

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 22 June 2016 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: J. Rigby (Chair) Secondary Academy Representative
Councillor T. McInerney, Observer
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N. Unsworth, Financial Management, HBC
K. Albiston, PVI Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative
L. Feakes, School with Nursery Unit Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Governor Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Vincent, All Through Schools Representative

Action

SCF1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Thalia Bell, Lesley Davies, Karl Landrum and Richard Collings.

SCF2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 URGENT BUSINESS

The Forum was advised that a matter had arisen which required immediate attention by the Forum (Minute number 9 refers). Therefore, pursuant to Section 100 B (4) and 100 E and due to time constraints and service continuity; the Chairman ruled that the item be considered as a matter of urgency.

SCF3 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF41 – Early Years Funding for 2016-17 – it was noted that new guidance was now expected so a review at local level would be put back, until this was received.

The Chair welcomed Councillor T McInerney as Observer to the Forum, in his capacity as the Children, Young People and Families Portfolio Holder on the Council's Executive Board.

SCF4 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Forum received an update on the current membership of the Forum and noted that two vacancies existed in the Primary Sector – one for small schools and one for an academy representative.

The invitation made to the Dioceses was noted and any further responses from them would be reported to the Forum.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

SCF5 SEN REVIEW PRESENTATION

The Forum received a presentation on the proposed review of funding for special educational needs and disability (SEND).

The presentation discussed:

- Current level of funding and the budget pressures;
- Enhanced funding;
- Resource provision bases and whether they met the current need;
- Special schools and whether they met the current need;
- Out of Borough provision; and
- The next steps that need to be taken.

The Forum discussed the information provided and the reasons why a review has become necessary. It was agreed that a task and finish group would be set up to review all funding and provision to ensure the efficient and effective use of local resources when meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Volunteers were requested, to start as soon as possible and the following representatives came forward:

- Lesley Feakes;
- Jeanette Vincent;
- Nigel Hunt; and
- Maraide Hurst (volunteered by Amanda Brown)

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received and the arrangements for a SEND review be carried forward.

SCF6 OUTTURN - ANNE JONES

The Forum received a report informing them of the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position for 2015-16 and Members were asked to note the amount of DSG carried forward into the 2016-17 financial year.

It was reported that the Local Authority was required to submit a Section 251 Outturn return to the Department for Education (DfE) which recorded its total income and expenditure for the previous financial year (2015-16).

It was noted by the Forum that the total DSG for 2015-16 was £80.1 m and the total expenditure in 2015-16 totalled £78.4m, as detailed in the report. The unspent DSG therefore was £1.6m, which would be brought forward into 2016-17 and would be used to fund budget pressures in the current 2016-17 financial year.

Officers advised that regular monitoring meetings would continue over the course of the year to identify areas of concern and put in place ways of minimising the overspends during the year.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes that the amount of unspent DSG from 2015-16 of £1,584,474, will be carried forward into the 2016-17 financial year.

SCF7 SCHOOL BALANCES 2015-16 - ANNE JONES

The Forum received a report on the level of balances brought forward from 2015-16 by Halton Schools.

Further to the lifting of the limits of excess surplus balances previously imposed on schools, the balances were still to be monitored and reported to Schools Forum. Further, it was agreed by Schools Forum in June 2015 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. These responses had now been received and were tabled for Forum Members to read.

Members were also referred to:

- Appendix A which detailed the Individual School Budget balances with comparisons to the previous year. Schools that had balances above the former excess surplus balance limit were highlighted; and

- Appendix B which detailed the Non-LMS (Devolved Formula Capital) balances brought forward into 2016-17.

Forum Members queried the cost of playground work at Our Lady Mother of the Saviour Primary School, as it seemed high in comparison to costs for other schools. Anne Jones would contact the School for further information and report back to the Forum.

Anne Jones

RESOLVED: That the report and responses from schools which had balances in excess of 8% (5% for secondary schools) as to why their balances were so high, be noted.

SCF8 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATIONS - ANNE JONES

The Forum received an update on the consultations in respect of the Schools National Funding Formula, the High Needs Funding Formula and Other Reforms, and the Early Years National Funding Formula.

Further to a meeting that was held on 30 March 2016 with representatives of Schools Forum, a response was drafted to the Department for Education (DfE), in response to the above consultations.

Members were referred to the Stage One Consultation documents attached to the report, with the Schools Forum responses. It was noted that there had been limited information released by the DfE following the submission of these and the DfE had stated that the Stage Two consultations would be given a suitable length of time for responses to be made.

The Forum noted the current position with regards to Stages One and Two of the consultations; the implications of the introduction of a Sparsity Factor; and the allocation of the PFI factor, LA rates and Pupil Growth funding on a historical basis.

Officers advised that any further information received would be forwarded to schools as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF9 REQUEST FOR FUNDING - EAL SERVICE

The Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and

Provision, advised the Forum that due to an increase in demand for the English as an Additional Language Service based at St Chads School, an extra teacher was required for the period from September 2016 to March 2017 at a cost of £15,000.

The Forum agreed that this could be funded from the Schools Forum Contingency Fund.

RESOLVED: That the request for funding for the EAL Service for £15,000 be approved.

Meeting ended at 5.05 p.m.