

EXTRACT OF SCHOOLS FORUM MINUTES 14 JANUARY 2016

8 Schools Funding Settlement and Budget 2016-17

Grant Davis presented the Schools Funding Settlement and Budget 2016-2017.

Mr Davis informed the meeting that in December the EFA had announced that colleagues in early years and the high needs sector would be included in the Settlement and Budget too.

Mr Davis continued that there had been no additional details given about the devolved formula capital and that Pupil Premium would continue at its current level; he drew the meeting's attention to page 13 of the agenda supplement here and commented that in the County of Wiltshire there was over £14 million awarded in 2015-16 in pupil premium.

There were no movements in the rates for pupil premium for 2016-17 year and therefore, the 2015-16 rates would continue to apply for the 2016-17 year,

It was also explained that Service Pupil data was not correctly aligned with census data, as Service Pupil data had been compiled from January data, as opposed to October data and thus, Mr Davis advised those present that this data could be used to note any discrepancies.

Mr Davis then directed the meeting's attention to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and noted the allocation that had been received for 2016-17. He commented that the EFA had agreed that a new national formula for funding would be provided and that, if so, this formula would be made public in the spring, however, this date remained ambiguous. Mr Davis then reassured that if a new formula was to be provided, the SFWG would convene to discuss this change.

In terms of the DSG settlement, it was explained that fairer funding money was being continued for 2016-2017 and a ministerial statement had confirmed that this money would form a part of baseline funding.

It was noted that the total DSG Funding for 2016-17 was £311.246 million.

High Needs:

Mr Davis outlined that there had been a significant decrease in the high needs block; however, this was due to how the EFA defined high needs and that, in cash terms, there had only been a slight decrease. Mr Davis highlighted that the High Needs Block was indicative and that comparative work needed to be done between 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the 2015-16 allocation of funding for the High Needs Block (HNB) prior to deductions was £37.308 and Mr Davis stressed that this figure was provisional and indicative, as it had been based

upon 2015-16 data. He assured members that funding appeared to have decreased, however, in real terms there appeared to be no legitimate decrease and thus, the EFA's manner of reporting the data could be used to explain why funding appeared to have decreased.

Mr Davis added that an additional £97.5 million for High Needs funding had been allocated by the EFA and that Wiltshire's share in this was £823,000.

It was stated that the EFA paid into recoupment for SEND academies and that the UTC in Salisbury represented a free school. For maintained special schools the EFA paid 6.116 million directly, hence, why the figure for the HNB had been reduced.

Early Years:

Mr Davis reminded those present that at the Schools Forum meeting in March 2015, members had agreed the rates for 3 and 4 year olds as a single, private and voluntary rate. Mr Davis then drew the meeting's attention to the table on page 16 of the agenda supplement and noted that no discussion about this had taken place at the last reference group. He also reminded the meeting that the given rates of £3.81 would apply from 1 April 2016.

It was explained that 2 year old funding was originally at £5.43 and that the Department of Education had published figures at £4.97 an hour and that this figure had been implemented. Mr Davis highlighted that in June 2016 additional funding would be allocated based on data compiled from the January census, in order to ensure that the Schools Forum would be funded accurately.

Schools Block:

Mr Davis informed the meeting that £260.15 million was an increase and had been based on the fact that there had been an increase in pupil numbers.

Mr Davis noted that the Schools Forum budget deadline was the following week and that AWPU rates would be continued with, subject to any discussions that were had by the Schools Forum members present. Mr Davis informed the meeting that total funding quantum's for EAL Prior Attainment and Deprivation had remained unchanged and that MFG costs would be met through formulaic 'capping' and therefore, the Schools Forum appeared to be sustainable for the current year. In other words, the School Funding would be affordable.

Mr Davis noted that a Falling Rolls Fund was not proposed for the 2105-16 year.

It was explained that the HNB had seen an increase in £92.5 million and this was, in part, due to a national increase, however, Wiltshire had fared considerably well in this area – receiving £823,000 of this new national increase. Mr Davis proposed that extra funding allocated remain in the HNB and thus, that £823,000 be proportioned to the HNB.

Mr Davis highlighted that in terms of the High Needs provision cost savings had been presented last March and that members of the SFWG had been looking at these savings and that most of these savings had been achieved and were in

line with the budget, apart from with the independent specialist schools. Mr Davis informed the meeting that Susan Tanner could answer any questions on this matter.

The £311.624 million was the provisional allocation from the EFA and the allocation that the Forum would be working towards for the current year. Mr Davis also commented that there was a DSG reserve of £1.4 million.

Mr Davis also reminded those present that the Schools Forum had previously decided to fund term-time only payments through the DSG and some indicative payments not exceeding £100,000 were left to be paid to individuals that had retired or moved abroad.

It was noted that cost savings had been made, yet, cost pressures themselves had increased.

Having been put to the meeting it was

Resolved:

- i. That any increase in DSG (from Jan early years census) be allocated to the EYSFF budget, to support the increase in population and thus, take up of places**
- ii. That there should be no change to the hourly rate for 2 year old places**
- iii. That the agreed hourly rate for 3 & 4 year olds be implemented from April 2016**
- iv. That the agreement needs to be reached for the assumptions, used in calculating the delegated budget (which is detailed in paragraph 31 of this Report)**
- v. That the extra £0.823m allocated for the High Needs Block, to stay within the High Needs Block**
- vi. That the overall Schools Budget be set at: £311.246 million, as allocated by the EFA**

The Chairman then invited Mrs Susan Tanner to present a report on SEN Block.

Mrs Tanner explained that savings had been made and that all savings targets had or would be achieved, which would equate to £1.48 million worth of savings. However, she noted that the problem the Forum faced was that it did not appear as though any savings had been made, because the equivalent amount had been spent in other areas; including independent school places and Named Pupil Allowances (NPAs).

The meeting was made aware of how there had been a significant increase in NPAs and that measures to address this were being considered, including:

- Issuing a new banding structure for SENs
- By introducing the band 0 – this was explained as what the Forum would expect the school to have in place and to have provided for the pupil, before any application for funding could be applied for

Mrs Tanner advised that, hopefully, these new implementations would help to address the current overspend.

The meeting was informed that the SFWG had vigorously investigated this overspend and had thus, requested that all placements to independent special schools be reviewed. Mrs Tanner advised the meeting that the current system may not have been working at its optimum for some pupils, hence why an additional increase in pupils had been placed in independent special schools.

It was discussed that, occasionally, special needs are unusual and that in these instances children would need additional specialised provision; which would mean that children would have to be placed in independent special schools out of County. It was noted that such packages are very expensive and thus, for those pupils at the lower end of this spectrum, reviews should take place.

A case was highlighted as where there were a number of pupils in a special school that were not being provided with a service better than they would have received in a mainstream school and thus, it was argued that there was a clear need to review the SEN school places.

Further discussion was had over the fact that there are, usually, tribunal losses and that the Forum could learn from past tribunal cases, in order to learn how to decrease the number of cases brought. It was stressed that once a pupil had gone to an independent special school, the chance of returning the pupil back into the mainstream sector had been known to be virtually impossible. It was advised that between the year groups of year 6 to year 7, a pupil could be changed from the independent to the mainstream sector and the same could be said with pupils entering into the sixth form.

The meeting was informed that savings were not able to be made in the specialist sector, but that this was an area that was being looked into such as; by special school's buyers looking into decreasing the costs. It was then made clear that the results of the analysis would be given at the next Schools Forum meeting.

Mrs Tanner confirmed that at the next meeting a basket of proposals would be offered to the Schools Forum over how to ensure savings in the HNB. Mrs Tanner explained that she could pinpoint a list of areas of concern and then the Schools Forum would be able to evaluate how areas could be changed.

It was noted that the SFWG and the SEN working group would meet again, as soon as reasonably possible; in order to discuss the fact that the HNB was overspending.

The meeting was informed that, although the HNB had been given additional funding, the HNB had overspent and thus, savings had been wiped out and replaced with a deficit.

Mrs Tanner stated that she would work on the analysis for the budget. Grant Davis commented that he would arrange a SFWG and SENWG joint meeting date, at the close of the Schools Forum meeting.