# SCHOOLS FORUM

*At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Monday, 12 October 2015 at Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall*

Present: J. Rigby (Chairman)
M. Constantine (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Philbin, Observer
K. Albiston, PVI Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
L. Fox, Secondary Academy Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative
L. Feakes, School with Nursery Unit
A. Brown, Nursery Schools
S. Broxton, Primary Governor Representative
R. Collings, Primary Representative - Infant School
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
K. Landrum, Primary Representative - VA School
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision
A. Jones, Democratic Services
N. Unsworth, Financial Management, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
J. Vincent, All Through Schools
N. Hunt, PRU Representative

*Action*

SCF13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Thalia Bell, 16-19 Provision Representative.

SCF14 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF15 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE & EFA UPDATED OPERATIONAL GUIDES

Forum Members were presented with the following updated documents published recently by the Education Funding Agency (EFA):

- Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide;
- Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities; and
- Schools Forum Structure.

Further to the current Membership of the Forum, it was noted that the following vacancies still existed:

- One Small School Primary Representative; and
- One Academy Representative

It was also recommended in the updated Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide that Halton Schools Forum required:

- One Academy Special School Representative; and
- One Diocesan Representative.

SCF16 PLANNED EXPENDITURE OF PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE 2015-16

The Forum received an update on the planned expenditure of the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Children in Care 2015-16.

It was reported that the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for Children in Care (CIC) was governed by the conditions of grant published by the Department of Education (DfE). Within those conditions it stated that the grant allocation Looked After Children (LAC) must be managed by the designated Virtual School Head in the authority that looks after those children to be used for the benefit of the looked after child's educational needs as described in their Personal Education Plan (PEP).

It was noted that the DfE also produced further statutory guidance (March 2014) that described the 'role of the Virtual School Head in managing the PP+ for Children in Care'. The report provided a summary of the key points that governed how the grant could be used.

The Forum was then presented with the financial allocation of PP+ for CIC 2015-16 and the planned expenditure of PP+ for CIC 2015-16.

Further to queries, it was confirmed that if the grant was not used throughout the year then it was returned to the Government at the end of the year. With this in mind, Members requested that Sharon Williams be invited to a future meeting to provide examples of how other authorities had used theirs in the past.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum accepts the report as an accurate representation of the planned expenditure for the PP+ grant for 2015-16. Ann McIntyre

SCF17 EARLY YEARS PUPIL PREMIUM

The Forum received a report which informed them of the new Early Years Pupil Premium Funding (EYPP).

Members were reminded that eligible statutory school age children had received Pupil Premium for many years. From April 2015, Government introduced a new Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) for 3 and 4 year olds and local authorities received the EYPP funding as part of the Dedicated schools Grant (DSG) allocations. The total EYPP funding was £50m nationally, and was designed to narrow the attainment gap between young children from low income families and their peers, setting them on a path to a more successful future. The EYPP was set at a national hourly rate of 53p for 15 hours per week over no less than 38 weeks per year. Local Authorities passed the full rate for each eligible child directly to the provider.

The report went on to discuss the following:

- Advertising the new EYPP;
- Who was eligible for the EYPP;
- What the funding was to be used for;
- How much funding the Local Authority (LA) had received;
- How many children were eligible during the Summer Term; and
- How often the LA has to check eligibility.

Members noted the above information. Further to a discussion around Pupil Premium across the board, its importance for school funding and the problems being experienced by schools in identifying eligible children, it was reported that the Council was aware of this and was working with the Divisional Manager, Support Services, on the best approach to encourage parents to register. It was agreed that a system was needed to help raise awareness of the benefits of Pupil Premium to both the child and the school they attended.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum notes the funding available for Early Years Pupil Premium Funding and the eligibility criteria.

SCF18 SPECIAL SCHOOLS TOP UP FUNDING LEVELS

The Schools Forum was advised on the level of funding currently supporting special schools and received a proposal to review of top up levels to ensure that the funding

was in line with the budget available.

It was reported that in April 2013, the funding for special schools was changed so that each school received a base sum of £10,000 for each of the estimated number of places and a top up rate for each pupil based on the real time movement of pupils. Two top up bands were agreed, with the intention that the higher rate would only be used in exceptional cases where a pupil required one to one support.

The national reforms were expected to be cost neutral, however, since the introduction of the new funding formula costs of provision had risen by $1.4m, from £5.2m in 2013-2014 to an estimated £6.6m in 2015-16. It was noted that although there had been additional sixth form provision at Ashley School, this only accounted for approximately £268,000.

The report explained a number of issues with the current banding system in Halton, which were discussed by the Forum. Details of the top up levels for special schools for 2015-16 were presented in the report (as presented to the Forum at the March meeting).

The Forum discussed the review proposals and agreed that this level of funding would be no longer sustainable. They also agreed with the principle of banding funding so that it was directly related to the level of need of the child.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

1) Acknowledges the current funding system is unstainable; and

2) Supports the review of special schools top up funding so that future funding was in line with the resources available.

SCF19 SCHOOL EXCESS BALANCES 2014-15

Further to the decision made by Schools Forum in January 2013 that the previous excess surplus school balance limits of 5% for Secondary and 8% for Primary schools be removed; a decision was made at the June 2015 meeting of Schools Forum that schools with an amount of excess surplus balance over these previous 5% and 8% limits be requested to provide details of this balance for submission to the October Schools Forum meeting.

It was noted that 32 schools had a balance that was over the previous 5% and 8% limits and they were contacted and asked to complete a pro-forma, all of which were appended to the report. Most responses stated that the excess balances were to be spent on staffing costs or various improvements to the school playground, classrooms and buildings.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

1) Notes the amendment to the balances of Lunts Heath and Fairfield Primary Schools;

2) notes the excess surplus schools balances intended usage for each School; and

3) continues to monitor these and request further information if needed.

*In order to avoid any allegation of bias, the Chairman handed over the Chairmanship to the Vice Chairman for consideration of recommendations 15 and 16 in the following item, as they related to his School. He left the room for the duration of the debate and did not vote on the item.*

SCF20 SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FORMULA 2016-17

The Forum received a report explaining the decisions required for the Schools Block Funding formula for the financial year 2016-17; these were detailed in the report and Members made the decisions relating to each one as detailed below.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

1) continues to use one value for Primary, one value for KS3 and one value for KS4 pupils as per the 2015-16 formula. Also that the funding be reduced by £1.17 per pupil in order to fund the newly implemented Sparsity factor;
2) continues to use a mix of FMS6 and IDACI with differing cash values between the primary and secondary phases (*members requested some remodelling on this for the budget preparation in 2017-18)*;
3) continues to use this factor (2) for both primary and secondary phases with the old EYFSP framework for Years 3 – 6 at 73 points or less;
4) continues to use the Looked After Children factor;
5) keeps the overall budget for LAC at the same level

and reduce the cash value;

6) continues **not** to use the EAL factor;
7) continues **not** to use the Pupil Mobility factor;
8) agrees to use the Sparsity factor now there is a qualifying school;
9) agrees to fund Daresbury Primary a lump sum figure of £20,000 by reducing basic entitlement by £1.17 per pupil;
10) continues to use the Lump Sum factor at the same level as 2015-16;
11) does not continue to use the Split Site factor but retain the criteria for eligibility and funding as current should this factor be required in future years;
12) continues to fund LA rates on the latest estimate of actual cost available;
13) continues to use the PFI factor at the same cash value per pupil as previously agreed;
14) continues to set Notional SEN at 5% of each funding factor used;
15) does **not** agree that should the appeal with the EFA fail (para 3.5 of the report), that this factor (no.14) be introduced, with EFA approval;
16) does **not** agree to fund the above new factor (no.14) by reducing the Basic Per Pupil factor across all schools;
17) maintained primary school representatives agree that the items de-delegated in 2015-16 be continued for 2016-17;
18) maintained secondary school representatives agree that items de-delegated in 2015-16 be continued for 2016-17; and
19) does **not** continue with the Pupil Growth Fund (see SCF21).

SCF21 DSG REPROFILING 2016-17

The Forum received a summary of the funding challenges faced in balancing the Dedicated Schools Grants (DSG) in 2016-17 and was requested to discuss the proposals in the report to address the funding gap to ensure a sustainable and balanced DSG.

Members of the Forum were asked to recommend one of the proposed budget options (A or B) as described in the report to be used to re-profile the DSG. Both options used a maximum of 1.5% reduction taken from each school in the next two years. Appendix A showed the impact of the proposed reductions on the different categories and sizes of schools for 2016-17.

The two options were discussed and it was agreed that Option B was preferred – *to reduce all funding factors by 1.0% and delete the budgets for Pupil Growth (£180,000) and Additional Notional SEN (£108,000),* giving a combined saving of approximately £794,000.

The Forum was also requested to support the proposal to review and revise the top up funding for special schools within the Borough to bring the funding in line with the budget available (as discussed in minute SCF18). It was noted that the main issues faced were the numbers and costs of high needs pupils.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

1) recommends that option B be used to re-profile the DSG; and

2) the Forum supports the proposal to review and revise the top up funding for special schools within the Borough to bring the funding in line with the budget available.

SCF22 GRANT ALLOCATIONS

The Forum was updated on the grant allocations relating to schools for the 2015-16 financial year for the following:

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|---|---|
| Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)<br>(*Halton total £102,634,112 - £27,374,533 distributed directly to Academies)*<br>*(*Including carry forward of £2,625,589 from 2014/15*) | *£77,885,168 |
| Pupil Premium (PP)<br>(*Includes FSM6, Post LAC, Services Children and LAC)* | £8,624,020 |
| Sixth Form<br>(*St Chad's, Sts Peter and Paul & Ashley School and the 6th form in non-maintained schools and independent schools*) | £1,525,460 |
| Additional Grant to Schools (AGS)<br>(*Primary PE and Sports Grant only – no news re Secondary PE Teacher Release Grant funding*) | £180,904 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) *(First payment)* | £670,071 |
| Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) (*Only for the non-voluntary aided schools*) | £246,346 |

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF23 UNITED UTILITIES VERBAL UPDATE

The Forum was advised that a meeting with United Utilities was arranged two weeks ago at Lancashire County Council; however they did not turn up.

It was noted that Councillor Thompson was lobbying United Utilities on behalf of Halton's schools and that Ann McIntyre had written to them stating the objections made.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

*Meeting ended at 6.30 p.m.*