

SCHOOL FORUM

At a meeting of the School Forum on Tuesday, 3 July 2012 at St Chads High School

Present: Cllr E. Cargill - Small Schools Representative
Cllr Dennett
J Woodroffe - Chairman, Secondary Community Governor
S. Clough, Children & Enterprise
J Coughlan, St Bede's Catholic Infant
J John, Children & Enterprise
A Jones, Financial Management
A. Jones, Democratic Services
A Keeley, St Chad's High - Secondary School with a Sixth Form
A. McIntyre, Children & Enterprise
D Stanley, The Grange Comprehensive - All Through School
Representative
L Feakes, School with Nursery Unit
N Shafiq, Financial Management
S Broxton, 1 Form Entry Representative
K. Hall, Transforming Children's Environment

Action

SCF1 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Clare Dawes and Linda Bowles.

SCF2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27th March 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF3 CAPITAL UPDATE

The Forum were presented with a report which outlined the methodology used to prioritise the schools for Basic Need funding for 2012-13 and outlined the Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) allocation for 2012-13.

It was reported that at the School Forum meetings in July 2011 and January 2012, it was agreed that the 2011-12 Basic Need allocation of £1,689,618 would be used to increase the capacity at: Lunts Heath Primary (additional 35 places), Windmill Hill Primary (additional 28 places), Weston Primary (additional 35 places) and St Bede's Catholic Infant School (additional 45 places), in order to meet the demand for places in those areas.

It was also agreed at these meeting that £450,000 of the 2012-13 Basic Need allocation would be used to

address capacity issues at St Bede's Catholic Junior School, as a consequence of extending the infant school. This left a balance of £513,081.

It was stated that the model for Halton which was used to allocate the 2011-12 Basic Need funding had been applied again for 2012-13. This model had been developed in order to objectively prioritise schools, identifying those with the strongest case for Basic Need support. The three key elements of this model were detailed in the report.

The schools with the highest priority were sorted into geographical areas and were listed in the report, together with summaries of Basic Need issues for all schools within the four geographical areas (Widnes East, Widnes West, Runcorn East and Runcorn West).

It was noted that in the case of Weston Point Primary, it was proposed to fund the cost of the extension (approximately £63,000) from Basic Need Capital Funding 2012-13, and a contribution from the school would also be required. This was agreed by the Forum.

It was noted that the balance of Basic Need funding for 2012-13 (£450,081) remained unallocated from the 2012-13 allocation, and it was proposed to retain this funding and add it to the 2013-14 Basic Need allocation later in the year when capital allocations were announced in order to address any basic need issues in the autumn.

The Priority School Building Programme and Modernisation Projects information was noted, and information relating to the allocation of DFC for maintained schools was provided.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

- 1) Notes the prioritisation process outlined within the report;
- 2) Agrees that a capital project could be developed to address a Basic Need issue at Weston Point Primary School;
- 3) Agrees that the balance of the Basic Need funding for 2012-13 be retained for combining with the 2013-14 funds for use on future Basic Need issues;
- 4) Notes the position in respect of the Priority School Building Programme and Modernisation Projects; and

5) Notes the DFC allocations for 2012-13.

SCF4 SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM PRESENTATION

Naheem Shafiq – Principal Finance Officer, gave a presentation to the Forum '*School Funding Reform*'.

It was announced that the Government's aim was to reform the way schools were funded so that it was simplified, fairer and more transparent. From April 2013 there would be a change to the local formula and new funding arrangements affecting all areas, although there would be limited change for the early years sector.

He stated that the system would be simplified as follows:

- 1) The DSG would be allocated to 3 notional blocks: schools; Early Years and High Needs;
- 2) Local Authorities would develop a formula for distributing schools block funding; and
- 3) permitted formula factors would be reduced from 37 to 10 (these were discussed one by one);

With regards to centrally retained funds these would be slimmed down as elements to be devolved to schools as much as possible; the Local Authority (LA) would fund statutory functions; and the DfE would allow schools to de-delegate budgets.

The summary timetable of the reform was provided and it was noted that modelling of the new local formula had started. It was noted that the DfE would issue the new modelling tool mid-July and consultation events were planned for mid to late September, as was an additional School Forum meeting to discuss this. Members of the Forum were asked to volunteer to attend this additional meeting and the following Members agreed:

John Woodroffe, Andrew Keeley and Ellen Cargill

It was suggested that Chris Smith – Registrar at St Chad's, and Elaine Hall – Registrar at The Grange should also attend; they would be contacted after the meeting. It was also suggested that further primary and academy representatives would be needed.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and comments made be noted.

SCF5 SEN FUNDING REFORM PRESENTATION

Ann McIntyre gave an *SEN Funding Reform* presentation to the Forum which covered the following areas:

- SEN – Mainstream Funding Formula;
- Low Cost High Incidence SEN;
- Additional Criteria;
- The Local Offer;
- Special Schools and Special Units;
- Funding for pupils and students with high needs;
- High Needs SEN and LDD Post 16;
- Alternative provision; and
- High Needs Block.

In light of the reforms announced it was suggested that the next steps would be:

1. for officer members of the School Forum attend the SEN conference being held in Manchester on 11 July 2012;
2. to expand membership of the SEN Sub Group;
3. to provide training on the Model AP budget;
4. to model special school and unit budgets and agree top up; and
5. to consult with neighbouring authorities and key stakeholders.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and comments made be noted.

SCF6 MINUTES OF THE SEN SUB GROUP

The Minutes of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Sub Group were provided for the information of the Schools Forum.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

SCF7 SCHOOL FORUM REGULATION CHANGES & MEMBERSHIP

The Forum considered a report which informed of the proposed changes to the School Forum Regulations.

It was reported that The Department for Education (DfE) publication '*School Funding Reform: Next Steps Towards a Fairer System*', indicated that the Schools Forum

Regulations would be amended with effect from 1 September 2012.

It proposed to revoke and replace the Schools Forum Regulations 2012, with the aim of changing the manner in which Schools Forums operated and in addition make their meetings more transparent.

The amendments would be as follows:

- To remove the requirement to have a minimum of 15 members on a Forum;
- To limit the number of other local authority attendees from participating in meetings unless they were a Lead Member, a Director of Children's Services (or their representative) or were providing specific financial or technical advice (including presenting a paper to the Forum);
- Confining the voting arrangements to allow only schools members and providers from the private, voluntary and independent sector to vote on the funding formula;
- A requirement that local authorities publish Forum papers, minutes and decisions promptly on their websites;
- That the Schools Forum converts to a public meeting, in line with other council committees; and
- Give the *Education Funding Agency* observer status at School Forum meetings.

It was noted that the Government would also require local authorities to review the membership of the Schools Forums to ensure they were representative of the categories of schools in their area.

With regards to Halton's position, presently there were 16 members and the Forum discussed the possible adjustments to the membership that could be made in relation to the categories of schools. Information on school numbers using the January 2012 census was provided; there were presently a total of 16,403.8 children of school age which was split: 60% primary and 40% secondary.

It was noted that a paper would be brought to the next meeting of the Schools Forum listing the actual revisions to the constitution and also explaining how operational changes would be implemented. Also, Members noted that from September all School Forum meetings would be public meetings serviced by an independent secretariat provided by Committee Services.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) Notes the changes to the operation of School Forums; and
- 2) Agrees to consider the new regulations and agree the proposed change in membership from September 2012.

SCF8 SCHOOL BALANCES

The Senior Finance Officer presented a report to the Forum which outlined the level of balances brought forward from 2011-12 by Halton Schools.

As the Forum was aware, following discussion at the School Forum meeting in January, the excess surplus balance limits previously imposed on schools were lifted for 2011-12; however, the balances were still to be monitored by Schools Forum.

It was reported that the total level of balances in the Individual School Budget (ISB) held by Halton Schools brought forward into 2012-13 was £7,015,969, which also included the former Standards Funds monies which had been included in this figure for the first time. The report provided further details of this and *Appendix A* displayed information on the ISB balances in comparison to 2010-11. *Appendix B* detailed the non Locally Managed Schools (LMS) balances brought forward into 2012-13, which were now the Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) monies only.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the report.

SCF9 DSG OUTTURN 2011-2012

The Senior Finance Officer presented the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position for 2011-12 and requested the Schools Forum to note the amount of DSG carried forward into the 2012-13 financial year.

It was reported that the total DSG that would be carried forward was £1,952,709. This was primarily made up of Special Needs and Early Years provisions and would be used to fund budget pressures in the current 2012-13 financial year.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the amount of unspent DSG from 2011-12 (£1,952,709), being carried forward to the 2012-13 financial year.

SCF10 CONTINGENCY UPDATE

The Forum was presented with a report which provided an update on the value of the contingency for 2012-13 and the requests agreed to date.

It was reported that the total original general contingency was £605,139 which included the carry forward from 2011-12.

The report presented the requests agreed so far for the four contingency budgets (schools general, SEN, NQT and central DSG) and went on to provide details of these. The amount of £300,000 to support staff reductions in schools was noted, as was the continuing support for the EAL service for 2012-13 from the DSG centrally retained contingency.

The Forum was asked to note that any school converting to an academy would now take a proportion of the school contingency budget which would be recouped from the budget in-year.

RESOLVED: That School Forum:

- 1) notes the current balance of each of the four contingency budgets;
- 2) notes the commitments agreed in 2011-12 to the school contingency budget;
- 3) notes the current balance of the Staffing Reductions Budget; and
- 4) continues to support the costs of the EAL service for 2012-13 from the DSG centrally retained contingency.

John Woodroffe (the Chairman) declared a personal interest in the following item as he was Chair of Governors at Wade Deacon High School.

SCF11 SCHOOL FORUM SUB

The Operational Director – Children’s Organisation and Provision, provided the Forum with a report on the outcome of the School Forum Sub Committee meeting on 30th May 2012.

The meeting was held to consider a request for

funding to support a reduction of one member of the teaching staff and one technician at Wade Deacon High School.

After considering the business case submitted by Wade Deacon in support of the request, together with the information mentioned in paragraph 3.3 of the report, the Sub Committee decided not to approve the request for funding. In reaching this decision the Sub Committee took into consideration the level of balances and previous support provided to Wade Deacon High School, and the abatement arrangements following the school's conversion to an Academy.

On behalf of the Wade Deacon Governors, The Chairman wished to record their disappointment with this decision.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the decision of the School Forum Sub Committee in relation to financial support for Wade Deacon High School.

SCF12 DSG FINAL ALLOCATION 2012-2013

The Forum received a report informing of the final Dedicated Schools Grant allocation for 2012-13, which identified the variance from the provisional allocation.

The Forum was advised that the provisional DSG allocation for 2012-13 was £98,104,000 based on an estimate of 18,321.66 pupils and the Guaranteed Unit of Funding (GUF) was £5,354.52 (it was noted that the GUF was at the same level as for 2011-12).

It was reported that the Early Years and January Census data was validated each year by the Department for Education (DfE) after the Section 251 Budget return had been completed and school budgets allocated. Once the validation process had been completed the final DSG allocation for the year was then confirmed by the DfE by the end of June.

The Schools Forum was advised therefore that the final validated pupil numbers were confirmed as 18,304, a reduction of 17.66 fte so the final DSG allocation was £98,009,000, a reduction of £95,000 to the provisional application. It was noted that this change would have no impact on individual school budgets.

Furthermore, it was noted that the DfE were yet to

advise on the amount of DSG that would be removed from the allocation for the three schools that had already converted to academy status last year, and the school that was due to convert to academy status during this financial year.

RESOLVED: That the revised DSG allocation of £98,009,000 (before academy recoupment) was confirmed and the variation noted by the School Forum.

SCF13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Financial Guidelines - Jackie Coughlan queried the status of the new financial guidelines. It was noted that these would be progressed after the 'formula exercise' (minute SCF 4 refers) had been completed.

SCF14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 16 October 2012 at 5pm at a venue to be confirmed.

Meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.