

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Thursday, 18 June 2020 via remote access

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
K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery Representative
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
A. Sheppard, VA Schools Representative
J. McConville, Secondary Academy Representative
I. Critchley, All Through Schools Representative
L. Roberts, Small Primary Representative

Action

SCF1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Thalia Bell, Kathryn Albiston, Simon Corner, Heather Austin and Anne Simmons.

SCF2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF3 NORTH WEST LOCALLY MANAGED SCHOOLS (LMS) UPDATE

The Forum was presented with an update on the key issues discussed at the recent North West LMS meeting, which was held virtually on 12 May 2020.

This included question and answer section on the Covid 19 pandemic and its impact on schools budgets, which had been identified as a key regional issue. It was reported that the DfE had set up a financial support package for schools for which further guidance would be issued when the system was live. It was noted that a further meeting would be set up for July, after the 2021-22 guidance was issued.

RESOLVED: That the update is noted.

SCF4 DSG OUTTURN 2019/20

The Forum received the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Outturn for 2019-20.

It was reported that the final amount of DSG to Halton for 2019-20 was £114,320,639, which was split between the Schools Block; High Needs Block; Early Years Block and Central School Services Block (CSSB). The report provided details of the expenditure within each block and supporting commentary where necessary. Further a detailed breakdown of the outturn was attached to the report at Appendix A.

It was noted that a balance of £136,464 from the DSG from 2019-20 would be carried forward into the 2020-21 financial year. This would contribute towards budget pressures in 2020-21.

RESOLVED: That the balance of £136,464 being carried over from the DSG from 2019-20 into the next financial year, be noted.

SCF5 HIGH NEEDS SUMMARY 2020-21

The Forum received a summary of the commitments to the High Needs budget for 2020-21.

The total High Needs allocation for Halton was £19,063,244, to support pupils and students aged 0 – 24 years with high needs. It was noted that after the recoupment of £2,906,662 (explained in paragraph 3.3) from the ESFA, the balance of grant was ££16,156,582.

The report provided a list of settings covered by the funding. Members were referred to Tables 2 and 3 where the proposed allocation of the funding was set out and explained. The Forum reviewed and discussed the amounts for each area of the High Needs Block as listed in table 2. Comments made regarding the success of the satellite provision at Brookfields and the establishment of this provision for Ashley in the future were noted.

Following queries, it was noted that the previously agreed £100k transfer from High Needs for the Educational Psychologists service was included in the 'staffing' allocation in table 2. Also, with regards to the budget provision for the educational psychologists, it was confirmed that the schools could keep this funding as it may be needed once the schools are re-opened following the Covid-19 pandemic and

the demand for the service is resumed.

The Forum agreed to support the budget allocations as discussed in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum

- 1) Note the High Needs allocation for 2020-21;
- 2) Supports the budget allocation for 2020-21; and
- 3) Requests an update on High Needs expenditure at the next Schools Forum meeting.

Operational
Director -
Education, and
Inclusion
Provision

SCF6 SCHOOL BALANCES 2019-20

The Forum considered a report which presented the level of funding brought forward from 2019-20 by Halton's Maintained schools.

It was noted that although schools balances were still reported to the Schools Forum, no excess surplus balance limits were in place. However, the Forum retained the right to require schools to provide further information as to how their balance would be spent, should they so decide.

Further to the publication of the reports some errors had come to light in the main report and Appendix A, so the following corrections were made:

- Paragraph 3.2 – balance should read £4,546,444;
- Paragraph 3.3 – balance should read £120,429 (due to error on Ditton Nursery which should be £35,317);
- Paragraph 3.4 – balance should read £3,960,980 (due to error on Woodside which should be £52,014);
- Paragraph 3.5 – balance should be £181,678 (due to error on PRU which should be £189,171).

The total of individual schools budget balances for Halton's maintained schools was £4,546,444 at the end of 2019-20.

The report provided a breakdown of types of schools and officers presented Appendix A (with the above amendments noted), which showed the balances against the 2018-19 balances for comparison. Appendix B showed the balances of Devolved Formula Capital grant for maintained

schools, and the 2018-19 balances for comparison, which had decreased on last years.

The Forum discussed the balances and the additional costs incurred by schools due to the Covid-19 outbreak and their reimbursement by the DfE. The Forum suggested that in respect of school balances, comparisons going back 3 years would be more useful in spotting trends (high or low balances) and therefore would help in considering whether or not more information should be requested from a particular school. This would be looked into by Financial Management.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum notes the report, corrections and associated appendices.

Financial
Management,
HBC

SCF7 SCHOOLS FORUM CONTINGENCY/STAFF DISMISSALS UPDATE

The Forum received an update on the total spend against the schools contingency and staff dismissal budget in 2020.

It was reported that the total budget for the schools contingency budget for 2019-20 was £198,780 and a total spend of £157,849 was approved at Schools Forum Sub Committees for 4 schools.

This left a balance of £40,903, however, following the DfE notification that they would no longer fund the per place funding for the sixth form at Ashley, a total of £93,333, this sum was taken from the school contingency. This, together with the required rates adjustment for primary and secondary schools costing an additional £73,759, has resulted in an overspend of £126,161.

The budget for staff dismissals was £127,110. Following one application for support for £105,304, which was approved by the Schools Forum Sub Committee, the balance remaining was £21,806.

Officers wished to record their thanks to all Forum Members who had volunteered their time to sit on the Schools Forum Sub Committees.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the spend against the school contingency and staff dismissals budgets.

Meeting ended at 4.45 p.m.