

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 16 October 2019 at Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn

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

Action

SCF7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Emlyn Wright, Ian Critchley, Jackie Coughlan and Angela Sheppard.

SCF8 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2019 were agreed as a correct record. It was noted that C. Liko was the Community Nursery Representative; the named substitute for A. Brown (not Community Primary Representative).

SCF9 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Forum received a membership update and noted the information contained in the report. Forum Members wished to record their thanks to Syd Broxton for his dedication and service on the Forum over the years.

RESOLVED: That the update is confirmed and noted.

SCF10 FUNDING UPDATE 2021

The Forum received the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding updates for 2020-21 in relation to the following:

- Funding for 2020-21;
- Schools Block confirmed updates;
- High Needs Block;
- Central Schools Services Block;
- Early Years Block; and
- Teachers Pay Grant and Teachers Pension Grant.

It was noted that modelling work would be completed and the consultation issued to schools on the proposed funding formula for 2020-21. This would be presented to Schools Forum prior to a decision being requested from the Executive Board.

Officers advised that the provisional budget allocations had just been received (Monday 14 October) and some areas were due after half term; these would be sent to Forum Members as soon they were received by them. A special meeting was requested to approve the budgets following the consultation and this was agreed. Members would be notified of the date as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

SCF11 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

The Schools Forum received an update on the final High Needs outturn for 2018-19.

It was reported that for 2018-19 the High Needs DSG was £241,786 over the allocated budget; a table was presented in paragraph 3.1, which showed the level of spend against budget for the key areas.

It was noted by Members that the profile of expenditure on High Needs had changed over the last 12 months since the original budgets were set. There had been a significant increase in the special school populations both in and out of the Borough, which had meant that the four Halton special schools were providing places for many more children and young people than previously and were up to maximum capacity. This increase in numbers and complexity of pupils' needs had also been reflected in the special schools funding.

Financial
Management,
HBC

Officers provided some commentary around the level of spend in these key areas to help explain the variances. They also advised that due to the increased pressures on High Needs it had been recognised that there was a need to provide accurate and timely information to Schools Forum, so it had been agreed that a DSG Outturn report would be presented at each meeting.

Further to a query regarding the recently established Commissioning Unit; it was suggested that they make a presentation to the Forum at the January meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Operational
Director -
Education,
Inclusion and
Provision

SCF12 DSG OUTTURN 2018/19

The Forum was provided with the final Dedicated Schools Grant position for 2018-19 for the Central Schools Services Block; Early Years Block and High Needs Block (this was discussed in the previous report).

A detailed breakdown of the year-end position was attached at Appendix A of the report, which was noted by Members.

Officers outlined the DSG Outturn Forecast for 2019-20 by means of a presentation. This would be emailed to the Forum Members following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report and presentation are noted.

Financial
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SCF13 INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HIGH NEEDS

The Forum was presented with a report on the recent review of High Needs Provision undertaken by independent Consultants *Peopletoo*.

It was reported that in February 2019 Executive Board approved the recommendations from the independent review of High Needs Provision, undertaken by *Peopletoo*. They also approved funding to *Peopletoo* to lead on the next steps of the project, the revision and redesign of both the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process and provision within the Borough.

The report explained the three workstreams that the project had been split into: *Identifying Need*, *Meeting Need* and the *Pupil Referral Unit*. It was commented that the aim was for these three workstreams to be completed by

December 2019. Following this a report would be submitted to the January meeting of the Executive Board, setting out the proposed changes for their consideration. If the recommendations are agreed, formal consultation on the revised arrangement would then be undertaken.

The following was noted / clarified after presentation of the item:

- A report on the findings and recommendations of *Peopletoo* would be submitted to the January meeting of the Schools Forum prior to being submitted to Executive Board for approval;
- If the recommendations were agreed by Executive Board, the formal consultation would include all schools;
- A partnership approach was being taken and health colleagues from different disciplines were very much involved; and
- An example of proactivity when dealing with a shortage of special school places this year at Brookfields was provided, where they were accommodated at The Grange Academy.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the report;
- 2) supports the progress of the revision and redesign of High Needs; and
- 3) requests a further report is submitted at the next School's Forum meeting.

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SCF14 HALTON'S SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS (SFFS) UPDATE

The Forum received a report that presented the consultation response and proposed changes to the Halton Scheme for financing Schools (SFFS) for August 2019.

It was reported that the Department for Education issued updates to Schemes for Financing Schools, which local authorities were required to consider or implement. There was a requirement for the LA to consult with all maintained schools on the updates before requesting Schools Forum approval of the updates.

Appended to the report at Appendix A was the proposed SFFS document August 2019 and the consultation

document was appended at Appendix B. Although only 3 responses had been received saying they were in agreement with the proposed changes, it was recommended that the updates be accepted with immediate effect.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the consultation responses; and
- 2) agrees the proposed changes to Halton's SFFS and that they be effective immediately.

SCF15 CONTINGENCY UPDATE

Forum Members received a report on the level of School Contingency and staff dismissal budget and an update on the approved requests to date.

It was noted that the Schools Contingency was the sum delegated to those schools maintained by the Local Authority (LA). Halton schools had agreed that this sum is de-delegated and managed centrally. It was reported that the total budget for 2019/2020 is £198.252.

The report outlined the circumstances in which the funding could be used; the circumstances in which applications could be considered by the Schools Forum; and the procedure for applying for additional funding from the contingency.

Members noted the two approved applications for funding received and considered in 2018-19 (Ditton and Simms Cross Primaries) with a commitment for the additional funding to be paid in 2019-20. They also noted the remaining budget balance for staff dismissals at £21,805.98 following an approval of a request from Woodside Primary School.

Officers advised that there had been further requests for financial assistance from some schools and asked for volunteers to sit on a sub group. Lyn Roberts, Jim Wilson, Jane O'Connor and Judith McConville would be contacted in due course to arrange a suitable date for the meeting.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the current commitments agreed from the contingency and staff dismissals.

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Meeting ended at 5.05 p.m.