

Schools Funding Working Group

20th October 2015, 8:30am, Longleat Room, County Hall

Minutes

Present: Catriona Williamson, Neil Baker, Martin Watson, Andy Bridewell, Jan Hatherell, John Hawkins, Grant Davis, Susan Tanner, Jane Ralph, Debbie Williams

Apologies: Phil Cook

1	Minutes from Previous Meeting The minutes from the previous meeting were discussed and agreed.	
2	High Needs Recoupment Update GD presented a paper to the SFWG regarding the recoupment from schools in relation to the High Needs place funding. The paper set out the current work carried out in relation to the recoupment for unfilled places in both Resource Base settings and Enhanced Learning Provisions, covering the period from April 2015 to August 2015. The views of the Education Funding Agency had been sought. They had expressed some concerns over the current method of recoupment and suggested that the recoupment should be taken using the 'top ups' mechanism rather than using the place funding. This would ensure that Wiltshire was acting in full compliance with the funding regulations. The value to be recouped had initially been projected at £250,000, when the recoupment option had been presented as an option to, and approved by Schools Forum in March 2015. Using the recoupment through the top ups funding, the amount likely to be recouped for the financial year 2015-16 is on target for the £250,000.	
3	Funding of Additional High Needs Places, above the Agreed Number of Places GD presented a paper to outline the proposal for funding 'additional high needs places' in both Resource base settings and Enhanced Learning Provisions. Funding of High Needs places within Wiltshire is broken down into two elements, 'place' funding and 'top up' funding. The schools funded Number on Roll is reduced by the number of High Needs places, which are funded at £10,000 per place Currently within Wiltshire, where schools exceed their numbers of 'planned' places, they are entitled to additional place funding of £10,000 per place, plus the associated top up funding. Two scenario's were presented for discussion; <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Where a pupil moves from mainstream into High Needs- Where a pupil moves from High Needs setting in one school to another Scenario 1 From a funding perspective, the school would have received an AWPU for this particular pupil and therefore to receive an additional £10,000 (pro rata per month) for the extra place would result in double-funding of the AWPU element.	

	<p>Scenario 2</p> <p>Wiltshire has long supported the principle of the 'money following the child'. In the case of a child moving from a High Needs setting in one school to a High Needs setting in another school, which then cause the recipient school to exceed its number of planned places, then the principle of the 'money following the child' would mean that the school would be funded at £10,000 (pro rata) for each additional place.</p>	
4	<p>Review of High Needs Places for 2016-17</p> <p>GD presented a paper to the Group titled "High needs: place change request process – technical note 2016 to 2017"</p> <p>The Education Funding Agency (EFA) has issued guidance to enable LA's to make changes to the number of pre-16 place numbers for both maintained schools and academies. The LA has discretion to make the changes to maintained schools, but must agree amendments to place numbers directly with Academies.</p> <p>Given the current position in Wiltshire with planned places, this is an opportune time for Wiltshire to revise its number of planned places for the 2016-17 year. Schools Forum have long supported the view of the 'money following the child'. Therefore the Group can consider alternative options for the future funding of High needs places across the county.</p> <p>ST updated the group on the current direction of Resource bases and ELPs across the county and the more strategic elements of the SEN strategy.</p> <p>The Group was mindful that the EFA are giving consideration to amending the current method of funding High Needs and that their decision could have an impact upon the potential future funding to Wiltshire. In particular, if funding is aligned to the number of High Needs places across the County, should the number of places be reduced, then this would have a detrimental impact upon funding.</p> <p>A number of options were considered by the Group;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Option 1 – retain status quo - Option 2 – revise place numbers to current actual numbers - Option 3 – agree a core minimum number of funded places and fund on actual numbers - Option 4 – agree zero places with all schools and fund on actual numbers <p>The group gave consideration to the options and agreed upon the following option, Option 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agree to fund places based upon actual numbers at a particular point in 2015-16 (May), to maximise funded places, but retain the option for recoupment through top ups. 	
5	<p>Control of Surplus Balances 2014-15</p> <p>Jane Ralph presented a paper which set out the Schools Revenue Surplus and Deficit Balances for 2014-15. The paper was discussed in detail and a number of questions were raised for further discussion. The key points of the report are;</p>	

	<p>Revenue balances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall reduction in school balances £145,717 - increase in Primary balances of £1,038,693 - decrease in Secondary balances of £701,108 - decrease in Special balances of £483,302 <p>Deficit balances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall increase in deficit balances of £956,124 - increase in Primary deficits of £238,858 - increase in Secondary deficits of £717,266 - no Special Schools are in deficit <p>The appendices to the report set out the number of schools with balances in excess of 15% of the schools budget share and what action should be taken.</p> <p>A number of schools were deemed to be trying to future proof themselves against future financial difficulties and had built up small balances.</p> <p>JR confirmed that a return was to be issued to each school, as previously agreed with Schools Forum.</p>	
6	<p>High Needs Savings Proposals 2015-16 (RAG Rating)</p> <p>A RAG rated table was presented which detailed all of the savings measures and categorised the various measures. A discussion took place regarding each of the measures and their associated RAG ratings. The RAG ratings represents a 'savings' document but will need to be considered in light of the actual budget position for 2015-16.</p> <p>Each of the areas was considered in turn and further detail was sought regarding the Hard to Place pupil budgets to clarify whether these savings would be achieved.</p> <p>ST confirmed that negotiations with Independent Special Schools were proving less fruitful than expected but that the real key would be to review all future placements and establish if a suitable in-county placement would be appropriate.</p>	
7	<p>AOB – F40 Membership</p> <p>GD presented a paper which outlined the aims and objectives of the F40 Group. The F40 Group represents the 40 lowest funded authorities in the country and lobbies the Government towards a fairer funding system.</p> <p>The F40 Group were heavily involved in the lobbying which lead to the additional £5.7m Fairer funding monies awarded to Wiltshire for the 2015-16 financial year.</p> <p>Wiltshire is currently the 7th lowest funded authority in the country, previously being the 6th worst funded authority in the country. Wiltshire's MP's are working with the F40 Group to influence change in the funding for schools in this county. The work of the F40 Group has been quoted in press releases and other publicity material by both schools and the LA.</p> <p>There is an annual charge for the membership of £1,000 per annum.</p>	
8	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>To be confirmed at the next Schools Forum meeting on the 12th November</p>	