

SCHOOLS FORUM

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2013 AT MAIN HALL - ST JOHN'S PARISH CENTRE, 2 WINGFIELD ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 9EA.

Present:

Dr Peter Biggs, Mr Steve Clark, Mr Tim Gilson, Jan Hatherell, Mr J Hawkins, Mr J Proctor, Ms I Sidmouth, Mr Martin Watson (Vice-Chair) and Mrs C Williamson

Also Present:

Simon Burke, Julia Cramp, Stephanie Denovan and Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE

13 Apologies and Changes of Membership

Apologies were received from Neil Baker (Chairman), Julia Bird, Andy Bridewell, Ann Ferries, Sue Jiggins, Rev. Alice Kemp and Dr Tina Pagett.

The Vice- Chairman, Martin Watson, took the Chair.

14 Minutes of the previous Meeting

The Chairman drew attention to the minutes found on pages 1 to 6 of the agenda.

A proposal to amend the wording of the second resolution in item no. 10 to read

- (2) To agree an hourly rate for 2 year olds in private, voluntary and independent settings at £5.43, plus an additional 25p per hour as a start up rate per pupil for 2013-14, to be reviewed on an annual basis

was accepted.

A further proposal to amend the ninth resolution for minute no. 10 to read

- (9) To recommend to Council that the overall schools budget be set at £302.184 million

was accepted.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed

1. To accept the amended wording for the second resolution from minute no. 10
2. To accept the amended wording for the ninth resolution from minute no. 10
3. To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes from the meeting held on 24 January 2013, subject to the amendments detailed above.

15 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

16 Chairman's Announcements

Simon Burke and Councillor Grundy OBE were thanked for their contribution to the work of the Forum and wished every success for the future.

17 Children and Young People's Trust Board Update

Julie Cramp, Service Director – Commissioning and Performance provided updates on the following:

Safeguarding Peer Review

A sector-led review took place at the end of January. OFSTED's message since this review was to keep up the pace and complete the plan.

Early Intervention Strategy

The Safeguarding Trust Board had approved a multi-agency thresholds document, which was being taken to PHF next week and hopefully WASSH in the near future. The strategy would also be brought to Schools Forum.

18 Budget Monitoring

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report and noted the projected underspend of £0.6 million. Work was ongoing to support vulnerable schools through the funding mechanism, and it was agreed that details of this support would be brought to the next Schools Forum meeting.

Resolved:

The Forum noted the report.

19 Reports from Working Groups

School Funding Working Group (SFWG)

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report and minutes from the SFWG. She highlighted the recommendations which gave support for an amendment to the funding scheme to withdraw the control mechanism on

surplus balances scheme, a request for additional information to be made available to the Forum to assist with consideration of the Review of 2013-14 School Funding Arrangements consultation and a recommendation that no cash back be distributed to schools in 2012-13 within the Free School Meals Pooling Scheme.

Resolved:

The Forum noted the report and recommendations contained within.

SEN Working Group

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report and minutes from the SEN Working Group. She highlighted the recommendations which requested a review of Top Up Rates for 2014-14 and recommendations for the response to the Review of School Funding Arrangements 2013-14 consultation.

Resolved:

The Forum noted the report and the recommendations contained within.

Schools Services Working Group

Simon Burke provided a verbal update from the Schools Services Working Group.

He confirmed that the existing contract for broadband would finish on 31 July 2013 and the preferred provider was South West Grid for Learning. He highlighted the important decision to de-delegate and confirmed that the offer to special schools was made on the same basis as academies, and that a review had been agreed.

Wiltshire Council was now acting as an appropriate body for qualified teachers. There was a new online system for schools to access, and the charges for this service were £175 registration and £75 per NQT.

Changes had been made to the pupil advisor programme with a move from 4 to 3 and a half days from central funds. A request to increase music services by 2.5% was agreed.

Work on modernising the payroll system was ongoing however it was unlikely to be implemented before the autumn.

A query was raised over whether the charges to some schools for broadband provision from SW Grid for Learning between the period 1 April 2013 and 31 July 2013 being higher than previously for a whole year could be overcome. It was confirmed that this would not be possible as changes to the Schools Funding regulations meant delegation to DSG with the schools having to pay back, however they were seeking to reduce across the board and were hoping to offset costs. Concern was raised over the lack of understanding on and confidence in the broadband offer from SW Grids for Learning and it was agreed that they would attend the next meeting of the PHF. Schools would have to reach a decision by 31 March 2013.

20 Review of School Funding Arrangements 2013-14

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, introduced the report circulated at the meeting and attached to these minutes which provided detail around the consultation questions. She explained that the document was split into 4 sections, and the Forum were asked for their steer for the response.

Section 1: Are we moving towards national consistency

The move to a pupil led system with funding following the pupil was noted. In 2012-13 80% of funding in Wiltshire was allocated through pupil-led factors; in 2013-14 this went up to 88.9%. The Forum agreed that a minimum threshold should be set for the pupil-led factors, but noted that if rules were changed to allow differential lump sums between primary and secondary this may impact on the amount allocated through pupil led factors.

Section 2: Areas of concern and possible change for 2014/15

The difficulty in commenting on prior attainment given the concern over the new set of data was highlighted.

It was confirmed that Wiltshire Council had opted not to use a pupil mobility factor in the new funding arrangements and the Forum noted that the impact of mobility included sudden reductions in pupils numbers in addition to large increases and that it may be better to have a facility to set a deficit budget to support schools in managing this.

The Forum recommended that there should be different lump sums for primary and secondary, which would negate the need for a sparsity factor. It was agreed that the proposed sparsity factor was complex and questions were asked if it would take into account safe walking routes.

The issues around service schools were likened to those of deprived area and therefore not triggering deprivation factors and it was suggested that some issues could be tackled in conjunction with the MOD. Concern was raised over falling rolls with a suggested solution of licensed deficits; however it was acknowledged that this would not be easy for academies.

Section 3 – Options for adjusting high needs funding in 2014-15 and beyond

This section and the questions contained within had been considered by the SEN working group and the Forum agreed with the responses suggested.

Section 4 – Schools Forum

The Forum felt that as given in feedback previously they worked in a collaborative way and any additional restrictions may work against that.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to submit a response to the DfE consultation based on the points made.

21 **Schools Budgets 2013-14 - Update**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report and drew the Forum's attention to an error relating to Secondary School Budgets 2013-14 detailed in a briefing note circulated at the meeting and attached to these minutes.

The error in the calculation of number on roll for secondary schools affected 22 out of 29 schools, and the following two options were considered:

- a) Adjust in the following year
- b) Recover the overpayment by adjusting the top ups to be paid to schools in 2013-14

The Forum noted that it was possible to recoup the overpayments for all but 1 secondary school by adjusting the top up payments payable in 2013-14 for high needs pupils and which enabled the funding for each school to be corrected within the financial year, avoiding any knock on impact to 2014-15.

It was explained that the budgets had been sent out to schools on 1st March and should be earlier next year.

Further work was needed on the funding of high needs provision for 2014-15 and it was agreed that SENCO / Business Managers should be approached for involvement in a working group to look at potential changes to the banding system for provision across mainstream schools and report back via the SEN Group to the October meeting of Schools Forum.

It was confirmed that funding rates were inclusive of all new delegation and budgets could not be adjusted to correct errors once issued.

The impact of funding changes showed a significant increase in schools protected through the MFG. Work was ongoing on how to support schools that are financially vulnerable as a result of the new funding formula and proposals would be brought to the June meeting of Schools Forum

Resolved:

The Forum agreed

- 1. To note the progress on the 2013-14 schools budget to date**
- 2. To recommend the recovery of overpayments to secondary schools by adjusting the top-ups to be paid to schools in 2013-14**
- 3. For the SEN working group to consider how high needs funding should be allocated across mainstream schools and report back to Schools Forum in October.**
- 4. For proposals to support schools who are financially vulnerable as a result of the formula changes to be brought to the June meeting.**

22 **Expectations for SEND Green Paper Pathfinders during the Extension Period (April 2013 to September 2014)**

Julia Cramp – Service Director, Commissioning and Performance, introduced the report and highlighted the huge piece of work being undertaken which included the identification of unit costs for personal budgets. She confirmed that the legislation had been delayed and was currently scheduled to come into effect on 1 April 2014.

The following key days were noted:

June 2013: Personal budgets to be offered to all those with a new Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).

September 2013: My Plan would be offered to all new applicants. Work would start on converting existing statements to EHCP.

In response to questions Julia confirmed that they would be writing to people with existing statements explaining what the options were.

Wiltshire Council's success as a regional pathfinder supporting other authorities in the region was noted, and it was confirmed that they had been chosen as a national pathfinder.

Resolved:

The Forum noted the report.

23 **Controls on Surplus Balances scheme - outcome of consultation**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report detailing the results of the consultation with schools on the withdrawal of the Controls on Surplus Balances Scheme with effect from 2013-14.

The results of the consultation showed the schools in agreement with the proposal to withdraw the scheme and initiate an alternative approach which maintains a balance between encouraging prudent financial management whilst also embracing the DfE's guidance that schools should operate autonomously.

Resolved:

The Forum recommended a revision to the Wiltshire scheme for funding schools to withdraw the control mechanism on surplus balances with effect from the 2013-14 financial year.

24 **Free School Meal Pooling Scheme**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance introduced the report which detailed the estimated balance as being £80k, which had previously been believed by officers to be adequate to offset any growth in free meals in 2012-13.

Resolved:

The Forum recommended that no cash back be allocated from the Free School Meal Pool in the current year.

25 Confirmation of dates for future meetings

The following dates were noted:

27 June 2013

3 October 2013

12 December 2013

23 January 2014

13 March 2014

26 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.40 - 3.35 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kirsty Butcher, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713 948, e-mail kirsty.butcher@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115