

# SCHOOLS FORUM

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## **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2011 AT COMMITTEE ROOM III - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.**

### **Present:**

Mr N Baker, Mrs Julia Bird, Mr C Dark, Mrs A Davey, Mrs A Ferries, Mrs J Finney, Mr J Foster, Mr Tim Gilson (Reserve), Mr J Hawkins, Mr M Keeling, Ms I Lancaster-Gaye, Dr Tina Pagett, Mr J Proctor, Mr M Watson and Mrs C Williamson

### **Also Present:**

Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE, Rev. Alice Kemp and Cllr Alan Macrae

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### 129. **Public Participation and Councillors' Questions**

None

### 130. **Apologies**

Ted Hatala (reserve)  
David Cowley  
Carol Grant (substituted by Tim Gilson)

### 131. **Minutes of the previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 02 February were presented.

### **Resolved:**

**To approve as a correct record, and sign the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 02 February 2010.**

### 132. **Declaration of Interests**

None

### 133. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman explained that updates from Wiltshire's Children & Young People's Trust Board would be a standing item on the agenda henceforth. Updates would take the form of a short report and/or verbal update from Julia Cramp, Service Director Commissioning & Performance. This would reflect the strong links between the work and objectives of both bodies and allow Schools' Forum decisions to be as informed as possible.

### 134. **Budget Monitoring**

Liz Williams updated the Forum on the projected budget monitoring position for 2010/2011 and gave an update on the Budget for the 2011/2012 financial year.

#### **Budget Monitoring 2010/2011**

The budget figures project an underspend against DSG of £2.499 million. Any variance against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) will be carried forward in to the next financial year. Schools Forum previously agreed that £1.536 million should be utilised to fund priorities in 2011/12.

Key pressures and potential underspends are:

#### **Maternity Costs**

Based on payroll data this budget is projected to overspend by £114,000.

#### **Special Educational Needs Services**

Underspends are projected against the Independent Special Schools (ISS) budget and the Special Recoupment budget which funds placements in other local authority maintained special schools. From 2011/12, underspend against these budgets will be released in to the delegated budget to increase the amount delegated to mainstream primary schools for SEN.

The Named Pupil Allowance (NPA) budget is not yet fully committed however it is expected that there will be further NPA allocations through the remainder of the year and it is therefore projected to be on target at this stage.

#### **Early Years Budgets**

Early Years budgets are projected to underspend by £1.8 million. Of this £1.5 million is against the Early Years Single Funding Formula. This projection is an estimate based on one term's data and will be updated for the January pupil count when this is available.

#### **Young Person's Support Service**

At the December meeting of Schools Forum it was agreed that £91,000 should be allocated from the projected underspend to fund cost pressures within the YPSS.

## **Budget Update 2011/12**

The Head of Finance explained that the budget for 2011/12 had been considered by Cabinet and passed by Council at their 22<sup>nd</sup> February meeting. Key points were as follows:

- Roadshows have been held for Head Teachers, Governors and schools finance staff to outline the main issues within the budget. These have been well attended.
- Proposals for the variation of the minimum funding guarantee have been submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration. The response to these submissions forms the basis of Agenda item no.9.
- Data from the pupil census has now been collated and checked by the Research and Statistics team and work has commenced on detailed budget calculations at school level.
- The financial planning software has been updated for the provisional AWPU and other values and is now being tested by the Accounting & Budget Support Team prior to issuing to schools in early March.

### **Resolved:**

**To note the revenue budget monitoring position for 2010/11 and the progress on finalising individual schools budgets for 2011/12.**

#### **135. Council Business Plan (including Early Intervention Grant)**

The Head of Finance, DCE summarised her report which sought to update the Schools' Forum on the Council's Financial Plan 2011-2015 as it affects Children's Services and to share detail on how the Early Intervention Grant has been prioritised in 2011/12.

### **The Financial Plan & Children's Services**

It was explained that the local authority settlement was for two years as opposed to the schools settlement (DSG) which was for one year only. Key points were as follows:

- A reduction in the number of specific grants with some rolled into the formula grant and others rolled into new specific grants.
- A reduction in formula grant from the government of 14.3% after transitional funding.
- Funding equivalent to a 2.5 % increase in Council Tax for 2011/12

The key aims of the financial plan are:

- ✓ Protecting and safeguarding vulnerable adults and children
- ✓ Investing in priority services – including children's attainment
- ✓ Making savings

Investment will continue to help protect and safeguard vulnerable children and to help increase children's attainment. This includes a £0.650 million investment in 2012/13 to develop a small in-house residential crisis resource to provide a safe environment for children whilst they are assessed prior to placement and further investment of £0.270million rising to £1million in 2011/2012 to enhance school-to-school support, identification of vulnerable groups, and capacity-building in schools.

Savings will also be achieved through cross-cutting service reviews which will include the Passenger Transport Service. These will focus on protecting the vulnerable whilst finding procurement, management and building savings. The way services are delivered will be reviewed, taking advantage of opportunities for income generation.

### **Early Intervention Grant (EIG)**

The EIG replaces a number of discrete grants such as Sure Start funding, short breaks for disabled children, and Area Based grants. Wiltshire received £17.957 million for these grants in 2010/2011.

It was explained that there has been a significant reduction in this grant to £14.66 million in 2011/12 and £15.5 million in 2012/13.

The grant is not ring fenced although there are indicators to how it can be spent, such as statutory guidance and press releases from DCLG. The Council's financial plan provides for the full amount of EIG to be spent within Children's Services.

The council is to maintain 30 Sure Start Children's Centres. The core offer of short breaks for disabled children will also be retained for 2011/2012.

Officers were requested to undertake work comparing levels of EIG for Wiltshire's statistical neighbours for Children's Services.

### **Resolved:**

- a. To note the impact of the Council's financial plan on services for children and young people.**
- b. To note the prioritisation of the early intervention grant for 2011/12.**

### 136. **Devolved Formula Capital**

The Head of Business and Commercial Services, Simon Burke invited Schools Forum to consider future arrangements for the distribution of the Devolved Formula Capital grant (DFC) to non-Voluntary Aided schools in Wiltshire.

The national formula for DSG provides only a single flat rate to each school irrespective of whether schools have split sites through reorganisation or amalgamation. Schools Forum had agreed that a flat rate should be allocated to each site, thereby upholding the principle that amalgamated schools should not be worse off by amalgamating. These additional flat rate payments have been funded from the DfE allocations made for schools which have closed or by reducing the formula allocation to all schools. This principle has not been applied to amalgamated VA schools which receive their DFC allocation direct from DfE.

The key considerations for schools forum were:

- A significant reduction in the maximum level of flat rate funding per school – from £18,500 to £4,000 in the national formula allocation for 2011-12.
- 8 Schools currently receive the flat rate of funding.
- The funding can be used for any Capital purpose.
- DFC is provided by the DfE by a formula which is based upon the numbers of schools and pupils reported in the school census of the January of the preceding calendar year.
- The aim of the arrangement is to remove any disincentive based on site restrictions for schools to Federate/Amalgamate when this is necessary.

A discussion ensued where the following points were debated:

- The definition of a split-site school – i.e. those which serve two or more communities and must remain on two sites due to site constraints.
- School's Forum's previously affirmed principle of funding for the future rather than on the basis of historical allocations.
- The continued necessity of the scheme, in the view of Officers.
- The desirability of parity between otherwise comparable schools, regardless of VA/Maintained/Academy status.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That DFC should be allocated to schools in line with the allocation of funding from the DfE. This would:**
  - **allocate grant with reference to the preceding year's pupil numbers ( e.g. January 2010 for 2011/12)**
  - **provide a double flat rate element to schools which had amalgamated during the preceding year (and a single flat rate in subsequent years).**
- 2) The arrangement would be reviewed again for the 2012/13 funding settlement.**

### 137. **Minimum Funding Guarantee Variations**

A report was tabled by the Manager, Schools Accounting & Budgets, DCE, which updated Schools Forum on responses received from the DfE to requests to vary the MFG to date.

At its meeting on the 2 February Schools Forum agreed that a number of adjustments should be applied to vary the normal operation of the DfE's Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) where not to do so would lead to inappropriate MFGs. Three of these adjustments were then sent to the Secretary of State for approval.

It was explained that the following baseline adjustments have been permitted following consideration by the Secretary of State:

- a) Where a Specialist Learning Centre is to close, to remove the associated funding from the Baseline.
- b) In respect of increased SEN delegation; to add to a school's baseline the appropriate amount of devolved funding it received in 2010-11.

In respect of 1 2 1 tuition, the initial request (to allocate this funding through KS 2 and KS 3 AWPU) has been refused. Officers relayed to the Forum that the Secretary of State will not allow the LA to remove the funding from the baseline "unless the funding is allocated including a significant weighting for deprivation or low attainment".

A discussion ensued surrounding the best possible choice for allocation of this grant funding. Points for consideration included:

- Using the 1-2-1 tuition funds for their original purpose: to address low attainment rather than deprivation
- The possibility of retaining a certain percentage of the funds, to be allocated on an AWPU basis.
- Consistency across phases and types of schools
- A wish to ensure all schools received some funds, but not necessarily equal amounts.
- Personalised learning measure would closely replicate AWPU, and maintain consistency across phases.
- Personalised learning (deprivation) uses MOSAIC indices of deprivation and as such would likely come close to replicating the distribution of the Pupil Premium.

#### **Resolved:**

- a. **That in respect of the allocation of the former 1-2-1 Tuition Grant, the following actions be taken:**
  - i. **To appeal the decision of the Secretary of State if possible.**
  - ii. **That if any appeal fails/is not possible, then permission be sought to allocate the £2.1 million as follows:**
    - **40% via AWPU and 60% via prior attainment measures using the Personalised Learning KS1 SATS formula**

**driver for Primary Schools and the Secondary SENA  
formula driver for Secondary schools**

- iii. **If this proposal is still refused, to allocate the £2.1 million 100% on prior attainment (same drivers as above)**
- b. **To seek the Secretary of State's permission to adjust the MFG Baseline of those schools that have received the in-year pupil increase ("trigger") funding in 2010-11 by an amount equal to the funding allocated in 2010-11.**
- c. **To seek the Secretary of State's permission to adjust the MFG Baseline of those special schools that received transitional protection by an amount equal to the funding allocated in 2010-2011**

**138. Controls on Surplus Balances Schemes - Options for 2011/12 onwards**

Phil Cooch, Schools Accounting & Budget Support Manager, updated those present on the results of a consultation with Wiltshire Schools regarding the continuation and form of the Controls on Surplus Balances scheme. This follows revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools published December 2010, which imply a relaxation or removal of clawback schemes.

He began by sketching out what decisions other Schools' Forums in the South West had made about their clawback mechanisms. Most had not yet reached a decision. On the day of this meeting, Somerset Schools' Forum were also to make their decision, whilst South Gloucestershire had decided to remove their clawback scheme, but keep a monitoring scheme in place.

A discussion emerged, and members of the forum considered the advantages and disadvantages of the current scheme and also the government's direction of travel regarding this area of schools policy. Forum members felt strongly that the scheme had helped to change the culture amongst Wiltshire Schools for the better, and had led to informed decision making and increased accountability. Officers were asked to quantify the resources spend working on the scheme, which equated to approximately two officers working for 6 weeks. They believed this to be worthwhile.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That Wiltshire will continue with a Controls on Surplus Balances Scheme for 2011/12**
- 2) That the scheme in its entirety will be reviewed in the autumn (the October meeting).**
- 3) That only those schools which exceed the permitted thresholds will be required to submit a Controls on Surplus Balances monitoring statement (all other schools can be monitored when rollover balances come to Schools' Forum as part of the report on schools revenue balances for 2010/11).**
- 4) That the scheme not be amended (as previously proposed) to require justification of the whole revenue balance for those schools who exceed the permitted thresholds.**

139. **Results of the Consultation on a change to the Controls on Surplus Balances Scheme**

**Resolved:**

**Following discussions regarding the Controls on Surplus Balances scheme under the previous item, it was agreed to defer this item to the Autumn meeting of the Schools Forum in October, when a full review of the scheme will be considered.**

140. **Confirmation of dates for future meetings**

Members of the Forum noted the dates of upcoming meetings.

The next meeting will take place on 23 June 2011. A briefing will precede the meeting, and the items for consideration will be the YPSS Funding formula and the Final Budget figures for 2011/2012

141. **Urgent Items**

At the Chairman's discretion Simon Burke, Head of Business and Commercial Services, DCE, updated the Forum on recently received changes to the Music Funds available to the Council. In 2010-11 Wiltshire Council received a grant of £476,850 for music as part of the Standards Fund programme. £183,850 of this sum was devolved to schools to support the provision of music education at Key Stage 2.

Allocations for 2011-12 will be made on the basis of the numbers of primary school-aged children in the local authority area with an 11% weighting applied for those children eligible for free school meals. This will be paid by the Federation of Music Services in two instalments – April and December, and is intended to be used solely to fund music education. The allocation for Wiltshire for 2011-12 is £528,511.

The Head of Business and Commercial Services explained that whilst the increase in grant is welcomed, and helps address funding which has historically been low compared to other authorities, the change in the purpose and conditions of the grant has implications for the way the grant is allocated and managed in Wiltshire.

**Resolved:**

- i. That one third of £183,850 be allocated to schools on the current basis to represent the cost of maintaining the provision of music education for Key Stage 2 for terms five and six**
- ii. To consider future arrangements for the Music Grant at the next meeting of the Schools Forum.**



(Duration of meeting: 1.40 - 3.45 pm)

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