

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 17 January 2018 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillor T. McInerney, Observer
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
K. Landrum (Chair), Primary Representative (VA School)
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N. Middlehurst, Financial Management, HBC
M. Constantine, Special Schools Representative
T. Bell, 16-19 Provision
K. Albiston, PVI Representative
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Vincent, All Through Schools Representative
E. Haver, Special Academy Representative
S. Ainsworth, Special Schools Representative (Substitute)

Action

SCF20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Richard Collings, Emlyn Wright and Syd Broxton.

SCF21 MINUTES - 11 OCTOBER 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

Further to item SCF13 it was confirmed that the information had now been received on the number of staff who met the revised Quality Supplement factor.

SCF22 MINUTES - 8 NOVEMBER 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF23 FORECAST DSG OUTTURN FOR 2017-18

The Forum received the forecast outturn position of DSG budgets for 2017-18.

It was reported that when the budgets were being prepared, there were concerns that there would be

insufficient funding for all amounts that were required and there would be a need to use some carry forward. The report presented the forecasts for the Schools Block; Early Years Block; and High Needs Block based on expenditure up to 3 January 2018.

Since the report was written and published, Officers advised the Forum that the 2018-19 carry forward had now reduced from £885,300 to approximately £400,000. This was due to further demands on the high needs budget and increasing financial requests from individual schools.

A further detailed report would be presented at the June meeting of the Schools Forum.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF24 SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FOR 2018-19

The Forum received the Schools Block Funding for 2018-19.

A special meeting of the Schools Forum was held in November to discuss the outcome of the consultation with schools regarding which funding formula option to recommend to Executive Board. Following discussion, it was agreed to recommend that an Interim Funding Formula be used and modelling work on this commenced the day after the meeting.

Officers advised however that after a few weeks it was evident that an interim formula could not be built within the constraints of the Schools Block regulations and that did not adversely affect the funding for more schools than would be adversely affected by the NFF with transitional protection.

A decision was made to return to Executive Board in December to ask that the National Funding Formula with transitional protection be used. This was in line with the majority of responders to the consultation and would minimise both the number of schools adversely affected by the change in formula and the level of their losses in funding.

The report went on to discuss grant allocations for 2018-19; pupil numbers; the current position; and the minimum funding guarantee (MFG). Members discussed the MFG as this could now be varied between minus (-) 1.5% to plus (+) 0.5%. It was agreed that this could be kept to the -1.5% as with previous years in Halton.

It was noted that the decision on the funding formula, which would be submitted by 18 January 2018, would be taken by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and this would be known by the end of February. Once the approval was received, Schools Block budgets would be confirmed to head teachers as soon as possible. Early Years and High Needs Blocks would be notified by the end of March.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

1. note the report; and
2. agree that the Minimum Funding Guarantee be set at -1.5%.

SCF25 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FOR 2018-19

The Forum received the current position on Early Years funding for 2018-19.

Members were reminded that Halton moved to the new Early Years National Funding Formula (NFF) as required by the then Department for Education in April 2017.

The Early Years NFF Operational Guidance was released towards the end of November with no major changes to the NFF requirements. Officers were advised of the hourly rate that would be funded for 2018-19 and the indicative grant allocation, although this would be updated during the year. Following the consultation with all stakeholders during the Autumn Term the intention was to change the quality supplement criteria for 2018-19 to support staff with qualifications at Levels 5, 6 and 7 plus Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Early Years.

It was reported that the hourly rate received from the DfE for 2016-17 was £5.69 which reduced to £5.40 for 2017-18. This was reducing again to £5.13 per hour for 2018-19.

Members were advised that due to the low level of DSG reserves it was likely that the only way to keep within budget was to reduce the hourly rates. Concerns were raised by the Forum regarding this. It was stressed by Officers that this was not what was wanted and every effort would be made to minimise any such reduction. However, it was also noted that if the overall funding for Early Years was being reduced by a possible £400,000 to £500,000, there would be no other option available to the authority.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

SCF26 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

The Forum received an update on the estimated high needs deficit for 2018-19 and the proposed options to bring expenditure in line with the budget allocation to Halton.

It was noted that following consultation and discussion at Schools Forum it was agreed in November 2017 that 0.5% could be transferred from the Schools Budget to the High Needs budget in 2018-19, which added a total of £421,594.

The Forum was advised that this transfer of funds had been helpful and reduced the deficit but it still left a funding gap of £1,654,547. Officers had scrutinised each area of the budget and presented options relating to each area for consideration by the Forum, as presented in the report.

The Forum discussed the funding gap and the proposals made by Officers. It was agreed however that a special meeting of the Forum was needed to discuss and dedicate more time to consider the proposals. The Forum also briefly discussed the potential impacts of the Behaviour Support Team when it was implemented; training courses available for teachers in dealing with behaviour issues; and exclusions in Halton.

RESOLVED: That a special meeting of the Forum be arranged to further discuss the proposed options available to reduce the High Needs funding gap.

SCF27 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2018/19

A summary of the Capital Programmes for 2018-19 for the People Directorate was provided to the Schools Forum.

Members were advised that in October 2017 the Department for Education announced the schools Capital Grant allocations for 2018-19 and confirmed that there would be no change in the methodology used in 2017-18 for the coming year 2018-19, so Halton should receive the same amount as in 2017-18, £1,086,031. Officers advised the Forum that Halton would also receive funding from the *Healthy Pupils Capital Funding* (from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy) and from the *Special Provision Capital Funding* to be invested in provision for children and young

people with SEND aged 0-25 (Halton's allocation would be £500,000 provided over 3 years).

In paragraph 3.4 the report provided details of the funding available to support capital projects across the school estate and 4.1 gave details of how the School Condition Funding would be allocated.

It was noted that consultation with schools would take place regarding their contributions to the proposed works, following the Council's consideration of the budget report in March 2018. If the respective schools (Appendix 1) could not or were not willing to contribute, any proposed projects would not be carried out in 2018-19.

RESOLVED: That the capital funding available for 2018-19 be noted.

Meeting ended at 6.10 p.m.