

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

28th November 2012

MINUTES

Present

R. Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

S Allen	A Moore
E Cogan	C Penn
B Cummings	K Podmore
P Dixon	G Pritchard
C Hughes	J Weise
L Ireland	M Walker
D Kitchin	G Zsapka
M Kophamel	

Non-Schools Group

S Davies	D McDonald
J Kenny	S McNamara

In Attendance

D Armstrong	Cllr W Clements
P Ashcroft	S Dainty
S Ashley	J Hassall
S Bellerby	M Lightburn
S Blevins	A Roberts
N Clarkson	

Apologies

J Gordon	S Peach
S Higginson	N Reilly
B McGregor	P Roberts
J Owens	

The Acting Director of Children's Services explained that the meeting was to discuss the impact the Local Authority's budget savings options 2013-16 on schools and to advise Cabinet at their meeting on 20th December.

Schools Music Service (£21,000)

This savings option was noted and no further comments were made.

Oaklands Outdoor Centre (£23,000)

This savings option was noted and no further comments were made.

Planned Programmed School Maintenance (PPM) (£450,000)

As many schools have had work completed for legionella and asbestos in the past, costs moving forward should be considerably less and budgets could be reduced. The costs would transfer to the school budget and kept centrally or if delegated then schools will cover their own costs.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Affordability Gap (£2,300,000)

The saving to the council would effectively mean a charge to all schools not just the PFI schools. There were concerns that the schools would not be able to afford this collectively and that transfers should not be made until this becomes affordable by schools.

There are 2 City Learning Centres funded through PFI, which need to be looked at further.

School Improvement and Academy Income (£191,000)

The savings option was noted. This will not impact on the EQ service.

Home to School Transport (£832,000)

The removal of discretionary denominational transport expenditure totals £180,000. The diocese representative was concerned that some parents would not be able to choose a denominational school due to the cost of transport.

A secondary representative was concerned that under the changes proposed pupils going to Catholic Grammar School would suffer financially. It was pointed out that other Grammar Schools don't receive free transport for children travelling across Wirral.

There were concerns that the removal of transport for 16 -19 year old vulnerable children would inhibit travel and attendance to school or college, post 16. Special school members pointed out that given the high profile accorded to NEETS and the difficulties in placing our most vulnerable, that such a move forward was of great concern.

The Special Schools representatives further pointed out that:

- head teachers have already received concerns from many parents
- there were concerns that parents would choose to go to a nearer mainstream schools rather than the most appropriate for the child.
- There are a significant number of high risk vulnerable young people receiving transport, with and without statements, they should be considered most carefully and individually before removing the option of transport for future individual students.
- There were concerns about the impact of school attendance.

Members would welcome a full consultation as they are concerned about where lines would be drawn.

Child and Mental Health Service (£250,000)

It was suggested that the Children in Care Council should be involved in the redesign of the service. With cuts in the Health Service as well we need to take into consideration if this will affect the service for LAC's / Adopted Children further.

Education Psychology Service (£80,000)

This savings option was noted and no further comments were made.

Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (£1,000,000)

This savings option was noted.

Children's Centres and Surestart (£2,172,000)

Members requested that when this option is being considered that the business model that Frank Field MP has been involved in is taken into consideration, before further advance of funds to Mr Field's proposed projects.

Comments were made about implications of changes for Nursery Schools where Childrens Centres are integrated and the need for consultation.

Foundation Learning (£133,000)

Members pointed out that proposed savings in this area, Foundation Learning and the Wirral Apprentice Programme were not conducive to reducing NEET issues or for helping schools fit young people for employment / training within the Borough.

Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities (£300,000)

This savings option was noted and no further comments were made.

Youth and Play Service and Youth Challenge (£1,578,000)

Members commented on the importance of these services for young people. In relation to the Youth Opportunities Fund, it was noted that this option not only gave carefully thought out small but important grants to organisations working with young people, but also gave young people experience of applying / bidding and preparing presentations for grant applications and a further body of young people the

valuable, lifelong experience of being Grant Panel Members. It was noted as important the need to continue to involve and engage young people in Wirral Councils decision making.

Area Team/Family Support (£200,000)

Members noted the expectation that redesigned services would be better targeted and focussed

Universal and Targeted Parenting (£900,000)

Comments as above

Reducing School Crossing Patrols (352,000)

There were concerns about increases in road traffic accidents, particularly the safety of the children and any bad publicity the schools may receive. Members noted comments about the difficulty this may place Governing bodies and Headteachers in, especially in relation to finance, parental pressure and equity. There are over 100 crossing sites, many of which are shared. Schools are concerned about the affordability of being charged for a number of crossings.

Wirral Apprentice Programme (£500,000)

Members would like to know how successful the scheme has been in securing permanent employment. There were concerns that the national scheme is not very good.

Closure of Acre Lane (£260,000)

A training provision would still be required. Although the building is in need of significant refurbishment it is maintaining quality training that is the important issue here.

Procurement (£80,000)

This savings option was noted and no further comments were made.

Conditions of Service (£4,000,000)

Changes to overtime rates and the reduction of protection for the Phase 3 Job Evaluation from 3 years to 1 year may affect school staff.

HR Service

This will not affect the service to schools as this is purchased through an SLA.