

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 8 November 2017 at Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillor T. McInerney (Observer)
K. Landrum (Chair) Primary Representative (VA School)
J. Wilson (Vice-Chair), Secondary Governor Representative
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N. Unsworth, Financial Management, HBC
T. Bell, 16-19 Provision
K. Albiston, PVI Representative
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
R. Collings, Community Primary School Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Governor Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Vincent, All Through Schools Representative
E. Haver, Special Academy Representative
E. Wright, Secondary Academy Representative
S. Ainsworth, Special Schools Representative (Substitute)
C. Towell, Primary Representative – Infant School (Substitute)
S. Evans, Secondary Representative (Observer)

Action

SCF17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Marjorie Constantine and Jackie Coughlan (nominated substitute Members were in attendance).

SCF18 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING FOR 2018-19

The Forum considered a proposal to transfer funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2018-19.

Members were advised that from April 2018 the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be split into four blocks: Schools Block, Central Schools Services Block, High Needs Block and Early Years Block and would be used as follows:

- The Schools Block – to support mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies and funding distributed via a funding formula for pupils in Reception to Year 11;

- The Central Schools Services Block – to support central functions on behalf of pupils in state funded maintained schools and academies;
- The High Needs Block – to support provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities for age 0-25, including central services;
- The Early Years Block – to support provision for children aged 2 to 4.

It was noted that since the introduction of the revised funding formula in April 2013 local authorities had been allowed to move funds between the blocks of DSG freely. From April 2018 the Schools Block element would be ring fenced and must be fully distributed via the funding formula. However, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will allow authorities to transfer up to 0.5% of the Schools Block allocation to the High Needs Block to ease budget pressures.

The report provided information regarding the consultation exercise that was carried out; this document was appended to the report as Appendix A. The responses and comments from the consultation were appended to the report as Appendix B.

Members considered the conclusion as presented in the report and discussed the increasing demands on the high needs block.

A vote was conducted and the Forum agreed with the majority of the respondents to the consultation, that the transfer of funds should go ahead for the 2018-19 financial year, to be taken from the basic per pupil funding factor.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) agree a 5% transfer of the December 2017 Schools Block allocation of DSG to the High Needs Block for 2018-19.

SCF19 SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FORMULA FOR 2018-19

The Forum received the Schools Block Funding Formula for 2018-19. It was reported that the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant was to fund pupils in mainstream primary and secondary schools. From April

2018 it would be ring-fenced and must be devolved to schools via a funding formula.

The report discussed the impact of the High Needs transfer (if agreed); the impact of the former Education Services Grant de-delegation; and premature retirement costs. Information was provided on the consultation carried out with maintained schools and academies; the consultation document was appended to the report at Appendix A. Appended at Appendix B were the consultation responses.

A summary of the responses was provided in the report with regards to the three funding formula options presented in Appendix A. In conclusion it was clear that the majority of schools who responded to the consultation indicated a wish to move straight to the National Funding Formula (NFF) with transitional protection for 2018-19. By moving to the NFF with transitional protection for 2018-19, Halton would remain on the NFF for 2019-2020, probably with transitional protection again, as it was unlikely that sufficient funding would be received to implement the full NFF until April 2020, when it was expected to be wholly funded.

The information was considered and discussed by the Forum, which was asked to make a decision on which funding formula they wanted to use for 2018-19. Officers put forward the option that was not voted for by schools; that an interim funding formula is used to ease the transition, which would lower the level of funding reductions to schools losing funding. This could only be funded by not supporting the higher levels of increases in funding to schools receiving more funding. It was noted that in Halton the majority of schools should be receiving more funding under the NFF than seeing reductions.

After further debate the Forum voted for the third option, to use an interim funding formula for 2018-19, as discussed above.

It was noted that a final decision on which funding formula to use for 2018-19 would be made by the Executive Board on 16 November 2017, after which schools would be notified of the decision.

The Forum also discussed the funding of the premature retirement costs (previously funded by the ESG) as a decision was required as to whether this could be de-delegated from schools for 2018-19, subject to final pupil

numbers based on the October 2017 census data. Members appreciated the efforts made by Officers to reduce the cost per pupil from £38.70 to £20.77; however the consensus of the Forum was that this was still unacceptable. Members suggested using budget Reserves to fund the costs (£268,000) and although the impacts of using this were questioned and discussed, the Forum agreed to fund the retirement costs using Reserves.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) note the report;
- 2) agree that an interim funding formula be used for the mainstream primary and secondary funding formula for 2018-19; and
- 3) agree that the premature retirement costs be met using budget Reserves.

Meeting ended at 5.05 p.m.