

EXTRACT OF SCHOOLS FORUM MINUTES

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2015 AT SALISBURY ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

11 Schools Budget 2015-16

Elizabeth Williams, Head of Finance, was in attendance to introduce the report which outlined the detail of the schools funding settlement for 2015-16 and considered the implications for the Wiltshire schools budget.

The pupil premium would be continued in 2015-16. This would be paid to schools at the same rates as last year, apart from the Primary pupil rate had increased from £1,300 to £1320 per pupil. Based on January 2015 census data it was estimated that the total pupil premium grant allocated to Wiltshire schools would exceed £13 million in 2015-16.

The dedicated schools grant (DSG) had received an increase in total funding of £6.39 million to £310.309 million. The Schools Block had received a significant increase, whilst the Early Years Block had seen a slight decrease. The High Needs Block would be confirmed in March 2015. It was noted that no school would see a decrease in its 'per pupil' funding of more than 1.5%, in accordance with the requirements of the Minimum Funding Guarantee.

The growth in funding in the Schools Block was attributed to two factors, firstly the additional £5.7m from the Fairer Schools Funding allocation and £2.1m due to an increase of 505 pupils in the county.

The following assumptions for the schools delegated budget were proposed;

- Per pupil rates reflect the increases from the Fairer Schools Funding, as previously agreed with Schools Forum
- Lump sum allocations were unchanged at £85,000 for primary schools and £175,000 for secondary schools
- Total funding allocations for English as an Additional Language (EAL), Prior Attainment and Deprivation remain unchanged and funding rates were scaled accordingly
- Costs of the MFG were met through limiting the increases to schools gaining from the formulaic changes

The Early Years Block would be updated once 2014 census details were made available. Take-up was stated as being hard to predict and a ringfence of the budget was proposed. From April 2015 the funding of 2 year-old places would move to a full participation model where local authorities would be funded on the actual take up of places. It was discussed and agreed that any increase in DSG arising from the

January early years census was allocated to the EYSFF budget to support increases in population and take up of places.

The hourly rate for 2 year olds was currently set at £5.43 to providers. This was stated as being the historical rate. The EFA funded rate for 2015-16 of £4.97 was questioned as to whether it was appropriate and £5.25 was considered as a midpoint.

The hourly rate was proposed to be reduced as there was risk that there would not be enough money in the reserves to continue the hourly rates as they were. The quantum provided enough for £4.97; anything higher would require using the reserves.

A consultation had taken place on a single hourly rate for 3&4 year olds. This was discussed at the meeting and further proposals would be brought to the next meeting.

The allocation of the high needs block was based on agreed planned place numbers and historical spend rather than on specific school census data. The final High Needs Block allocations will be notified in March 2015.

A request to the EFA for additional place funding through the Exceptional Case Process was successful in securing an additional 117 places within Wiltshire for 2015-16.

Given the current significant overspend within the high needs block in 2014-15, further modelling and work was being carried out, looking at all areas of the service. There was an underlying assumption that changes and services must be managed within the existing budget level.

Resolved

- 1. Any increase in DSG arising from the January early years census is allocated to the EYSFF budget to support increases in population and take up of places**
- 2. To agree in principle to £4.97 as an hourly rate for 2 year olds with the view that it is affordable and that any surplus is brought back to the 12 March 2015 Schools Forum meeting to be recycled.**
- 3. To agree that the hourly rate for 3&4 year olds be considered at the next meeting following further modelling work.**
- 4. Schools Forum agree the assumptions to be used in calculating the delegated budget**
- 5. Top-up rates remain unchanged, subject to any proposals at the March Schools Forum in relation to the High Needs Block**
- 6. That the overall schools budget is set at £310.309 million, the level of the provisional funding settlement and that work is taken to review the High Needs budget and contain spending within the allocated High Needs Block.**