

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 2 July 2014

Present:

Richard Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

B Cummings	A Moore
J Devine	M Morris
K Frost	G Pritchard
L Ireland	M Walker
B Jordan	A Whiteley
D Marchant	G Zsapka

Non-Schools Group

S Higginson	J Pierce
B McGregor	N Reilly
J Owens	

In Attendance:

S Ashley	J Hassall
S Bellerby	Cllr B Mooney
J Bevan	A Roberts
C Chow	P Ward
S Dainty	

Apologies:

D Armstrong	D McDonald
M Brown	S McNamara
E Cogan	S Peach
Cllr W Clements	J Pearson
S Davies	K Podmore
S Duggan	Cllr PA Smith
J Gordon	P Young
C Hughes	

294 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH APRIL 2014**

Jeff Bevan attended the meeting. The minutes from the meeting were accepted as a true record.

295 **MATTERS ARISING**

Trade Union Facility time – there have been difficulties planning the Trade Union Facilities timetable from September for secondary schools and academies. Some schools have not responded to the new SLA (discussed at last meeting) and some replies are not clear.

296 **SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN 2013-14**

Andrew Roberts presented the provisional outturn figures for 2013-14, showing a DSG underspend of £929k. This is higher than previously reported due to a correction in the primary academy recoupment position. This underspend will be applied to the 2015-16 budget.

The report included a statement on the current position of a number of reserves, particularly £1m for the outstanding Job Evaluation (mainly the appeals for teaching assistants in special schools).

With regard to de-delegated budgets it was noted that although the special staff costs budget overspent overall by £200k the trade union element underspent by £35k. The teacher representative requested that this be carried forward and used for trade union time whilst the SLA was being finalised. This proposal will be taken back to WASH and Primary Heads Consultation Group and will be raised at the next Forum meeting.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

297 SCHOOL BALANCES 31ST MARCH 2014

Sue Ashley reported that the school balances have reduced slightly as at 31st March 2014 by £170k to £11.7m.

There was a concern about the term 'excess balances', which is a DfE indicator (balances greater than 8% of delegated budget for primary and special schools and 5% for secondary schools). Balances will continue to be monitored using these indicators, however, the amount of the balance used to set the 2014-15 budget (committed spend), will be taken into consideration in future before the thresholds are applied.

Although 7 schools ended the year with deficit balances, only three of them have requested a licensed deficit budget for 2014-15.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

298 WORKING GROUP UPDATE HIGH NEEDS AND SEN

Andrew Roberts outlined the work of the group which follows on from the High Needs Consultation and Cabinet/Schools Forum paper introducing a banded system for high needs Top Ups. This report made reference to the need to:-

- Develop a staged approach to high needs funding reform
- Review the inclusion funding provided to special schools
- To develop the high needs funding bands

Inclusion Funding

For most special schools inclusion funding is £33,470. This sum is paid through the budget. The group agreed that there was some good practice, but sought the views of the Forum about how to move forward in the future. Although no comments were made at Forum views will be welcome from members.

High Needs Places and Bandings

The Forum agreed the following recommendations in respect of high needs places and bandings:-

- Conversion of 8 places to ASC provision at Orrets Meadow be commissioned for 12 months, then further consideration given as part of the wider SEN review.
- To deal with the short term funding issues from increased pupil numbers at Kilgarth and The Observatory School, with a longer term solution to form part of the wider SEN review.
- Gilbrook to provide a report on the £150k funding for outreach work and additional cost pressures.
- No change to Hayfield places, or top ups for 2014-15, but to keep this under review.
- Defer any decision to increase the places at Stanley school until the autumn term.
- University Academy of Birkenhead's (UAB) resource base to reduce by 10 places, to 20, from September 2015.
- A report is taken to the working group on the pressures within the Home Tuition Service and proposals for the future.

299 HIGH NEEDS AND PERSONAL BUDGETS - VERBAL UPDATE

Phil Ward provided a verbal report to Forum with the main points being:-

- There is a need to carry forward developing protocols around Personal Budgets. Personal budgets are something new for education. Regulations around personal budgets pertain to the LA but schools can contribute too. The High Needs working group is supporting this work.
- The new focus on place funding will help the commissioning of specialist places in the future and it is important to work in partnership, particularly with the special education sector, health and social care.
- There is a 3 year transitional time frame for Statements of Special Educational Needs to be converted to Education and Health Care Plans, 2 years in the case of Learning Difficulty Assessments (post 16). The SEN statutory assessment team has been strengthened to carry out this work, which is funded by external grant from DfE. The first draft of the LA transitional arrangements must be published by the LA by 1st September 2014, this is on track.
- There is a lot of training ongoing with schools and others in preparation for the new Education and Health Care Plans. This will continue well into the autumn term.
- The statutory duty on the LA to publish the Local Offer will be in place by the 1st September 2014 and schools will be able to link into this.
- Just to remind the Forum that new duties from September 1st are to 0 to 25 years of age. This applies to Health too.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

300 SCHOOL FUNDING AND FORMULA PROPOSALS 2015-16 - WORKING GROUP UPDATE

As the DfE are not planning to introduce the National Fair Funding Formula until 2016 at the earliest the working group considered a number of possible changes to the local formula elements for the financial year 2015-16 as detailed below:-

- **Low Cost High Incidence (LCHI)** in Wirral is allocated through Prior Attainment only. Other LAs allocate higher amounts in this area and use a number of other formula elements. This change may not affect the distribution of funds to schools but are not recommended for the time being.
- **Looked After Children** funding. This area was increased last year but amounts per child are still less than amounts for deprivation. It is proposed to equalise funding by a top slice of approximately £200,000 from the deprivation element. Including Pupil Premium £3400 would be allocated, in future, to LAC and FSM deprivation.
- The **deprivation** element is a fixed percentage of the budget. As Free School Meal (FSM) numbers reduce the amount given per child increases. The introduction of pupil premium in 2011 has provided further funding for deprivation. Although the Forum agreed there would be no change in this area last year the working group are recommending that a cap be considered on the value of FSM in future.
- KS3 and KS4 AWPU amounts are different in Wirral. The working group considered if they should be made the same value. However, the introduction of this change appears to result in some unexpected movement in funds.
- A number of central budgets have and are being reviewed.

Resolved that:

- No further action for LCHI element at this time.
- Funding for LAC at the same rate as deprivation should be considered for the 2015-16 local funding formula.
- A cap on the unit value of deprivation is considered.
- The working group investigate the effects of the cap, particularly the redistribution of funding, with worked examples.
- No action to be taken to equalise KS3 and KS4 AWPU amounts at this time
- A further report to be submitted concerning central budgets to the next meeting.

301 TRADED SERVICES - SCHOOL MEALS UPDATE

Stuart Bellerby summarised the changes to the Metro Catering Service and SLA from September 2014. There will be three levels of service with a transparent charging structure. Any income received will now be paid directly to schools. This change coincides with the introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

302 **EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP**

Andrew Roberts outlined the agenda items to be covered at the early years working group with a view to holding a meeting before the end of term.

303 **SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS**

Sue Ashley highlighted the revisions for the Scheme for Financing Schools with a view to consult with schools as required in the autumn term.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

304 **WORK PLAN**

The work plan was provided for information.

The dates of the meetings for the coming academic year are:-

Wednesday 1st October 2014

Wednesday 21st January 2015

Wednesday 29th April 2015

Wednesday 8th July 2015

305 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business