

SCHOOLS FORUM

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2015 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Mr N Baker (Chairman), Mr M Watson (Vice-Chair), Mrs A Bates, Mr A Bridewell, Ms A Burnside, Ms M Chilcott, Mrs J Finney, Mrs R Collard, Miss Tracy Cornelius, Ms J Hatherell, Mr J Hawkins, Mrs S Jiggins, Mrs D Rock, Ms I Sidmouth and Mrs C Williamson

41 Election of a Chair

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to appoint Mr Neil Baker as Chair of Schools Forum for 2015/16.

42 Election of a Vice Chair

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to appoint Mr Martin Watson as Vice-Chair of Schools Forum for 2015/16.

43 Apologies and Changes of Membership

Apologies were received from:

George Croxford
John Proctor
Nigel Roper
David Whewell

44 Minutes of the previous Meeting

Resolved:

To agree and sign the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting held on 18 June 2015.

45 Declaration of Interests

None.

46 Chairman's Announcements

None.

47 Trust Board Update

Susan Tanner, Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning, was in attendance to deliver an update.

It was noted that there were no significant updates from the Trust Board meeting. Local changes to the Education Bill were referenced and had been circulated; documents relevant to this are attached to the minutes of this meeting.

48 Budget Monitoring

There was no update regarding this.

49 14-15 Rollovers Report

Jane Ralph, School Support Accountant, was in attendance to present the report.

The report presented the position of revenue balances of Wiltshire Council maintained schools as of 31st March 2015, and identified those which were in deficit. The analysis of the net revenue balances excluded schools that converted to academy status during the financial year but included those that converted post 31st March 2015.

The Schools Forum last considered a report on schools' balances and deficits in November 2014. In that report the value of surpluses was £9.943 million and 15 schools were in deficit with a total value of £1.314 million.

Significant underlying trends were referenced, and note was made to the table in paragraph 5 which displayed the deficit balances. It was noted that the deficit balance for Primary Schools and Secondary Schools had increased over the 2014/15 year.

When considering individual revenue balances it was explained that the underlying factors and causes generating or reducing balances should be taken into consideration. This included the pupil premium which did not have to be spent during the year. Some, or all, of the pupil premium could be carried forward to future financial years.

Appendix 1 provided a breakdown of the balances for the 2014/15 year. There were 24 Primary Schools and 2 Special Schools with balances above the limit. A total of 128 Primary Schools, 4 Secondary Schools, and 2 Special Schools had reasonable balances. There were 13 Primary Schools and 5 Secondary Schools with deficit balances.

Appendix 2 provided an analysis of schools that have had revenue balances in excess of 15% of their total School Budget Share (excluding Pupil Premium

funding) for the last 5 years. It was noted that this would not trigger a DfE investigation.

Appendix 3 contained an analysis of schools that had revenue balances in excess of 5% and 8%, for secondary and primary/special schools respectively, within the last 5 years.

Appendix 4 provided an analysis of schools that had been in a deficit position over the last four years (2011/12 to 2014/15). It was noted that three schools had been in a deficit of 2.5%, or more, for each of the last 4 years. This equated to 1.69% of Wiltshire's Local Authority schools, as at 31st March 2015. As this was below the 2.5% threshold set by the DfE it was explained that it would not trigger an enquiry.

In answer to a question it was explained that converted academies required reimbursement. Reference was made to paragraph 17 of the report. This stated that for converter academies the local authority was reimbursed the value of the deficit, with the money being recovered through the abatement of the academy's General Annual Grant. In the case of sponsored academies, the deficit remained with the local authority to be funded from the core budget.

A question was asked regarding the schools which had experienced the biggest growth in their deficits. One of the schools was being dealt with by Michael Hudson, Associate Director of Finance, to look at options. The other school was looking at becoming an academy.

Resolved

To note the Schools Revenue Surplus and Deficit Balances Report 2014/15

50 Membership of the f40 Group

Grant Davis, Strategic Financial Support Manager, was in attendance to present the report.

The report provided an overview of the work of the f40 group and form a view as to Wiltshire would like to join the f40 group. The f40 group had been established 40years ago to lobby the government for increase cash allocations for lowest funded education authorities in England. Wiltshire was noted as poorly funded in this area.

It was noted that the group has the support of MPs, councillors, education directors, governors, head teachers, parents and teaching union representatives. The current membership of the f40 comprised of 38 member authorities representing 2,472,620 pupils (31.5% of the total in England) in 7,944 schools (36.2%).

The work of the f40 group was noted as already having provided Wiltshire with extra funding.

Wiltshire was noted as not currently being a member of the f40 group, but was however eligible to be one due to its position as the 7th least funded local authority.

The cost of joining the f40 group was explained as £1000 per annum.

Resolved

- 1. To note the content of the report.**
- 2. To support Wiltshire Council joining the f40 group's membership.**
- 3. For Wiltshire Council's Lead Member should to advise local MP's of the decision and for an appropriate press release to be issued to confirm the LA's membership decision.**

51 Clarification of Growth Fund Definition

Grant Davis presented the report which aimed to seek clarification regarding the funding for Infant Class Size Growth, from the Wiltshire Growth Fund.

Wiltshire Council operated a growth fund and Schools Forum agreed to a number of criteria for the allocation of funding for pupil growth in the 2015-16 financial year. A revision to the scheme factored for in-year pupil growth. This was explained as because funding could only be provided for either growth due to basic need, or to meet infant class size regulations.

It was noted that the historical position, prior to 2014-15 stated that:

“In Year pupil number increases: Funding for in year pupil growth is allocated is the in year increase in numbers would necessitate provision of an additional class. For primary schools total funded NOR is divided by 30 to arrive at a theoretical class number for the school. Total NOR from the following census is also divided by 30 to arrive at a new class number. If the total increase in NOR is greater than 13 and an extra class would be generated then additional funding is allocated per additional class.”

The above wording had been changed to the following for the 2014-15 financial year was amended due to the changes in the regulations introduced by the Education Funding Agency:

“Infant Class Size Increases: This is payable to a Primary School with infant classes which is required to set up an additional class in the Autumn term as required by the infant class size regulations, and the school cannot accommodate all of its additional Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils in classes of 30 or less, i.e. the total number of pupils in the 3 year groups exceeds a multiple of 30. If the total increase in NOR necessitates that an extra class would be required, then additional funding is allocated per additional class.”

It was explained that the original scheme required a two-pronged approach. This included an increase of at least 13 pupils; and dividing school pupils by 30, which requires an extra class.

The revised wording proposed a single-pronged approach. This involved dividing school pupils by 30, which requires an extra class

The above change in wording was explained as having been made due to its original non-compliance. This was noted as possibly being due to the two-pronged approach used. It was confirmed that the Education Funding Agency (EFA) would not declare that this change could not be done.

Resolved

- 1. To note the content of the report.**
- 2. To re-establish a two-pronged approach and set a minimum threshold for the increase in pupil numbers.**

52 High Needs Additional Place Funding 2016-17

Grant Davis presented the report which provided the Schools Forum with options and proposals for the funding of additional High Needs places for 2016-17 onwards.

Place funding was explained as providing institutions with a guaranteed budget for the year. Top-up funding was explained as funding required over and above place funding in order to enable a pupil or student with high needs to participate in education and learning.

The report aimed to set out the situation where if a school had more than the planned number of pupils, what needed to be done to fund those extra pupils. Two scenarios were given. The first was when a pupil moves from a mainstream school to a High Needs School, and the second was when a pupil moves from a High Needs School to a new High Needs School.

Within the first scenario a problem was highlighted where the paying of £10,000 per additional place resulted in schools being over funded for the additional High Needs place.

Under the second scenario a principle of enabling the High Needs funding to follow the child in order to meet their individual needs was noted as being needed. In the situation where a child transferred from one secondary school with ELP provision to another secondary school with ELP provision, which then exceeds its number of planned places, then the £10,000 (pro-rata) funding would follow the child.

It was noted that something was needed in the formula so that it didn't apply to new starting year 7's with ELP.

Resolved

- 1. To note the content of the report.**
- 2. To revise the methodology and include within the first scenario that it does not include new Y7 ELPs.**
- 3. To include that when school is already in receipt of AWPU it will receive a £6000 top up, when it is not in receipt of AWPU then it will receive the full £10,000.**
- 4. To include that when a school which is not in receipt of AWPU comes into receipt of AWPU the top-up then stops.**

53 High Needs Recoupment 2016-17

Grant Davis was in attendance to present the report which provided an update regarding the recoupment from schools in relation to High Needs place funding.

At the March 2015 Schools Forum meeting it was agreed to implement a number of measures to help address the overspend within the High Needs

block. One of these measures was to recoup place funding from schools from unfilled places within both Resource Bases and ELP provision.

It was noted that a number of schools within Wiltshire had unfilled places within their High Needs provision and some others had exceeded their number of High Needs places.

A total of 12 Resource Base schools had been invoiced a total of £115,833, and 11 ELP schools had been invoiced a total of £207,500.

Some members from the Schools Funding Working Group had been recruited to help deal with queries from schools once they receive their invoices.

The EFA opinion was a suggestion that the LA use the top ups mechanism as a tool to make any adjustments to an individual school's funding, through either not paying, or paying reduced top ups to schools which are operating with unfilled places.

It was noted that top-ups for October 2015 had already been performed, and as such they could only be recouped from November/December 2015 to March 2016.

The total anticipated recoupment funding for 2015-16, using the original approach was estimated to save the LA through unfilled place funding a total of £776,000. However, the fully compliant recoupment was estimated to save £186,190 or £239,927. This would be a result of only recouping from top-ups and taking back what had already been paid to schools.

Appendix 2 was noted as displaying information on what amounts could be recouped from schools under both scenarios.

The methodology for the recoupment needed to be endorsed by the Schools Forum. This was proposed as recouping from top-ups rather than place funding.

The top-ups considered for recoupment were used for specific resource places and ELP's. Named Pupil Allowances were also noted as an area that could be recouped.

The discussed recoupment situation was noted as partly being a result of the financial crisis, which had resulted in looking into funding areas which had previously not been looked at.

Resolved

- 1. To note the contents of the report.**
- 2. To continue to recoup through top-ups as near to what has been overpaid for the rest of the 2015/16 financial year.**
- 3. To note that the definition of top-ups includes ELP's/NPA's/and any other top-up as a part of SEN.**

54 High Needs Review of Places for 2016-17

Grant Davis presented the report which provided an update regarding the recent document issued by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) entitled "High

Needs funding 2016 to 2017” and “High needs: place change request process – Technical Note for 2016 to 2017”.

The EFA issued the guidance in September 2015 which allowed local authorities the flexibility to make changes to the number of pre-16 places funded in maintained schools. It was noted that the changes can apply from April 2016; however the expectation was that the number of places would be amended from the start of the 2016-17 academic year.

It was noted that with academies the agreement must be more formalised, but with maintained schools they could be dictated. Any changes to the place numbers for academies needed to be agreed between the local authority and the academy and would form the basis of the EFA funding.

The Wiltshire Schools Forum approach was noted. The approach had always supported the principle of ‘the money following the child’. The principle aimed to enable the High Needs funding to follow the child in order to meet their individual needs.

Five options had been provided as a part of the EFA guidance:

Option 1

Retain the status quo.

Option 2

Revise the ‘place’ numbers at each school, to the actual number of pupils within the Resource Base or ELP provision in the 2015-16 year.

Option 3

Agree a core number of funded places with each school and then fund each additional place, above the core number.

Option 4

Agree zero places at each school and simply pay for place funding monthly, based upon the actual number of High Needs pupils.

Option 5

Revise the number of ‘places’ agreed to mirror a certain point in time in the 2014-15 year to maximise the number of places funded, but retain the mechanism to recoup from top ups.

It was noted that if the zero figure is returned to the EFA would take that as a sign that there were no high needs places at the schools. As a result the funding from the EFA could be zero if this option were to be taken. Option four was noted as being high risk due to the EFA not confirming what their approach would be.

If there were to be any fluctuation in numbers, as a result of army rebasing for example, it was confirmed that these would be funded. A consultation was expected in spring 2016 on the future options in the South East.

It was emphasised that SEND young people needed to be counted as pupils even if they weren’t in resource bases, so that the EFA knew of their existence in the future.

Resolved

- 1. To note the content of the report.**
- 2. To accept option five in the report “Revise the number of ‘places’ agreed to mirror a certain point in time in the 2014-15 year to maximise the number of places funded, but retain the mechanism to recoup from top ups” with the following amendment:**

- a. That if number is increased, there is evidence that recoupment can take place.
- b. To begin recoupment from maintained schools from April 2016 and academies from September 2016.
- c. To fund ELP's based on the number from the table in appendix 1. If numbers drop below that within the table then recoupment will take place. If it increases then the change will be funded.

55 Reports from Working Groups

School Funding Working Group

Minutes of the Working Group's meeting of 20th October 2015, 8:30am were included in the agenda.

SEN Working Group

Minutes of the Working Group's meeting of 13th October 2015, 9:30am were included in the agenda.

Early Year's Reference Group

It was agreed to bring these back for consideration at the next Schools Forum meeting.

Resolved

1. To note the minutes of the School Funding Working Group and the SEN Working Group.
2. To bring back the minutes of the Early Year's Reference Group to the next Schools Forum meeting for consideration.

56 Confirmation of dates for future meetings

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday, 14th January, 2016 1.30 pm in the Kennet Room - County Hall, Trowbridge.

Resolved

To propose that the date of the Thursday, 10th March, 2016 1.30 pm be changed as it clashed with a meeting of WASSH.

57 Urgent Items

Delegation of Central Expenditure 2016-17

It was noted that this had been sent out to schools mid-September 2015. The proposal was that they remain a de-delegated process.

Resolved

To agree that the Delegation of Central Expenditure 2016-17 remains a de-delegated process.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 4.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Adam Brown, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718038, e-mail adam.brown@wiltshire.gov.uk

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