

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Monday, 22 June 2015 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillor Philbin, Observer
 J. Rigby (Chairman), Secondary Academy Representative
 M. Constantine, Special Schools Representative
 L. Fox, Secondary Academy Representative
 J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
 L. Feakes, School with Nursery Unit
 A. Brown, Nursery Schools
 R. Collings, Primary Representative - Infant School
 E. Hall, All Through School Representative
 N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
 L. Rhodes, Riverside College
 K. Landrum, Primary Representative - VA School
 J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
 K. Albiston, PVI Representative
 A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
 A. McIntyre, Children and Enterprise
 A. Jones, Democratic Services
 N. Unsworth, Financial Management, HBC
 A. Hough, named substitute for D Moran, Primary Academy Representative
 D. Baugh, Pewithall Primary School (SCF55 refers)

Action

SCF1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Deborah Burke.

SCF2 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2015 were agreed as a correct record. Officers provided the following updates:

SCF 47 – Top Up Funding Levels for 2015-16 – the working group had not been set up yet as it was being done in collaboration with CWAC and discussions were ongoing. The Forum would be updated in the Autumn.

Ann McIntyre

SCF 48 – Early Years Funding for 2015-16 – the complete document *Early Years Cash Values for 2015-16* would be emailed to members after the meeting.

Anne Jones

SCF 50 – Nurture Group Pilot Funding – the pilots had not yet begun and would be looked at in the Autumn.

SCF3 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Forum was advised that two new Members had been nominated by their sector and elected to join the Schools Forum, namely Kathryn Albiston and Jane O'Connor, both representing the PVI Sector.

It was also reported that the two vacancies: Primary Governor Representative (Small School) and Secondary Academy Representative, both remained vacant.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

SCF4 NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIRMAN & VICE CHAIRMAN ROLES

The Chairman requested nominations for the roles of Chairman and Vice Chairman, as both had completed the recommended two year term.

The Forum was advised that since the publication of the agenda, no nominations had been received for the roles. The request was repeated at the meeting, with no volunteers coming forward either. Considering these circumstances the Chairman and Vice Chairman volunteered to continue their roles.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

- 1) Agrees to the appointment of John Rigby as the Chairman for a period of two years; and
- 2) Agrees to the appointment of Marjorie Constantine as Vice Chairman for a period of two years.

SCF5 REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Forum received an application for financial assistance from Mr David Baugh, the Headteacher of Petwithall Primary School, as described in his application form contained in the agenda.

The Forum requested clarity from Mr Baugh on some of the information provided in order to assist them with their decision.

The Forum then considered circumstances which led to the application for the amount of £25,000 and the rationale behind this. They debated the request and determined that although the instances described had

unfortunately occurred around the same time and were unforeseen, they were not considered exceptional, as many other schools in the Borough had experienced similar difficulties.

The Forum proceeded to a vote and the request for financial assistance was declined.

RESOLVED: That the request from Pewithall for financial assistance of £25,000 be declined.

SCF6 SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

The Schools Forum received the revised Scheme for Financing Schools (SFFS) that had been put out to consultation to maintained schools on 8 June with a closing date for comments by Friday 19 June 2015. The *Halton Borough Council, Scheme for Financing Schools – Revised April 2015*, was appended to the report.

The revised Scheme had been drafted by a working group of Officers and school representatives from each sector. Officers advised the Forum that no comments had been received from any school during the consultation. Officers requested that the Halton SFFS be implemented on 1 September 2015 with an aim to review this in the summer term each year following consultations, and make revisions where necessary.

The report went on to advise that on 28 May 2015 the Education Funding Agency (EFA) announced it was proposing two changes to the SFFS, the details of these were contained in the report and the closing date for the consultation for these proposals closed on 25 June 2015.

RESOLVED: that the maintained schools representatives approve the revised Halton Scheme for Financing Schools to come into effect from 1 September 2015.

SCF7 DSG OUTTURN 2014-15

The Forum received the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position for 2014-15 and the amount of DSG to be carried forward in the 2015-16 financial year.

Members noted the information provided in the report and that the unspent DSG from 2014-15 to be brought forward to 2015-16 was £2.6m. Officers advised that regular monitoring meetings would be held over the course of the

year to identify areas of concern and in order to put in place ways of minimising over spends for the coming year.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note that the amount of unspent DSG from 2014-15 (£2,625,589) will be carried forward into the 2015-16.

SCF8 CONTINGENCY UPDATE

The Schools Forum received an update on the value of the Dedicated Schools Grant contingencies for 2015-16. These balances were as follows:

General Schools Contingency - for 2015-16 was £207,966. To date support had been agreed for The Grange School and Licences, which left a balance of **£100,930**;

Pupil Growth Contingency – for 2015-16 was £100,000 plus a carry forward of £80,001, giving a total of **£180,001**;

High Needs Contingency – for 2015-16 was £1,129,210 plus a carry forward from 2014-15 of £404,726, giving a total of £1,533,936. Noted that a value of £356,242 had been agreed for Ashley post 16 and post 16 administration, which left a balance of **£1,177,694**;

Early Years Contingency – for 2015-16 was currently nil. There was a carry forward of £142,996 but there would be a reduction of £74,000 in the Early Years budget. The remaining balance was **£25,702** following the financial support of £43,294 to Ditton Nursery.

Total Central Contingency – carry forward from 2014-15 was £1,840,337 with £50,000 committed as a contribution to IWIST, leaving a balance of **£1,790,337**.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the current balance on each of the contingencies.

SCF9 SCHOOLS BALANCES 2014-15

The Forum received the level of balances brought forward from 2014-15 by Halton Schools.

It was noted that following the Schools Forum meeting in January 2013, the excess surplus balance limits previously imposed on schools were lifted for 2012-13 and this had continued up to 2014-15, with the balances still being monitored.

It was reported that level of balances in the Individual School Budget held by Halton Schools brought forward into 2015-16 was £7,451,751. This was an increase of £120,224 to the balance carried forward into 2014-15 of £7,331,527.

Officers advised that given the increasing pressures on the Dedicated Schools Budget as a whole, it was strongly recommended that schools with balances above the former excess surplus balance limit be requested to provide an explanation as to how they planned to spend this high balance. Further, they recommended that Schools Forum agree that schools with balances above the former excess surplus balance limit be required to provide an explanation for submission to Schools Forum in future years, with the Schools Balances report at the Summer Term meeting.

The Forum agreed with officers concerns regarding the high excess balances in some schools and the need for transparency. They agreed that the recommendations mentioned in the report be implemented. Ann McIntyre advised that for uniformity a pro forma could be designed for the purpose of providing a balance statement to the Schools Forum.

Appendix A to the report provided details of the Individual School Budget balances with comparison to the previous year and schools which had balances above the former excess surplus balance limit were highlighted. Appendix B detailed the Non-LMS (Devolved Formula Capital) balances brought forward into 2015-16.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

Ann McIntyre

- 1) notes the report;
- 2) requests explanations from schools which have balances in excess of 8% (5% for secondary schools) as to why their balances are so high; and
- 3) requests that schools with carry forward levels in excess of 8% (5% for secondary schools) provide explanations for those levels and these be submitted to schools Forum with the school balances report each summer term.

SCF10 PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS

Schools Forum received an update on the expenditure profile of the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Children in Care 2014-15.

It was reported that the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for Children in Care (CIC) was governed by the conditions of grant published by the Department of Education (DfE). In February 2014 these conditions changed resulting in significant differences from the conditions applied in previous years. The report provided a summary of the major differences. It was also reported that the DfE produced further statutory guidance (March 2014) that described the '*Role of the Virtual School Head in managing the PP+ for Children in Care*' and a summary of the key differences here were also provided in the report.

It was noted that in response to these changes, Halton adopted a 'child's individual needs driven model' of allocation that was linked to the completion of effective, timely and high quality PEPs. This also coincided with the move to termly PEPs as outlined in the revised statutory guidance for Local Authorities on 'Promoting the education of looked after children' (July 2014). A summary of the key overarching principles of the model adopted by Halton was presented in the report which was deemed to be good practice by Ofsted during Halton's recent inspection (Nov-Dec 2014).

Further detailed information was provided to Members on the financial allocation of PP+ for CIC in 2014-15. It was noted that the total grant allocation of PP+ for CIC for 2014-15 was £323,000. Officers advised that a further report would be brought to Schools Forum in October.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the use of the Pupil Premium Plus for Children in Care for 2014-15.

SCF11 PERSONAL BUDGETS PRESENTATION

The Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and Provision, presented an overview to the Forum on the implementation of Personal Budgets for Children and Young People with Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCP).

The Forum was advised that a Personal Budget was an amount of money provided to support a person's identified needs – planned and agreed between the person and the local public service. In SEND, a Personal Budget was a sum of money that may be available for children and young people who needed extra help. It enabled parents and young people more choice and control over the services they received and could be requested at any time during the assessment or review. The EHCP would offer a Personal

Budget for aspects of the provision outlined following the assessment if the client wished and was eligible.

The presentation detailed the eligibility criteria and how the Personal Budgets worked. It was reported that the Budgets could be provided in four ways:

- Direct payments – to the individual who would then contract, purchase and manage the services themselves;
- Organised/notional arrangements – where the LA retained the funds and commissioned the support specified in the EHCP;
- Third party arrangements/nominees – where funds were paid to an individual or another organisation on behalf of the parent/young person, so they managed the funds;
- A combination of the above.

The process for obtaining a Personal Budget was then outlined and further details on Direct Payments and the conditions surrounding them were provided. It was noted at this point that a schools high needs funding could only be included with the permission of that school or college.

The Forum queried the monitoring of outcomes of the EHCPs and it was noted that the Council would carefully monitor these in respect of the money being spent correctly and efficiently, and in respect of an individual's progress using the services. Additionally, the commissioned agencies would need to monitor and plan to ensure that outcomes and provision in the EHCP were being met.

It was noted that the policy guide on Personal Budgets in Halton would soon be finalised and that all schools would be briefed on these as part of the implementation process. It was hoped that from September there would be a number of pilot cases in place so that these could be reviewed and revised if necessary.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

- 1) Note the contents of the presentation; and
- 2) Supports the proposed approach and the next steps for implementation.

SCF12 ANALYSIS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES' SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FORMULAE

The Senior Finance Officer presented the Forum with

an overview of the formula factor values chosen by local authorities to set their Schools Block funding formula for 2015-16.

Members were advised that the Education Funding Agency (EFA) had published a report giving an overview of the funding formula submitted by each local authority (appendix A). The report provided charts and brief commentary on the ranges of unit funding amounts they had selected and the proportions of the School Block funding attributed under each of the permitted factors.

It was noted that on each graph the cash value that corresponded to Halton's funding formula was highlighted in yellow. The EFA had also published a data file showing each element for each funding factor which could be used to compare cash values across other local authorities.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the report.

Meeting ended at 5.50 p.m.