funding following the pupil should be applied and that it was preferable to implement the removal of funding for unfilled places for Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) than to remove the funding for additional places.</p> <p>It was also agreed that there should be equity between any proposals on the reduction of Named Pupil Allowance (NPA) values and top up values for other high needs places.</p> <p>Action – EW to amend the report for Schools Forum to reflect the recommendations of the Group</p> | EW |
| 4 | <p>Schools Traded Services – Changes to Governance Arrangements</p> <p>JC informed the group that a paper would be brought to the next Schools Forum meeting proposing changes to the governance arrangements for traded services provided to schools. It was proposed that the Schools Services Group would cease to exist and that a Traded Services Stakeholder Group would be established to enable the local authority to inform schools of changes to prices and service levels.</p> <p>It was discussed that schools required sufficient notice of any changes to enable them to make alternative purchasing decisions if necessary.</p> | EW/JC |
| 5 | <p>AOB</p> <p>No AOB was raised at the meeting</p> | |
| 6 | <p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Wednesday 3rd June 2015, 8:30am, West Wilts Room, County Hall</p> | |