

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 5 July 2017

Present: Jill Billinge (Chair)

Schools Group

L Ayling

S Baker

K Brown

M Forber

L Ireland

T Kelly

N Lightwing

D Marchant

T Taylor

A Whiteley (Vice Chair)

Non-Schools Group

S Bennett

S Davies

A Donelan

N Prance

In Attendance:

S Allen

S Ashley

S Bellerby

A Davies

C Fenlon

S Gibbs

C Hibbard

I McGrady

M Morris

A Roberts

A Snow

Apologies:

M Bulmer

E Cogan

B Chadwick

S Duggan

D Gornick

I Harris

Cllr P Hayes

S Higginson

J Goalen

R Mahony

Cllr C Meaden

K Podmore

T Quinn

D Spencer

P Young

V Woods

482 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes from both meetings were accepted as true records.

483 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of both meetings that were not covered on the main agenda.

484 **ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALTERNATIVE PROVISION**

Jan Levenson updated the Forum on the progress that has been made in Alternative Education Provision in Wirral.

Developments during the 2016-17 academic year were:-

- The Wirral Guild of Alternative Education has been set up, with a number of AP providers all following the same processes for referrals and monitoring.
- Wirral Alternative Education Portal has been set up to manage school referrals and record pupil outcomes.
- A Liverpool City Region Alternative Education Forum which meets termly to discuss common concerns.

Developments moving forward are:-

- The establishment of a 35 place independent school, which from September 17 will provide a 12 week programme for Key Stage 3 students who are permanently excluded, with a view to integrating pupils back into mainstream schools.
- Over the next 18 months plans to develop a 50 place AP Free School for Key Stage 4/5 pupils.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and agreed the recommendations to support emerging AP developments, explore and research best practices in other regions and continue to lead strategically on shaping and expanding the local Alternative Education offer.

485 UPDATE OF WATER CHARGES FROM UNITED UTILITIES

Andrew Snow updated the Forum on the future change to billing for Surface Water and Highways drainage for Wirral Schools. After pressure applied by North West Councils and Schools, led by Sefton Council, United Utilities have agreed to give a concession to educational establishments that have attached playground facilities and deliver tuition to KS1 - KS5 pupils. This concession equates to an average 15% reduction in surface water drainage charges in 2017-18 and 40% from April 2018.

Resolved

Forum thanked Sefton Council for their work and noted the report.

486 UPDATE ON ENERGY PRICES

Leading on from the January meeting Andrew Snow advised Forum of the estimated price increases for gas and electricity for the 2017-18 financial year. Gas supplied by Corona is estimated to rise by 2% and electricity is expected to rise by 9.5% if it is supplied by EdF or 14% if supplied by British Gas. It was noted that the reduction in school water costs may offset the rise in energy prices.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

487 FREE SCHOOL MEALS ELIGIBILITY

The report highlights the eligibility criteria and work by councils' benefits team to identify and maximise FSM numbers. FSM numbers are beginning to rise again as a result of automatic Opt in/Opt out registration. A similar system is in place within Early Years and has led to an increased take up of the early years pupil premium. The benefits team are now working on assessing FSM entitlement for pupils in independent and non-maintained special schools both in and out of area.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

488 TRADED SERVICES UPDATE - EDSENTIAL

Ian McGrady highlighted Edsential's achievements and services offered to schools in Wirral and Cheshire West in their first full year of trading.

The company has reduced its cost base by £2m, a saving that has been passed onto schools through price freezes and reductions. Edsential are now working towards their first grant fund allocations, with an initial amount of £50k and will make decision later this year on how this will be allocated.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

489 TRADED SERVICES - WIRRAL TRADED SERVICES

Stuart Bellerby briefed Forum on Wirral Traded Services which continues to work alongside Edsential. The 2017-18 level of buyback from schools is comparable to 2016-17. Every school in Wirral buys at least one service, with primary schools contributing to 70% of the total income generated.

Resolved

Forum notes the report

490 EARLY YEARS INCLUSION

Carol Fenlon highlighted the changes in the Early Years Education and Childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities relating to SEND.

Wirral already provides an inclusion fund. Providers will be consulted on the proposed changes whereby:-

- Hourly rate to increase to £4.22 for 3 and 4 yr olds, for the universal offer only
- To extend access to the fund to nursery schools and nursery classes
- Develop a review panel for allocation of funds, meeting 2 or 3 times a year
- An annual payment rather than a termly payment

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) is a new payment of £615 per annum for children in receipt of DLA and receiving free early education. A revised draft of the Early Years Funding Entitlement Agreement was attached to include the additional 15 hours entitlement for working parents, the Inclusion fund, Disability Access Fund and Early Years Pupil Premium.

Resolved

Forum agreed the following recommendations

- to update the SEN Inclusion Fund based on the proposals highlighted.
- nursery schools and classes will have access to the SEN Inclusion Fund
- To note the SEN Inclusion Fund will not apply to the additional 15 hours of childcare.
- To endorse the Early Years funding Agreement
- To consult in the autumn term on the proposals within the report.

491 **SCHOOL ADMISSIONS**

Sally Gibbs updated Forum on school admissions for 2015-16. There were over 7,500 applications for entry to school in September 2016 with around 2000 in-year transfers. Appeals were up by 100 to 372 compared to the previous year, however outcomes were proportionally similar.

On-line applications for admissions have increased from 87% to 92%, which is now in line with the regional and national average.

From September 2018 the 4 non-Catholic grammar schools will admit up to 15 children eligible for FSM who have reached the standard.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

492 **COMMISSIONING PLACES FOR HIGH NEEDS/SEND**

Sally Gibbs updated the Forum on the plans to review commissioned SEN provision within Wirral. An interim report will be produced by October 2017, looking at SEN needs, this will be used to inform discussions with stakeholders and parents. The outcome from these discussions will be reported to Cabinet in January 2018, which may then request permission to consult on any changes required. It is intended that this timescale will enable the LA to agree the future of specialist provision prior to the introduction of the High Needs National Formula

Appendix 1 updates the agenda paper as it now includes the number of pupils attending bases in January 2017.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

493 **SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN FOR 2016-17**

Shaun Allen outlined the year end position for the 2016-17 Schools budget. The overspend of £79,600 was better than indicated in January and was met from existing reserves. The main pressure on the budgets is the high needs block. It was noted that there is ongoing work to reduce the overspend on Independent Special Schools budget but these children are some of the most vulnerable in Wirral.

Resolved

- Forum noted the report
- Forum agreed that underspends on de-delegated services are used to offset budget pressures and that provision is made for a Community Works carry forward of £20k.
- Forum agreed that the overspend of £79,600 is met from DSG reserves.

494 **UPDATE ON SCHOOL BALANCES**

Sue Ashley advised the Forum of the school balances position as at 31st March 2017. School balances have reduced by £777k to £10.5m since last year. The budgets received so far, from schools, for 2017-18 indicate that balances at 31st March 2018 will be £4.2m reducing to £1.2m at March 2019.

There are significant and ongoing financial challenges facing all schools. The work by headteachers and governors to review and set sustainable budgets is acknowledged.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

495 **SCHOOLS BUDGET UPDATE 2017-18**

Andrew Roberts informed the Forum of the Schools budget changes that have been made since the previous report in January. They are:-

- The primary and secondary schools budgets have reduced to take account of changes for de-delegation and academies.
- High needs adjustments for 6th forms and academy provision
- Early Years budgets have been adjusted and reduced to take account of the Early Years Census and a fall in rolls for 3 & 4 year olds.
- An increase of Early Year Pupil Premium Grant.
- A PFI adjustment agreed with the ESFA.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

496 **BUDGET MONITORING 2017-18**

Shaun Allen presented the first quarter budget monitoring report. There are no variations to report to the Schools Budget in 2017-18 at present.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

497 **DSG BASELINE**

Shaun Allen updated the Forum on the DSG baseline for 2018-19 and the transfer of £106k from the schools block to the high needs block.

The Vice Chair asked a question about the planned closure of Kingsway academy and the funding for pupils who would transfer to new schools. It was noted that the LA will apply to the DfE to dis-apply Schools Finance Regulations for schools who receive pupils who are or would have been attending Kingsway so there would be no lag in funding.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

498 **SCHOOLS FORUM ASSOCIATION**

The Chair –elect for the next academic year Adrian Whitely agreed to follow up the application to join the Schools Forum Association.

499 **SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS CHANGES**

Andrew Roberts highlighted the revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools, including revised wording where charges may be made to a school budget. These will be consulted on in the autumn term, with comments brought back to the next Forum Meeting for approval.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

500 **FORUM MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Sue Ashley updated the group on the membership of the Forum. The recent primary academy conversions have changed the split between maintained schools and academies. Although there is no requirement for a primary/secondary academy split there is a recommendation that the place is offered in the first instance to primary academy schools.

Adrian Whitely agreed to join the High Needs Working Group to replace Deborah Marchant.

Resolved

Forum noted and agreed the recommendation

501 **ACTION PLAN AND DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The workplan was provided for information.

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

Wednesday 27th September 2017

Wednesday 17th January 2018

Wednesday 25th April 2018

Wednesday 4th July 2018

502 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Forum thanked Steve Dainty for all his dedication and work on the Forum over the years as primary Headteacher representative, Chair, and finally, as a primary governor rep.

Forum thanked the outgoing chair, Jill Billinge, for her hard work over the last 2 years.