

SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2014 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Mr N Baker (Chairman), Mrs Aileen Bates, Mr Andy Bridewell, Chilcott, Mr Steve Clark, Jan Hatherell, Mr J Hawkins, Mrs Sue Jiggins, Rob Parsons, Mr J Proctor, Ms I Sidmouth, Mr Martin Watson (Vice-Chair) and Mrs C Williamson

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Gamble

1 Apologies and Changes of Membership

Apologies had been received from the following:

Aileen Bates – SEN Governor
Peter Biggs – Secondary School Governor
Alice Kemp – Diocesan Representative
Rosemary Collard – Early Years Representative
Carolyn Godfrey – Corporate Director

2 Minutes of the previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held 3 October 2013 were presented, and subject to an amendment to those present at the meeting, it was

Resolved:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held 3 October 2013 as a true and accurate record.

3 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

4 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements made through the Chairman.

5 Children and Young People's Trust Board Update

No verbal update was made at the meeting.

6 **Budget Monitoring**

The Head of Finance outlined the budget monitoring report which highlighted the summary of expenditure against the Dedicated Schools Grant as of 30 November 2013.

The report highlighted the a projected underspend of £1.423 million against the overall schools budget which included the following variances:

- An overspend of £0.296 million is projected against the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) for 3 and 4 year olds, as a result of a reduced take up in places for 3 year olds, which does not reflect the current data on take up.
- A planned underspend of £0.169 million is projected against the EYSFF for 2 year olds, and was broadly in line with initial projections.
- The projected underspend of the Independent Special School (ISS) budget was £1.735 million.
- Top-Up Budgets for Wiltshire Schools and Academies was expected to break even for the year.
- Top-Up Budgets (Post-16) had increased in the final DSG settlement and was projected to underspend by £0.116 million. The budget will continue to be under pressure in 2014-15 as numbers of placements this year will again exceed the numbers initially planned.
- The Named Pupil Allowances (NPAs) budget was projected to overspend by £0.451 million, a further increase from the previous report in October 2013.

Following the update, the forum:

Resolved:

To note the Budget Monitoring 2013-14 report from the Head of Finance.

7 **Reports from Working Groups**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, introduced the reports and minutes from the Schools Funding Working Group, High Needs Working Group, and the Early Years Working Group.

Resolved:

The Forum agreed:

- a) **To note the reports and minutes from the working groups.**
- b) **To simplify the process for payment adjustments within the Early Years Single Funding Formula, so that only phased payments are used from April 2014.**

8 Growth Fund and Falling Roles Fund

Growth Fund

The Strategic Financial Manager, Grant Davis, outlined the Allocation of Funding for Pupil Growth 2014-15 report which documented the proposal for allocating funding for the pupil growth fund from the centrally retained growth fund for 2014-15.

The report outlined the background to the growth fund and changes to DfE Guidance for 2014-15 which would render current allocations of the Growth Fund as non-compliant. The report contained proposals to revise the Wiltshire criteria to allocate in year growth for infant class size as in year growth can only be reflected if it is due to basic need or infant class size requirements.

The centrally retained budget for the Growth Fund was set by the Forum in December 2012 for an amount of £1.1 million.

The report outlined the proposed criteria which include:

- a New School Allowance for newly opened schools based on a teacher to pupil ratio and a top-up value. Funding would also be inclusive of an estimate of the new pupil intake for the forthcoming academic year.
- Class Expansion for Basic Need whereby funding is provided for additional classes to meet a basic need identified by the Local Authority. The definition of Expansion was that of a building project or mobile classroom.
- Finally changes to Infant Class Size Increases were outlined as being applicable to KS1 elements only.

The forum expressed frustration at the required change from the Education Funding Agency relating to the in year growth factor, and discussed the affordability of the proposed changes. It was agreed that the proposals would release approximately £0.250 million compared with the 2013-14 budget which could be allocated to other priorities.

At the end of the discussion, the forum;

Resolved:

- a) To agree to amend the criteria for funding Basic Need Expansion to include the ability to fund schools where the LA has requested them to increase their PAN regardless of whether there is a building project being undertaken.**
- b) To set the budget for pupil growth in 2014-15 at £0.848 million.**
- c) To amend the criteria for funding in year pupil growth, so that only growth making schools that are compliant with Infant Class Size regulations can be funded.**

Falling Rolls Fund

The Strategic Financial Manager, Grant Davis, presented the Falling Rolls Fund 2014-15 report which outlined changes to regulations that allow local authorities to fund and provide short term protection to schools with falling numbers on roll.

The Forum was asked to discuss the implementation of a falling Rolls fund for 2014/15.

The Strategic Financial Manager outlined the key requirements of the fund which were that:

- The falling rolls fund be restricted to population increases expected in 2-3 years in necessary schools classified by OFSTED as good or outstanding. It must not be used to prop up unpopular or failing schools.
- Any funds remaining at the end of the financial year must be added to the following year's DSG and reallocated to maintained schools and academies through the local formula.
- Local authorities be required to produce criteria on which any falling rolls funding is to be allocated. This should provide a transparent and consistent basis for the allocation of funding.
- Local authorities propose the criteria to the Schools Forum and gain its agreement before funding is allocated.

The Strategic Financial Manager outlined the analysis that had been completed, based upon schools within Wiltshire which showed that:

- from 2011 to 2012, 94 schools had a drop in pupil number;
- from 2012 to 2013 the drop was 100 schools; and,
- from 2011 to 2013 there were 52 schools that had a drop in pupil numbers year on year.

The most common percentage band drop in pupils across all school phases was 0 - 5%. The analysis also detailed five schools with more than a 10% drop in pupil numbers year-on-year across two years, with each of these having received an OFSTED rating of either inadequate or satisfactory / requires improvement.

Based on the analysis, dialogue with other Local Authorities and DfE requirements, the Strategic Financial Manager outlined the proposed criteria for the Falling Rolls Fund policy as follows:

- Must have had a falling number on roll for a minimum of 2 years based on the autumn term census
- Number on roll must have fallen by more than 5% in both of the previous 2 years.
- Must have an OFSTED rating of good or outstanding. The OFSTED ratings will be taken from the most recent inspection at the October census date prior to the start of the financial year.
- The forecast pupil data, for the school planning area, must show the school is expected to have an increase in pupil numbers by the end of the 3 years (2016/17 to 2017/18 based on a 2014/15 base year)

The Strategic Financial Manager then outlined the calculations for forecast data based on a School level capacity (SCAP) return, which is an EFA requirement for Local Authorities.

The methodology for calculating the fund was discussed by the Forum, which discussed a threshold of 5% of pupil numbers, with the higher rate calculated for year on year falls. The forum discussed the methodology and costing implications of the Falling Rolls Fund, and the difficulty in relying on the SCAP as a predictor of growth. Mr John Hawkins spoke in support of the fund noting in particular the importance of the fund in retaining staff and preventing the initiation of a downward spiral. At the end of the debate the forum;

Resolved:

To not utilise a Falling Rolls Fund to support schools with Falling Rolls in 2014-15, and consequently, not develop a Falling Rolls Policy.

9 Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools Budget 2014-15

The Head of Finance outlined the Schools Funding Settlement and Budget Proposals for 2014-15. The report contained the schools funding settlement for 2014-15 which included details of the Pupil Premium and Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Forum discussed the Pupil Premium and the 'Ever 6' arrangements which had been proposed to be set at £1,300 for Primary and £935 for Secondary. The Forum also discussed the premium for looked after children and pupils who had been adopted from care will attract a premium of £1,900. It was stated that the total allocation of the premium in Wiltshire would exceed £13.3 million in 2014-15.

The Head of Finance outlined the changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant which was stated as being £303.92 million. The Forum discussed the breakdown of the allocation into Schools, Early Years and High Needs. The forum noted that whilst the DSG settlement represented an increase of £0.805 compared with 2013-14, it reflected upward and downward adjustments within some of the budgets. The Forum discussed the Minimum Funding Guarantee of -1.5% per pupil, which represented a cap on reduction in funding per pupil before any premiums are added.

The Forum discussed the impact on Early Years funding, in particular focussing on the increase in provision for 2 year olds that is covered by the grant. The forum discussed the affordability of the current £5.43 hourly rate with a 25p set-up allowance, and considered the affordability of continuing the current hourly rate and the impact of removing the 25p set-up allowance. It was considered that by removing the 25p set up, the cost of provision for 2 year olds would be reduced from £3.657 million to 3.496 million giving a saving of around £160k and that this would enable the hourly rate of £5.43 to be continued in 2014-15. The Forum discussed rolling forwards the previous years underspend, to support any continuation of the hourly rate.

The Forum then discussed the breakdown of the DSG on the Schools Block and its impact on High Needs. The Forum also noted the previous discussions on Falling Rolls Fund and Growth Fund. Particular concern was noted around

the funding formula's ability to fund special schools with parity. The Forum discussed provisions for pre and post 16 high needs, focussing on the source for the data used in the calculation of the figures. A discussion was held on supporting high needs pupils through into reception, and how funding for this could be arranged. A debate was also held on the funding triggers for High Needs and the cost implications for any amendment to the arrangements. At the end of the discussions, the Forum;

Resolved:

- a. That any increase in DSG arising from the January early years census be allocated to the EYSFF budget to support increases in population and take up of places.
- b. To agree an hourly rate for 2 year old places of £5.43;
- c. To remove the set up allowance of 25p per hour applied to places for 2 year olds from April 2014;
- d. To roll forward any underspend against the funding allocation for 2 year old places to support the continuation of the hourly rate in future years.
- e. To make no change to the hourly rate for 3 & 4 year olds;
- f. To agree the assumptions to be used in calculating the delegated budget as outlined in the report;
- g. To set the Top-up rates for Resource Bases and ELP as follows;

<u>Resource Base Band:</u>	<u>1</u> £10,823	<u>2</u> £5,881	<u>3</u> £2,920
<u>ELP Band:</u>		<u>ELP2</u> £5,881	<u>ELP1</u> £2,920

- h. To note the work being carried out to finalise top up rates for special schools, and to agree final rates at the March meeting;
- i. To agree the budget for the post-16 top up budget and to set it at the level allocated within the funding settlement;
- j. To allocate £0.150m from the DSG Reserve to support the proposal to fund Hard to Place pupils;
- k. To formalise a proposal for consideration at the next meeting for a fund to support the transition of pupils with high needs in to Reception, to be funded in 2014-15 from the DSG Reserve;
- l. To set the overall schools budget at £303.919 million including the agreed utilisation of the DSG reserve to support Hard to Place Pupils. This figure was not inclusive of the 150k that would be utilised from DSG Reserves to support the Hard to Place pupils (as in j above).

10 **Supply Insurance Pool**

The Forum discussed the Supply Insurance Pool Scheme report which outlined the current arrangements for insurance with regard to sickness absence. Currently Schools receive a cashback payment for any claims that amount to less than 50% of the premium paid.

The Forum discussed the premium payable by the Local Authority and questioned if this amount was a worthwhile payment when calculating the total absences payable over the course of the year. After discussion, the Forum;

Resolved:

1) To set the following Supply Insurance Pool payments as follows:

- a. To set no increase in prices for 2014-15.**
- b. To make cashback payments for 2013-14 at the enhanced level.**

2) Schools Forum also requested that the Local Authority look at the necessity to underwrite the scheme through external insurers given the level of balances on the scheme in recent years.

11 **Funding for Alternative Provision and Hard to Place Pupils**

The Head of DCE Finance outlined the Funding for Alternative Provision and Hard to Place Pupils 2014-15 report which contained an overview of the Local Authority and Schools responsibility to Hard to Place pupils. The Forum discussed the Power to Innovate Order and alternative provision funding. The Forum debated the financial implications of implementing the scheme, focussing on the impact of an increase in out of county pupils coming into Wiltshire as a direct result of the scheme. AT the end of the discussion, the Forum,

Resolved:

To allocate £0.4 million to the Fair Access Panels to support Hard to Place pupils coming in to Wiltshire, and to be funded from the budget released from the growth fund (£0.250m) and the DSG Reserve (£0.150m).

12 **Confirmation of dates for future meetings**

The Chairman confirmed the next date of the Forum as 13 March 2014, to be held at County Hall, Trowbridge.

13 **Urgent Items**

There were no Urgent Items to note at the meeting.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 4.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Samuel Bath, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718211, e-mail samuel.bath@wiltshire.gov.uk

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