

Schools Funding Working Group

31st March 2014, 8:30am, Salisbury Meeting Room, County Hall

Minutes

Present: Liz Williams, Grant Davis, Neil Baker, Catriona Williamson, Andy Bridewell, Martin Watson, John Hawkins

Apologies: Steve Clark, Phil Cook

1	<p>Fairer Funding for Schools 2015-16</p> <p>The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the DfE consultation <i>Fairer Schools Funding in 2015-16</i> which was issued on 13th March 2014 and to agree a response on behalf of Wiltshire Schools Forum. The deadline for response is 30th April 2014.</p> <p>EW presented a briefing paper on the consultation highlighting the main features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) A further £350 million is proposed to be allocated to increase funding in the lowest funding authorities;b) It is proposed to update the calculation method for the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) to include teaching and non-teaching employment costs;c) Minimum funding levels are to be used to set the funding for the Schools Block element of each local authority's DSG allocation. <p>The questions within the document focussed on whether the approach of using minimum funding values was the right one and whether the values had been set appropriately.</p> <p>Wiltshire is expected to gain from the allocation of additional funding and so in addition to discussing the response to the consultation the Working Group also considered how any additional funding could be allocated in 2015-16.</p> <p>EW confirmed the assumption that the additional £350m would be added to the overall schools budget on a recurrent basis and would not be one off. The final allocation of funding for 2015-16 would be based on October 2014 pupil numbers and so the values published within the consultation document were indicative.</p> <p>In terms of how any additional funding should be allocated the Working Group confirmed that the priority should be to reduce the overall cost of the Minimum Funding Guarantee within Wiltshire and therefore the number of schools currently being capped. GD presented initial financial modelling work which indicated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) It would not be affordable to implement the minimum funding values identified within the consultation document as these values were being used to calculate the overall Schools Block allocation for each authority, not the values that should be included in the local formula.b) Changing values of individual formula factors to move towards the published values would cause turbulence in school budgets and potentially increase the cost of the MFG.c) The most effective way to increase funding to all schools and reduce the numbers of schools, and amounts, subject to MFG and capping would be to increase the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) across all	
---	--	--

	<p>phases by the percentage increase in funding received.</p> <p><i>It was agreed to recommend to Schools Forum that any increase in funding received in 2015-16 as a result of the fairer funding methodology should be allocated through AWPUs.</i></p> <p>In relation to the consultation questions EW presented an analysis, drawing on work carried out by other South West authorities, indicating that the methodology used by the DfE in targeting the Schools Block element of DSG may not fully address relative funding values between different local authorities. The analysis compared the projected increase in funding for Wiltshire compared with other similar authorities which had previously benchmarked higher or lower than Wiltshire in terms of overall schools budget funding and showed the impact of historical spending decisions on the proposed allocation of increased funding.</p> <p><i>It was agreed that the Wiltshire consultation response should focus on the impact of the proposed methodology on relative funding values rather than commenting on the proposed minimum funding values.</i></p> <p><i>It was agreed that the draft response would be circulated to members of the working group for comment prior to submission on 30th April.</i></p>	<p>EW</p>
--	---	-----------