

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 22 March 2017 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: M. Constantine , Special Schools Representative
Councillor T. McInerney, Observer
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N. Unsworth, Financial Management, HBC
M. Vasic, People Directorate, HBC
K. Albiston, PVI Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
L. Feakes, Primary School with Nursery Unit Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Governor Representative
R. Collings, Community Primary Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
K. Landrum, Primary Representative - VA School (In the Chair)
J. Vincent, All Through Schools Representative
K. Lawton, Primary Academy Representative
L. Weedall, Nursery Schools Representative (Sub)
S. Ainsworth, Special Schools Representative (Sub)

Action

Due to the absence of the Chair and the existing vacancy for a Vice Chair, a temporary Chair was elected for this meeting. It was agreed that Karl Landrum would take the Chair for this meeting of the Forum.

SCF31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from John Rigby. The Chair introduced Halton Council's Strategic Director, People, to the Forum who was in attendance for the first time.

SCF32 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF33 VICE CHAIR APPOINTMENT

Forum Members were advised of the need to appoint a new Vice Chair to the Forum as discussed in the report.

It was agreed that Karl Landrum would assume the role of Vice Chair with immediate effect, until his current term of membership expires.

RESOLVED: That Karl Landrum would assume the role of Vice Chair to Halton's Schools Forum with immediate effect.

SCF34 HIGH NEEDS FUNDING 2017-18

The Forum was presented with a report advising of the High Needs Top Up Funding Rates for 2017-18.

It was reported that the High Needs Block was under increasing pressure, especially the top-up funding costs. It was estimated that in 2016-17 approximately £289,000 more would be spent on High Needs provision than was received as the High Needs Grant.

Attached to the report were Appendices A, B and C which presented the top up vales for special schools; resource bases and the PRU respectively. With regards to enhanced provision funding, schools were required to fund the first £6,000 of support for each pupil with SEN. It was only if a pupil required support in excess of this £6,000 of Notional SEN that a request for top-up funding would be considered.

It was noted that as in previous years the Financial Management Team would circulate details to Headteachers of pupils in their schools who were believed to be eligible for top-up funding each term. It was stressed that these details should be checked by the schools and the Financial Management Team notified of any discrepancies, to avoid incorrect funding.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF35 EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2017-18

The Forum received the Early Years National Funding Formula cash values for 2017-18.

It was reported that, following the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) consultation in January and subsequent decision to follow the majority of responses, Schools Forum agreed to the proposed funding formula at the January meeting. The January headcount data had now been received so the actual cash values for the 2017-18 formula could now be calculated.

It was noted that Officers were waiting for the EFA to release a data validation exercise regarding the ring-fenced transitional protection funding for the Maintained Nursery

Schools, so until a confirmed level of funding for this was received, the budget calculations could not be completed. It was noted therefore, that the figures provided in the report and at the time of publication were draft figures and were subject to change.

Officers advised the Forum that the data validation exercise regarding the ring-fenced transitional protection funding for the Maintained Nursery Schools would not be known until June 2017. Officers advised therefore that the draft budgets would have to be used for this year's funding calculations, so that they could be finalised as required by March 2017.

The funding concerns of the Nursery School Representative were noted and Officers advised that they would be liaising with the EFA on this and other funding queries that had been raised.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF36 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA STAGE 2
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Forum received the suggested Schools Forum response to the National Funding Formula Government Consultation – Stage 2.

The Stage 2 consultation was announced by the Department for Education on 14 December 2016, along with indicative schools block budgets and closed on 22 March 2017. Schools Forum members were offered the opportunity of meeting as a sub group to decide on their responses.

The responses to the questions were drafted and circulated to all Schools Forum members asking for comments. Attached to the report were the suggested responses which would now be submitted to the EFA.

RESOLVED: That the report and responses be noted.

SCF37 HIGH NEEDS FUNDING FORMULA STAGE 2
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Forum received the suggested Schools Forum response to the High Needs National Funding Formula and Other Reforms Government Consultation – Stage 2.

It was noted that the Stage 2 consultation was announced by the Department for Education on 14 December 2016, along with indicative budgets. This closed on 22 March 2017 and Schools Forum members were offered the opportunity of meeting as a sub group to decide on their responses. The sub group met on Friday 3 March 2017 and discussed the questions posed and the implications for Halton.

The responses from the sub-group were attached for the information of the Forum. These would be submitted to the EFA.

RESOLVED: That the report and responses be noted.

SCF38 SCHOOLS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES - LOANS AND DEFICIT RECOVERY PLANS

The Forum received a report and appendix '*Licensed Deficit Procedure for Schools*' for consideration and agreement.

It was noted that it was the responsibility of Schools' Governing Bodies to set a balanced budget each year and that no school should plan for a deficit budget. Where a school forecasted that it would not be able to set a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year, having taken all steps to make efficiencies and to reduce its cost, it must contact the Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and Provision. In this instance the position of the school would then be assessed with Finance and should it be necessary for the school to apply for a licenced deficit, the revised procedures would now need to be followed.

The procedures outlined the revised approach which must be followed by schools in financial difficulty applying for a licenced deficit. These procedures defined how a school would be identified to be in financial difficulty and outlined how the Local Authority would work with these schools. It also outlined the application process and how the recovery plan would be monitored and reviewed.

Forum Members discussed the procedure and agreed its implementation with immediate effect. Officers advised that Schools were welcome to contact the Financial Management Team if they felt that they were having difficulty with budget planning.

RESOLVED: That the Licenced Deficit Procedure for

Schools be agreed and implemented with immediate effect.

SCF39 SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING DATES FOR 2017-18

The meeting schedule was presented to the Forum for information as follows:

Date	Time	Venue
21 June 2017	4 pm	The Boardroom, Municipal Building
11 October 2017	4 pm	Civic Suite, Runcorn Town Hall
17 January 2018	4 pm	The Boardroom, Municipal Building
21 March 2018	4 pm	Civic Suite, Runcorn Town Hall

Meeting ended at 4.45 p.m.