

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 10 October 2018 at Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillor T. McInerney (Observer)
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery Representative
E. Wright, Secondary Academy Representative
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
T. Bell, 16-19 Provision Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Governor Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
E. Haver, Special Academy Representative
A. Sheppard, VA Schools Representative
J. McConville, Secondary Academy Representative
H. Austin, Community Special Schools Representative
E. Hall, All Through School Representative (Sub)

Action

SCF10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Kathryn Albiston, Ian Critchley and Jackie Coughlan.

SCF11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF12 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Forum was presented with an update on the membership of the Forum. The Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Representative had been renewed for a four year term and the new Community Special Schools Representative was noted.

RESOLVED: That the Forum confirms and notes the update.

SCF13 ESFA ANALYSIS OF SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FORMULA 2018-19

The Forum received an overview of the formula

factors used by local authorities to set their Schools Block Funding Formula for 2018-19.

It was reported that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had published a report giving an overview of the funding formulae submitted by each local authority for 2018-19. It provided charts and comments on the ranges of funding amounts used and the proportions of the Schools Block funding attributed to factors. Members were referred to the report which was attached as Appendix A; each chart value that corresponded to Halton's funding formula was highlighted.

It was noted that the ESFA had also published a data file showing the funding formula used by each local authority. The analysis and data file could be found on the DfE website.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

SCF14 FORECAST OVERTURN 2018-19

The Forum received the expected forecast overturn position.

It was reported that as part of the detailed monitoring of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the forecast overturn position based on expenditure to the end of August 2018 was an overspend of £680,259. Members were referred to Appendix A which gave an overview of how this figure had been reached.

The report provided commentary on each DSG block and provided a summary of the totals reached in paragraph 3.7. It was noted that Officers were monitoring expenditure on a month by month basis but it was acknowledged that unanticipated costs could be incurred by end of year.

The Forum discussed the Inter Authority Recoupment within the High Needs Block and the increasing demands for places at the Special Schools. Officers also updated the Forum on the status of the Behaviour Support Team which would be in place after the October half term.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF15 SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FORMULA 2019-20

The Forum received the Schools Block funding formula for 2019-20.

It was reported that the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was now ring fenced and must be fully devolved to mainstream primary and secondary schools/academies. The only exception was where an agreement was reached to transfer monies to the High Needs Block, subject to consultation with schools and approval of Schools Forum (up to a maximum of 0.5% of Schools Block). It was noted that any amount over 0.5% approval was also required by the Secretary of State.

Members were reminded that for 2018-19, the Council moved from its previous funding formula to follow the National Funding Formula (NFF). It was stated that for 2019-20, the Schools Block funding would increase due to the NFF; and based on the October 2017 census, an increase of £1.24m was expected, although this was likely to change once the October 2018 census data had been received. Officers also advised that the 2019-20 indicative allocation had been reduced by £1.56m by the DfE due to the transitional protection in place for the NFF.

The report provided information on the Funding Factors as described in paragraph 3.2, and those not applicable to Halton were noted by Members. It also outlined:

- Minimum Funding Guarantee and Gains Cap;
- Impact of the High Needs Transfer (if agreed);
- Impact of the former ESG de-delegation; and
- Premature Retirement Costs.

The Forum was advised of the consultation paper issued on 10 September with a closing date of 21 September; the analysis of results was attached as Appendix A. It was clear from this the majority wished to continue with the NFF and the Forum agreed with this.

A query was made with regards to the 1% pay award for maintained schools, and had provision for this been made by schools. Officers suggested that the draft allocations be sent to schools to help them plan (with caveats attached) and that a reminder of the 1% provision could be added in the next schools circular.

It was noted that there was also willingness for Schools Forum to determine the level of MFG and any Gains Cap at the January 2019 meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) agree that the Authority continue with the National Funding Formula.

Operational
Director -
Education,
Inclusion and
Provision

SCF16 HIGH NEEDS

An update on the High Needs funding was provided to the Forum.

It was reported that on 10 September 2018 a consultation paper was issued to all schools on the proposal to transfer funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2019-20. The paper set out the funding allocated to schools alongside the funding for High Needs. It showed the level of overspend in the High Needs budget since 2015-16, with an estimate for 2018-19. Details were also provided of the costs each year of additional or specialist provision with estimated costs to the end of the financial year.

It was noted that following consultation in 2017-18, it was agreed that 0.5% be transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block; this arrangement was for one year only. The proposals for the transfer of funding for 2019-20 were attached at Appendix A. A briefing session was held for schools on 12 September and the questions raised and responses provided were circulated to all schools prior to the close of consultation on 21 September, these were shown in Appendix B.

The Forum was presented with the three consultation questions (paragraph 3.5 of the report) and the responses from the 17 schools that replied. Forum Members commented that they were disappointed with the poor response from schools to the consultation; which equated to just 25% of Halton Schools.

Officers then requested the Forum to consider the transfer of 1% of the School Funding Block to the High Needs Block which was estimated to be £854,330. It was noted that as Schools Forum could only approve a transfer of 0.5%, an application would need to be submitted to the Secretary of State for the 1%. This was discussed by the Forum and they agreed unanimously that 1% should be

transferred from the Schools Budget to the High Needs Block.

The report also presented to the Forum the future plans in place to help reduce the demand on the high needs budget; which were welcomed by Members.

RESOLVED: That the Forum

- 1) notes the responses received from the consultation;
- 2) supports the transfer of 1% from the Schools Budget to the High Needs budget; and
- 3) supports the plans outlined to reduce the demand on the high needs budget.

SCF17 CONTINGENCY UPDATE

The Forum was advised that the total school contingency budget for 2018-19 was £198,780.

It was reported that so far this year there had been 5 applications for funding received to date. The circumstances and procedure for schools applying for funding were outlined in the report. Three of the applications were considered at Sub Group meetings in June and July; and funding was agreed for these schools as stated in paragraph 3.5; which left a balance of £129,740.55.

It was noted that '*Warrington Road Nursery*' in paragraph 3.5 should read '*Aspiring Foundations Federated Nursery Schools.*'

The remaining two applications for funding were considered by a Schools Forum Sub Group prior to this meeting, but the decisions on whether or not to award funding had not yet been made. Officers advised that the outcome of these two applications would be available on the January agenda.

RESOLVED: That the Forum notes the current commitments agreed from the contingency fund.

Meeting ended at 6.00 p.m.