

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Tuesday, 21 January 2014 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillor Philbin, Observer
J. Rigby, Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy - Chairman
E. Cargill, Primary School Governor Representative
S. Clough, Children & Enterprise
J. Coughlan, Primary School Representative
D. Stanley, All Through School Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Representative
D. Moran, Primary Academy Representative
A. McIntyre, Children & Enterprise
A. Jones, Democratic Services
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
M. Constantine, Special Schools Representative
L. Feakes, School with Nursery Unit
A. Jones, Financial Services
A. Keeley, St Chad's Catholic High
R. Collings, Primary Representative - Infant School
K. Landrum, Primary Representative - VA School
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
N. Unsworth, Financial Services

Also In attendance: D Burke & A Aleksic (min SCF 36 refers)

	<i>Action</i>
SCF22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
Apologies had been received from Carol Owen, Mark Dennett, Jamie Jardine and Jill Berry.	
SCF23 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING	
The minutes from the last meeting held on 15 October 2013 were agreed as a correct record.	
SCF24 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2014-15	
The Forum received a report informing them of the indicative allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for 2014-15, which was £101,774,000.	
It was reported that on 18 December 2013, the Department for Education announced the DSG for 2014-15, which was split between three notional blocks: Schools Block, High Needs Block and Early Years Block. For 2014-15 the Per Pupil Unit of funding for the Schools Block had	

remained the same as it was for 2013-14 at £4,857.53. As the number of pupils for 2014-15 had increased to 17,102, the cash value of the schools block was £81,932,000.

The report also advised Members of the following:

- Primary aged pupils had increased by 232 while Secondary aged pupils have decreased by 31;
- The per Pupil Unit of Funding for the Early Years Block also remained the same at £3,363.39, giving a total cash value of £3,865,000;
- The High Needs Block had been allocated at £13,887,000; and
- An amount of £2,901,000 had been received to fund: 2 year old early education places; for the induction of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs); and for Carbon Reduction Commitment.

RESOLVED: That the Forum notes the DSG settlement for 2014-15.

SCF25 CENTRAL DSG BUDGETS

The Forum was provided with an update on the Centrally Held Dedicated Schools Grant Budgets for 2014-15 and was requested to note the figures and information in the report.

They were advised that since the introduction of the new funding formula the Centrally Held Dedicated Schools Grants Budgets had been realigned to take account of the new requirements of the funding regulations and needs within the Borough. It was noted that Centrally Held DSG budgets from the Schools Block element were tightly restricted. No such restrictions were in place for centrally held budgets from the High Needs Block or Early Years Block.

The DSG budget proposals were detailed in the report for Schools Block; Early Years Block and High Needs Block. The figures proposed were as follows:

- Schools Block - £1,348,432
- Early years Block - £4,220,834
- High Needs Block - £5,937,653

It was noted that with the proposed Primary and Secondary school budgets plus estimates for special schools, the PRU, special units, nursery schools and nursery units, an under allocation of DSG of £385,651 was

forecasted. However, it was expected that the budget requirements for special schools would increase, and should the under allocation be insufficient, further realignment of High Needs budgets could be considered.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the report and notes that:

1. The Central DSG budgets from the notional Schools Block are set at £1,348,432;
2. The Central DSG budgets from the notional Early Years Block are set at £4,220,834;
3. The Central DSG budgets from the notional High Needs Block are set at £5,937,653; and
4. Further realignment of Central DSG budgets from the notional High Needs Block be undertaken if required.

SCF26 PUPIL GROWTH FUNDING

The Schools Forum received the options for the Pupil Growth Contingency for 2014-15.

Members were reminded that it was agreed at the last meeting in October that the Pupil Growth Contingency for Primary schools would remain at £300,000 whilst the Secondary schools would remain at £80,000.

It was recommended that for Secondary Pupil Growth Contingency the criteria be kept at an increase of 15 or more pupils at Key Stage 3/4, to be funded at £1,099.16 per pupil, so the same level as 2013-14.

For Primary Pupil Growth Contingency the budget was set at £300,000 whilst expenditure for 2013-14 was currently just under £700,000. It was necessary therefore to look at options for re-working either the criteria or cash value offered.

Officers presented Options 1 to 7 for consideration by the Forum; details of these were presented in the report and discussed in detail. Appended to the report were details on how the different options would affect the individual Primary schools based on 2013-14 numbers.

Forum members gave their opinions on the options presented which varied between members. Due to some disagreement over the option to be implemented the

Chairman moved to a vote. The outcome was:

Option 7 – Nine votes
Option 4 – Two votes
Abstain – Two votes

It was therefore agreed that Option 7 be implemented for the Primary contingency.

Jackie Coughlan wished to record her disagreement with Option 7, stating that Primary Schools Key Stage 1 would be in need of teachers and this option would lead to a duplication of money being given to some schools.

RESOLVED: That

1. The report be noted;
2. The Secondary contingency criteria and funding value remain at the same level as for 2013-14; and
3. It was agreed that Option 7 be implemented for the Primary contingency.

SCF27 SCHOOLS BLOCK BUDGETS

The final funding formula for Primary and Secondary schools for 2014-15 was presented to the Forum.

Members were reminded that at the last meeting decisions were taken on how the funding formula should be adopted for Halton's Primary and Secondary maintained schools, academies and free school. Presently, work was underway to calculate the cash values of each funding factor to be used and subsequently the indicative school budgets from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Officers advised that for Primary and Secondary schools, the DSG notional allocation for Schools Block was £81,825,824 including the top slice for the Carbon Reduction Commitment, they went on to explain how the figure had been calculated.

Officers then tabled information which detailed the cash values of the funding factors, overall budget used and Schools Block budgets for each individual school. However, it was noted that due to the decision made on the Pupil Growth Contingency item, these figures would need to be reworked to include the additional £200,000. Officers would

resend this information to the Schools Forum when it was ready.

With regards to Early Years and High Needs Funding – Nursery Schools and Units, Special Schools and Units and the PRU were funded based on the January 2014 census data which had not yet been released. It was anticipated that schools would not receive this information until March 2014.

One further point to note was that The Grange All Through School would lose its second lump sum in 2014-15. It was suggested that either Schools Forum supports a second lump sum through the DSG or the DfE would be contacted for advice on this.

Anne Jones

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

SCF28 HIGH NEEDS STUDENTS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK SUPPORT

The Forum received a report which informed of the implementation of the High Needs Students (HNS) Assessment Framework and its success in managing applications from Post 16 institutions and informed of the use of support to implement the HNS Assessment Framework.

It was noted that in April 2013 Halton introduced the High Needs Students Assessment Framework in response to each local authority becoming responsible for managing the funding for education support for high needs students aged 0 – 25, as outlined in the document *School Funding Reform: Next Steps towards a fairer system*, published on 26 March 2012.

The report advised that due to the rigour of the HNS Assessment Framework, the current costs for Post 16 High Needs provision was approximately £850,000 compared to a budget previously funded by the EFA of £1,240,000 in 2011-12. The process of managing this significant change in post 16 provision and funding had required support from the administration, commissioning and 14-19 team. It was reported however that they did not have the capacity to continue the support due to the volume of work involved. This was likely to have a major impact on the Council's ability to review and assess further applications and could lead to delays in funding for establishments and support to vulnerable young people.

Officers proposed therefore that to manage the additional workload the High Needs budget support the costs of additional staffing up to a maximum budget of £14,000 to allow additional support up to August 2014. The level of support required beyond August would then be reviewed as part of the work undertaken to respond to the Children and Families Bill.

The Forum agreed that funding to the amount of £14,000 could be provided to allow additional support as discussed, up to August 2014. Officers would provide further information on plans for the support post August 2014.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum agree to fund from the High Needs budget additional support to implement the High Needs Assessment process up to £14,000.

The Chairman John Rigby left the meeting (5.15 pm) and handed the Chairmanship to the Vice Chairman Marjorie Constantine.

The Vice Chairman, Marjorie Constantine (in the Chair) declared an interest in the following item as she was the Chair of Governors at Ashley School and therefore abstained from the decision making.

SCF29 ASHLEY POST 16

A report was presented which requested that the transitional funding for staffing costs for the new post 16 provision at Ashley School be approved.

The Forum was advised that following a statutory consultation on 28 March 2013, the Executive Board of the Council agreed that Ashley School be re-designated Ashley as a school for vulnerable pupils with a diagnosis of autism and those with social and communication needs who had moderate to high learning abilities. It was also agreed to extend provision from 16 to 19 years. It was agreed however, not to commence the re-designation until September 2014 to allow development of the facilities.

The Forum was advised that the capital programme to develop the post 16 facilities would be completed in May 2014 and work was currently being finalised on the Ashley offer for post 16. The provision would offer up to 42 post 16 places from 16 – 19 across three year groups.

It was reported that to ensure that the provision was fully operational for September 2014 the school would need

to employ a member of staff paid on TLR1 to manage and coordinate the new provision; three teachers and three teaching assistants. The costs of these staff would come from the schools budget from September 2014 however, as the staff would need to be appointed after Easter 2014, Schools Forum were asked to fund the costs of these posts for one term only, estimated to be in the region of £110,000, from the centrally held underspend contingency.

Members discussed the transition period, the development of the Post 16 offer and the setting up of the provision. Some questioned the need for seven staff during this setting up period. The request went to a vote and resulted as follows:

- For : 9 votes
- Against : 3 votes
- Abstain : 1 vote

Funding for the costs of staffing as requested was therefore approved by Schools Forum.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum approves the funding of the costs of staffing from April to September 2014 to support the development of post 16 provision at Ashley School.

SCF30 HIGH NEEDS PUPIL NUMBERS

Ann McIntyre advised the Forum that the base funding for this year for High Needs Pupils was the same as last, at £10,000 for schools and £8,000 for the PRU and £6,000 for post-16.

The EFA had requested that the numbers for special schools, resource provision units and placements in other authority and independent provision be submitted by 23 December 2014. A detailed analysis of current and projected place numbers was undertaken. In terms of pre-16 provision the EFA was notified that they had made an error in the numbers allowed for Cavendish by 26 as there had been a decrease overall in the number of places required by 5, a request for 17 extra funded places was made. For post-16 provision based on numbers and taking into consideration the new provision at Ashley School, a request for a further 16 places was made.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

SCF31 PUPIL REFERRAL FUNDING

The Forum was provided with the budget arrangements for The Bridge Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for 2014-15.

It was noted that to comply with new funding regulations Schools Forum agreed in March 2013 to delegate budgets to the PRU Management Committee to give them the powers necessary to run the PRUs.

The Forum was informed that in 2014-15 The Bridge School would receive the same base funding as 2013-14, of £8,000 per pupil for 60 places. In 2013-14 a temporary arrangement was in place with the EFA for early intervention provided at a PRU whilst the pupil remained on the roll of a school. This provision was provided at no cost to the school and was funded by the local authority through a top up from the high needs budget. A review of Alternative provision (AP) was underway that would inform the future funding arrangements for The Bridge School and the top up element from the high needs budget that would be delegated to the schools for early intervention.

The Forum was advised that confirmation had been received that the LA could continue with the arrangement to retain the top up element for early intervention. Schools Forum was therefore requested to agree to an extension to this arrangement for a further financial year. Additionally, they were requested to agree that any underspend on The Bridge School budget be carried forward and used to support the uncertainty over the intervention place requirements in 2014-15. The Forum agreed to both requests.

It was noted that for pupils excluded from mainstream school, the current arrangements would continue with schools paying back the relevant AWPU along with £9,000.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

1. Agree to a continuation of the high needs top up arrangement in place for early intervention; and
2. Approves the carry forward of any unspent PRU balances within the DSG from 2013-14 to 2014-15.

SCF32 NOTIONAL SEN

A report was presented to Schools Forum advising of the Additional Notional SEN funding criteria and allocations for 2013-14. It was now a requirement that Local Authorities submit these to the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

The Forum was advised that the sub-group set up to decide on qualifying criteria for Additional Notional SEN funding and allocations for 2013-14, met on 29 November 2013 and discussed the eligibility criteria and options for funding methods.

Details of this were provided in the report which also gave examples using the criteria adopted. Details of the Schools that had met the qualifying criteria and therefore received allocations for additional notional SEN for 2013-14 were also provided.

It was noted that the sub-group would meet again if any additional requests for funding were made.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF33 PUPIL PREMIUM GRANT 2014-15

The Forum received an update on the final levels of Pupil Premium Funding for 2013-14 and the funding announced for 2014-15 as follows:

Funding levels for 2013-14:

Free School Meals Ever 6	-	£900 per pupil
Service Children Ever 3	-	£300 per pupil
Looked After Children	-	£900 per pupil

(On 12 December 2013 funding level for Primary FSM6 pupils was increased to £953 per pupil, the Secondary FSM6 rate remained at £900 per pupil.)

Funding levels for 2014-15:

Free School Meals Ever 6 (Primary)	-	£1,300 per pupil
Free School Meals Ever 6 (Secondary)	-	£935 per pupil
Service Children Ever 3	-	£300 per pupil
Looked After Children	-	£1,900 per pupil

The eligibility criteria for each area were noted:

- Free School Meal Ever 6 pupils would remain unchanged in 2014-15;
- Looked After Children funding would apply to pupils who had been looked after for one day or more, instead of a minimum of 6 months;
- Children adopted from care or leave care under a special guardianship order or residence order would also be eligible for Looked After Children Funding;
- Children with parents in the armed forces would cover pupils previously attracting the premium since April 2011, even where the parent(s) were no longer in the armed forces or where parents had divorced. Schools would also be funded in respect of children of parents who were killed in action.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF34 CHANGES TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS

It was reported that unfortunately no information had been received by the Council regarding the changes to Free School Meals, so there was no news to report.

When this becomes available, the Forum would be informed.

Anne Jones

SCF35 DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHOOL FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

The Forum received a proposal for a Family Support Service within targeted Primary schools based on a key worker model. The aim was to provide an outreach family support service for families of children of school age (5-19 years) which would support the Inspiring Families programme.

It was reported that this proposal was a result of the Troubled Families programme introduced in 2010 by the Prime Minister, which put in resources to incentivise and encourage local authorities and their partners to develop new ways of working with families identified as 'troubled' (discussed in the report), which would focus on lasting change and a shift in the way we worked with these families in the future, so that costs would be reduced and outcomes improved. This initiative is locally called 'Inspiring Families Halton'.

Officers presented an overview of the Service which

included how it would be managed. Appendix 1 provided Members with a map showing all primary schools in Halton and showed those that fell in areas beneath the 10% level of deprivation. Forum members commented that they thought the information should include secondary schools as well, and that the deprivation statistics were not quite sophisticated enough for the purpose of identifying the most deprived schools, as they just related to the areas the schools were in. It was suggested that using FSM/Adaci or pupil premium data would be more accurate.

The Forum was advised that with regards to funding, the proposal was on the basis that the costs for the development and initial implementation of the service would be provided through the Troubled Families Financial framework, for the first 12 months. The funds were time limited so to enable sustainability of the service, the Council is asking that each school sign an agreed service level agreement that would outline levels of accountability, responsibility and financial contribution for a further two years.

Once the service was agreed in principle, the financial commitment would be clarified with the aim of implementation in April 2014 and would run until July 2017.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the information within the report, and:

1. supports the agreed pilot approach for a school family support service by targeting clusters of schools by levels of deprivation;
2. agrees to the proposed criteria for the service; and
3. supports agreement to a financial commitment for the three year programme.

Andrew Keeley declared an interest in the following item as he was the Headteacher at St Chad's School, where the EAL service was based and therefore abstained from debate and decision making.

SCF36 REVIEW OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE SERVICE

The Forum was asked to review the SLA to provide English as an Additional Language (EAL) support to Halton Schools, and was asked to make a decision about sustaining this funding beyond March 2014.

The report informed the Forum that since September 2004 there had been a significant increase in the number of children residing in Halton with English as an Additional Language needs referred for support.

In order to address these issues, Schools Forum was approached in 2007 to seek to fund an EAL service from the Designated Schools Grant. Schools Forum agreed to make available £146,828 which was the estimated cost of running a small service. St Chad's Specialist Language College entered into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to provide the service after expressing an interest to provide the service. The service had been provided to schools since September 2008.

Debbie Burke, Deputy Headteacher at St Chad's and Anna Aleksic, the EAL Co-ordinator, attended the meeting and presented the key aspects of the support by the EAL service across Halton and provided information on the impacts of the service to date. They requested further funding of £146,828 for the continuation of the service for 2014-15.

It was confirmed that the amount requested allowed capacity for increasing numbers. The Forum agreed to fund the amount requested for the year 2014-15.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum continue to support the provision of the centrally based EAL service provided by St Chad's at a cost of £146,828.

Meeting ended at 6.43 pm