

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 15 January 2020

Present: Adrian Whiteley (Chair)

Schools Group

L Ayling	R Mahoney
M Bellamy	E Morris
R Bridges	M Morris
J Bush	E Neal
L Davidson	Cllr Norbury
C Fenna (Deputy	T Taylor
M Forber	J Weise
H Johnson	R Wood

Non-Schools Group

S Bennett	E Longbone
S Davies	S Ralph
G Edwards	A Ryecroft

In Attendance:

S Allen	T Ghosh
Y Allen	S Talbot
S Ashley	A Turnbull
K Frost	

Apologies:

K Brown	T Kelly
G Fraser	N Lightwing
N Prance	D Spencer

656 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH NOVEMBER 2019**

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

657 **MATTERS ARISING**

There was a matter arising on the School Funding Consultation. An additional report has been added to propose an increase to the MFG for 2020-21 budget. The final DSG is £2m more than previously indicated and initial workings show that the budget can be set with a +.5% and no capping which leaves excess funding of over £1m to create the falling rolls/growth fund. The report recommends that the MFG is increased to the maximum allowed of +1.84% to direct more to more funding to schools. This will still leave £0.5m in a falling rolls/growth fund without a gains cap being required.

The views of the Forum was that there is no significant growth or falling rolls presently, so the falling rolls/growth fund would be manageable at the lower rate. Forum supports the model of the +1.84% MFG. There were no other matters arising.

658 **MEAS UPDATE**

Anna Turnbull updated Forum on recent changes to the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) and future plans for the service. The main income for the service comes from Schools purchasing the SLA. More than 70 languages are spoken within Wirral schools, with an increase Arabic but a reduction in Polish speakers.

The 24 Schools of Sanctuary within Wirral are:-

Barnston Primary
Clare Mount Secondary Specialist Sports College
Hayfield Primary
Hillside Primary
Prenton Primary
St Anselm's college
St Joseph's Upton
Thingwall Primary
Egremont Primary
Holy Cross primary
Mersey Primary
Our Lady of Pity Primary
Well Lane Primary
Bedford Drive Primary
Holy Spirit Catholic & CE Primary
Lingham Primary
Riverside Primary
Sacred Heart Primary
St Joseph's Wallasey
West Kirby Primary
Liscard Primary School
Park Primary School
St Anne's Catholic Primary School
St John's Infant Primary School

Forum was interested to know the position of refugees within Wirral, what the Authority's plans are in terms of resettlement programmes, and the potential impact on schools. Housing Services will report to the next Schools Forum meeting to give an overview briefing on the service, the resettlement programme and it's potential impact

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

659 EARLY YEARS UPDATE

Carol Fenlon updated Forum on the Early Years Working Group discussion and the consultation on the quality supplement.

Although the uptake in all areas of early years is above national levels it can fluctuate between terms. The Extended offer has a particularly good uptake in 2019-20.

After the quality supplement consultation the quality rate for 2020-21 will remain the same, but the number of settings receiving it may reduce for a period until settings identify staff with the appropriate qualifications in each eligible setting.

Uptake of the Inclusive Practice Fund has increased and the budget may overspend in year if access continues to This will be offset by the reserve. There is a slight increase of DAF claimants this year. This fund is also used to support a Mediquip contract providing specialist equipment to settings.

Positive uptake of training and development with 45 settings having completed training in language development, early literacy and numeracy, which will be cascaded to other settings across the sector. The early Years team are developing a SLCN pathway and CPD programme in response to “closing the word gap.”

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

660 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

Tarun Ghosh updated the Forum on a number of high needs areas, as follows:-

- Confirmation that the final SEND Review Report has been received from the Premier Advisory Group and passed to senior colleagues. It will then be passed to councillors.
- SENDCo Locality Boards are in the process of being set up to shape future priorities and strategy moving forward
- The Review of the pilot provision agreed in 2018 is ongoing.
- The Review of Individual Pupil Funding Agreements (IPFAs) is ongoing to ensure that pupil outcomes are met. This will include setting up a Local Area Board to assess and monitor the process.
- No further Group PFAs have been agreed since Autumn 2019.
- A proposed change to the inclusion funding allocated to special schools at preliminary discussion level within the Local Authority. This would be a significant reduction for one school, who the Authority are due to meet with to discuss.
- There is an ongoing review of KIND Team with a view to move the emphasis from a clinical model to an educational approach.
- To consider a High Needs funding review, with a consideration to explore further the following 3 options:-

- Option 1 – retaining the current system, which includes EHCP funding (special school top ups, resource of units, exceptional needs and out of borough funding), IPFAs, Early Years Funding entitlement.
- Option 2 – Additional funding/interventions specific to each child using an Individual Provision Map, with annual reviews. There would be no change in mainstream to the elements 1 & 2 funding through the formula budget.
- Option 3 – Pupil needs based model based on the 7 Ranges Model. Range 1-3 would not attract extra funding. Range 4a – 4d mainly mainstream funding, 5-7 top ups for special schools.

Forum requested that options 2 & 3 are reviewed and costed identifying the effect on each school. This is a large piece of work between the SEN and Finance teams. A wider consultation would also be required.

Forum agreed the timeline as follows:-

- High Needs working group to review the options
- Update at the September 2020 Forum Meeting.
- Consultation after September meeting.
- Feedback to influence budget setting for 2021-22

The special schools representatives asked the following questions on behalf of the Special School head teachers

- In light of the additional money being delegated to mainstream schools, what are the proposals for the distribution of the extra 6 million that the Local Authority is receiving for High Needs in April 2020. There are serious concerns that 6 of the 10 special schools already have a deficit and an additional 2 are likely to have a deficit in April 2021. The money needs to be distributed to SEN in all sectors as soon as possible.

Forum agreed that the distribution of the high needs funding should be discussed at the next High needs working Group.

- Additional funding (8%) has been given to the LA for Hospital School Provision. Could the LA outline the plans for the distribution of this money.

The Hospital Education element in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is increasing in 2020-21. However, the allocation to Wirral Hospital School will remain unchanged in 2020-21, with the increase to be held to be used to meet the special educational needs of children/young people (CYP) meeting the admission criteria. The Wirral Hospital Schools will be offered a meeting to discuss the 8% increase, and how it will be allocated to support and improve outcomes for children/young people (CYP).

- Concerns have been raised by Special School Headteachers regarding the sudden proposals to remove £119,500 from Clare Mounts school

budget. The consequence of the school only being informed on Monday 6th January 2020 about these proposals has meant that they have had no opportunity to factor this into their budgetary commitment for 2020-2021. Loss of this money will have a huge impact upon the pupils and the school. Due to the meeting that has been scheduled for Monday 20th January 2020 with Clare Mount and the Local Authority could any decision be deferred until after the meeting. The school are intending to highlight the reasons why Forum members agreed to continue with the allocation of this funding.

Specialist School status funding ended several years ago, with the grant allocations moved to the DSG. A decision was made at the time by the LA to leave the funding with Clare Mount school due to their budget position at the time and the impact removing it would have had on the school and its pupils. However, following Schools Forum's request that the LA conduct a review of Inclusion Funding it was felt that it is no longer appropriate that the school continue to receive this funding, and that, instead, it is used to continue the review of Inclusion and Outreach funding and impacts. This would also mean that the funding the school receives is clear and transparent.

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Resolved

Forum noted the report and the views of the Forum.

661 **BUDGET 2020-21**

Shaun Allen outlined the Schools Budget for 2020-21 highlighting the following:-

- minimum levels of per pupil funding of £5,000 for Secondary pupils and £3,750 per primary pupils are now compulsory in local formula from 2020-21.
- The MFG for 2020-21 must be between +0.5% and +1.84%
- Teachers Pay Grant and Teachers Pension employers Grant will continue to be paid for 2020-21 financial year.
- Core NNF formula factors will increase by 4% except for FSM factors which will increase 1.84% in line with inflation.
- Early Years hourly rates paid to Local Authorities will increase by £0.08.
- The contribution to combined budgets and school's retirement costs (school closure) has reduced by 20%.
- Changes to High Needs places from September 2019
 - Elleray Park increase by 23 places to 151
 - Gilbrook places increase by 5 places to 40
- Changes to high Needs places from April 2020
 - Emslie Morgan AP reduce by 80 places to 0 following the closure of the school in August 2019, with the Alternative Provision top-up budget being increased to fund replacement provision
 - Additional fund introduced equivalent to 40 places, for schools who take pupils over their current places, with a policy to be produced defining the criteria.
- SEN Top ups to increase by £2.8m to meet current need.

- EHCP budget to increase by £500k to meet current need

School Forum members highlighted their concern at the sudden reduction in the combined budgets of 20% reduction in central block in combined budgets. Council will provide this funding to ensure that services continue. Thanks to council for support.

Schools Forum also expressed their view that despite additional grant allocations for schools, Early Years, and Special Education Needs via the Dedicated Schools Grant, the increase does not do enough to offset existing and increasing pressures within schools, and the budget is insufficient to fully meet children's' needs.

Resolved

1. Forum views were sought on the Schools Budget for 2020-21 and they will be referred to Cabinet on 17th February 2020.
2. Forum members approved the contributions to the combined budgets in 2020-21 as detailed in the report
3. Forum members agreed to transfer the surplus High Needs funding for 2020-21 to the DSG reserve to partially offset the deficit position.
4. The School Budget be referred to Cabinet on 17th February 2020.

662 DE-DELEGATION OF BUDGETS 2020-21

The following budgets can be de-delegated: Contingency, Special Staff Costs (including TU facility time), School Library Service, Insurance, Behaviour Support, School Improvement and former ESG Costs.

The Vulnerable Children's Budget, currently held in contingency will be moved to behaviour support. There are increases in rates for the TU facility costs, library service and maternity/paternity de-delegation costs.

There are no changes to the rates for School improvement & Insurance.

Only Schools Forum members, in their relevant phase, can decide if these areas should be taken out of the formula budget before it is allocated to schools.

Resolved

1. The Primary Forum Representatives agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2020-21:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs including Trade Union Facilities time
 - School Library Service
 - Insurance
 - School Improvement
 - Behaviour support
2. Primary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £371,973

3. The Secondary Forum Representative agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2020-21:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs including Trade Union Facilities time
 - School Improvement
 - Behaviour support
4. Secondary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £56,267
5. Special Schools Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £71,760.

663 **BUDGET MONITORING 2019-20 QUARTER 3**

Shaun Allen advised the Forum on the expected position and variations with regard to the Schools Budget in the current financial year, particularly an in-year overspend of £1.23m mainly within the high needs budget.

One school converted to academy at the beginning of the financial year which resulted in a further reduction of the DSG (and corresponding reduction in spend).

The previous year's commitment has been overstated in respect of Independent special schools by £195k, which has led to a one-off saving. Unpaid commitments from 2018-19 are still being investigated with a potential for the projected costs to reduce further.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

664 **UPDATE ON SCHOOL'S BALANCES AND DEFICIT POSITION**

Sue Ashley updated Forum on the balances and future projections at period 6 monitoring. The projections for future years show a large decrease in overall balances, but it is noted that the projections are based current year budget and do not include any increased grant in the 2020-21 formula budget and the additional grant for TPG and TPECG. However, some schools will gain more than others so it is important that schools where in-year deficits are still large in 2020-21 schools do not assume that the extra funding will sort out the budget issues, many schools will still need to manage their budgets with savings going forward.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

665 **WORKPLAN**

The workplan was provided for information.

It was agreed that the current timing of Schools Forum meetings – 18:00 – 20:00 on a Wednesday are not suitable and regularly restrict attendance. The dates of the remaining meetings for the 2019-20 academic year have therefore been changed to the following:

Tuesday 12th May 2020

Tuesday 30th June 2020

The times of the meetings have been changed to start at the earlier time of 4pm for future meetings.

These meetings will be held in Council Chamber at Wallasey Town Hall

666 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.