

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 21 March 2018 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillor T. McInerney, Observer
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N. Middlehurst, Financial Management, HBC
M. Vasic, Operational Director – People
T. Bell, 16-19 Provision
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Governor Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Wilson, (Vice Chair in the Chair) Secondary Governor Representative
S. Ainsworth, Special Schools Representative
A. Sheppard, Observer

Action

SCF30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Kathryn Albiston, Jackie Coughlan, Karl Landrum and Jeanette Vincent.

SCF31 MINUTES - 17 JANUARY 2018

The minutes of the meeting dated 17 January 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF32 MINUTES - 21 FEBRUARY 2018

The minutes of the meeting dated 21 February 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF33 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FOR 2018-19

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

It was reported that an indicative allocation of £9,479,357 had been received for the provision of Early Years support. Halton had continued to follow the Early Years Funding Formula with a universal base rate for all sectors, a deprivation factor using IDACI and the quality factor, as per the autumn consultation for staff across all sectors who were qualified at level 5 and above. It was noted that the level of maintained nursery school

transactional protection had not yet been confirmed so it was assumed to be at the same level as 2017-18.

As commented in the report the cash values had not yet been finalised at the time of writing the report so these were tabled at the meeting. It was reported that there had been a reduction of 27p per hour in funding from the Department for Education (DfE) and extensive calculations were required to ensure hourly rates were set that were affordable to the level of Early Years grant that would be received.

Officers presented the proposals for the centrally retained budgets for 2018-19, showing the comparison to 2017-18 budgets and the Forum was asked to agree to these.

Forum Members were advised that the maximum sum which could be retained centrally was 5%, the proposed retained figure in Halton was 3.07%. Members then debated the proposal and raised concerns on the impact any retention would have on schools and settings and the level of centrally retained funding for 2 year old provision.

They also discussed the future of 2 year old provision in the Borough and its viability for Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers in the future, due to the reduction in funding.

In conclusion and after studying the information presented to them, the Forum agreed to the proposals, albeit reluctantly, and requested that this be noted.

RESOLVED: That the Forum

- 1) Notes the report; and
- 2) Agrees reluctantly to the proposals for the centrally retained budgets.

SCF34 CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK 2018-19

The Forum received a report on the Central School Services Block for 2018-19.

It was noted that the Central School Services Block (CSSB) was separated from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant for the first time in 2018-19. However, budgets were set as part of the Schools Block for 2017-18 and had been included for comparison.

Forum Members discussed the budgets and supporting commentary on these as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report and agreed the budgets.

It was requested by one Member to know how much money was retained by the Council from all four budget blocks. This would be presented at the next meeting. Members also made a suggestion regarding the possibility of training for Schools Forum Members. It was agreed this training would be arranged.

RESOLVED: that Schools Forum

- 1) Notes the report; and
- 2) Agrees the highlighted centrally retained budgets.

SCF35 HIGH NEEDS FUNDING 2018-19

The High Needs top up funding rates for 2018-19 were presented to the Forum.

It was previously reported that there was a funding gap between the grant allocated by the Department for Education (DfE) and the High Need budget required for 2018-19. Further to a special meeting of the Forum on 21 February 2018 to discuss this, the shortfall of £2,112,101 had reduced to £220,652, after the transfer from the Schools Budget and a range of savings that had been identified, discussed and agreed. It was noted that further reductions would be needed in 2018-19 to address that year's shortfall and that a further paper would be presented to the Schools Forum on the options for further savings.

The report discussed how the savings made to reduce the funding gap would affect Special Schools; Resource Bases; the Pupil Referral Unit; and enhanced Provision Funding. It also provided the centrally retained budgets from the High Needs Block, with the comparison to 2017-18. As per the report, information was tabled relating to the high needs top-up funding levels for 2018-19, which had been set following discussion with the special schools.

The Special Schools Headteacher representative outlined the steps that had been taken to align funding levels to the original 2017/2018 level. Forum Members expressed concern about the impact that these changes would have on staff and pupils.

Further to the February Schools Forum meeting, it

Operational Director -
Education, Inclusion
and Provision

was reported that the commitments to the top up / enhanced provision budget for mainstream primary and secondary had been reviewed. Members were advised that from the funding available provision would need to be made to meet the costs of current Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). There was a discussion on whether school balances should be considered for any future applications for EHCP. It was suggested that this may deter EHCP applications where schools had balances. Taking into consideration Members' views, it was agreed that schools balances would not be considered and provision would be made from within the top up / enhanced provision budget for future EHCP.

Those requests for enhanced provision support already committed would be met, but at a reduced level of 69%. It was reported that regrettably with the funding available from April 2018, funding for any new applications would have to cease as there was insufficient funding available. All schools would be notified of these changes.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

SCF36 MEETING DATES FOR 2018-19

The following future meeting dates were noted by Forum Members:

- 13 June 2018;
- 10 October 2018;
- 16 January 2019; and
- 20 March 2019.

Meeting ended at 6.00 p.m.