

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 13 June 2018 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillor T. McInerney, Observer
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N. Middlehurst, Financial Management, HBC
S. Baker, Revenues & Financial Management, HBC
M. Vasic, Strategic Director People, HBC
E. Wright, Secondary Academy Representative
T. Bell, 16-19 Provision Representative
K. Albiston, PVI Representative
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
S. Broxton, Primary Governor Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
K. Landrum (Chair), Primary School with a Nursery Representative
S. Ainsworth, Special Schools Representative
J. McConville, Secondary Academy Representative
A. Sheppard, Primary VA Schools Representative
A. Simmons, Community Primary Representative

Action

SCF1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received for the meeting.

SCF2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF3 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Forum received an update regarding the membership of the Forum and recent recruitment activity carried out in order to maintain the required representation.

The following was confirmed:

- A vacancy still existed for a small primary school representative;
- A vacancy still existed for a primary academy representative;
- Anne Simmons would replace Richard Collings as a Community Primary representative;

- Angela Sheppard would represent the Primary VA sector;
- Karl Landrum would represent the Primary School with a Nursery sector; and
- Judith McConville would join the Secondary Academy group of representatives.

The importance of each sector having appropriate representation was noted, however despite several attempts to recruit to the small primary and primary academy sectors, these still remained unrepresented as nominations were not forthcoming.

RESOLVED: That the Forum confirms and notes the current membership as outlined above.

SCF4 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA

The Forum received a review of the Early Years Funding position for 2018-19.

It was reported at the meeting on 21 March 2018 a report was presented to the Forum setting out the Early Years hourly rate as a result of a reduction to the Government funded hourly rate from £5.40 in 2017-18 to £5.13 in 2018-19.

Following the Schools Forum meeting the Council received representation from early year providers querying the level of funding which was proposed to be passed through to providers. The Council then agreed to a review of the pass through rate, which was undertaken by colleagues from another North West authority, using calculations provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, using a February 2018 operational guide.

The Forum was advised that the review found that the Council were marginally in breach of the pass through rate, for Halton this was calculated at 94.6%. It was noted that this was as a result of the number of hours funding received from Government compared to the hours Halton had used in the pass through calculation, based on the January 2018 census figure. This had increased by approximately 51,000 (3.4%).

Members were referred to Table 1 in paragraph 3.1, which showed the revised funding. The report provided commentary regarding the revised amounts. It was explained that the large increase in contingency funding reflected the increase in hours from the census position from

January 2017 to January 2018.

Table 2 was presented to help understand how both the revised and original funding formula reconciled back to the Council's 2018-19 early years allocation. It was reported that the base rate to be paid to early year providers would now be £4.41, an increase from the amount of £4.37. The Council would retrospectively apply this revised base rate back to 1 April 2018. Early years providers requested that more notice be given to them with regards to cuts to budgets, so that they had more time to adjust and put plans in place to compensate for these.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the review and revised 2018-19 Early Years Funding Formula; and
- 2) notes the revised basic rate paid to Early Year providers is £4.41.

SCF5 SCHOOLS BALANCES 2017-18

The Forum received a report that presented the level of funding brought forward from 2017-18 by Halton Schools.

Members were reminded that following a discussion at 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 2017-18. The balances however were still to be monitored by Schools Forum.

The level of balances in the individual school budget held by Halton Schools brought forward into 2018-19 was £3,694,868. This was a decrease of £1,080,964 to the balance carried forward the previous year.

Appended to the report were Appendices A and B. Appendix A detailed the individual school budget balances with comparisons to the previous year; 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 2018-19.

The report provided Members with carry over information on the primary sector, the nursery sector, the secondary sector, special schools sector and the Non-LMS balances. It was noted that the academy balances were not

included in the list as these had not been applied for.

The Forum discussed the schools with an above 8% carry over and whether they should request further information from them regarding what the money was to be used for and in particular, whether any of the carry forward was reserved to help the schools sustain their balances for next year. It was also commented that schools with a deficit carry over were just as much of a concern as those with an excess, and that these schools should be contacted as well for further information.

It was also requested that Officers write to the academies requesting their balances, so that all the Borough's schools' carryover figures were available to the Forum and in the public domain.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the report;
- 2) agrees that all academies be requested to provide their carry over figures;
- 3) requests that all schools with an above 8% carryover be contacted regarding what the money will be used for; and
- 4) requests that all schools with a deficit carryover be contacted for further information on this.

Operational
Director -
Education,
Inclusion and
Provision

SCF6 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

The Forum a received report which provided an update on the High Needs Funding which included a range of further budget reductions required in 2018-19 (explained in paragraph 3.2); and outlined the proposed new approach to discretionary top up funding (previously known as Enhanced Provision).

It was suggested that the ring fenced, cash limited budget for discretionary top up funding be delegated to a Panel of Headteachers or senior school staff from both the Primary and Secondary sectors, with LA officers attending in an advisory capacity only.

It was noted that in May 2018 *Peopletoo* were commissioned to undertake a review of SEND in Halton and a final report would be produced by *Peopletoo* at the end of September 2018. Paragraph 3.11 provided a list of

outcomes that were expected from the review.

Appended to the report were the following documents:

- the paper *SEND Support and Education, Health and Care Plans in Halton*;
- the application form for *request for discretionary Top-Up Funding*;
- the CARE Schedules – checklists assessing Risk of Exclusion for Primary and Secondary schools (pupil and teachers versions); and
- the paper '*Evidence of action for pupils at risk of exclusion*'.

Officers also updated the Forum with the disapplication request, submitted in relation to the Special Schools budgets. The Secretary of State had considered the case and had granted his approval on condition that the individual schools had agreed to it and that the average reduction in top up funding that schools receive would be no more than -5%. Special School's budgets would now be re-calculated. Members received an update from the Special Schools representative on the impacts that the reduction would have on their provision.

It was commented that some mainstream schools had children that were on 'the cusp' of specialist need and requested that this scenario be included in the *Peopletoo* review.

RESOLVED: That the Forum

- 1) note the proposed budget reductions outlined in paragraph 3.2; and
- 2) note the comments made regarding the guidance for supporting pupils with SEND, to ensure additional support was determined by a Headteacher panel and based on the specific needs of individual children.

SCF7 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT OUTTURN 2017-18

The Forum received the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position for 2017-18 and the amount of DSG being carried forward into the 2018-19 financial year.

Further to the requirement for local authorities to submit a Section 251 Outturn return to the Department for Education, the following was reported:

- Total DSG available in 2017-18 £79.5m
- Total DSG expenditure in 2017-18 £79.0m
- Total DSG brought forward into 2018-19 £ 0.5m

It was noted that the balance of DSG had already been substantially committed and allocated for spend in 2018-19, stated in paragraph 3.5 of the report. Regular monitoring meetings would continue over the course of the year to identify areas of concern and in order to put in place ways of minimising the risk of overspending against the available allocation.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note that the amount of DSG from 2017-18, £466,754, is carried forward into the 2018-19 financial year.

SCF8 CENTRAL BUDGETS

A report was presented to the Forum which provided a summary of the central budgets included in the Central School Services Block.

The information was provided following a request from a member of the Forum at the last meeting in March to see the total budgets centrally managed. It was noted that funding was centrally managed for three of the four blocks: the Central School Services Block, Early Years Block and the High Needs Block.

A summary of each was provided in the report in paragraphs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, each providing a breakdown of spend in different areas.

The following areas were commented on:

- The premature retirement costs related to staff retired prior to 1998; although the amount continued to decrease annually, it was unlikely that there would be sufficient carry forward to meet these costs in future years;
- The special schools were looking into the recommissioning of specialist equipment no longer being used by them. A consultation period on this would start soon; and
- The Commissioning Manager's post had not yet been

filled due to a restructure taking place in the Education, Provision and Inclusion Department. The consultation process was due to close next week and it would be referred to the HR Steering Group. The Forum would be advised when the post was filled.

RESOLVED: That the Forum notes the report.

SCF9 SCHOOLS CAPITAL UPDATE 2018-19

Members received a report that provided a Schools Capital Update 2018-19, which included the following:

- Information on the receipt of funding via the Healthy Pupil Capital Fund (HPCF);
- Details of the additional capital works required for 2018-19 at Ashley School and Simms Cross Primary School; and
- The proposals for additional resource base provision at two of Halton's Primary schools to accommodate and support children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

The report provided commentary on each of the above and Members were advised that a report was being submitted to the Council's Executive Board on 14 June 2018, asking them to note the HPCF funding; approve the proposed works at Ashley School and Simms Cross Primary School; and approve the proposals regarding the SEMH resource bases at the two primary schools. Copies of the Statutory Notices for both Primary Schools (Beechwood and Halton Lodge) were attached to the report.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) Notes the Healthy Pupil Capital Fund (HPCF) and application procedure for 2018-19;
- 2) Notes the proposals for capital works at Ashley School and Simms Cross Primary School, being funded from the Basic Need Capital funding; and
- 3) Notes the proposals regarding the provision of Social, Emotional and Mental Health Resource Bases at Beechwood Primary School and Halton Lodge Primary School, together with the publishing of Statutory Notices.

Meeting ended at 6.00 p.m.