

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM
22nd January 2014
MINUTES

Present: Richard Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

S Allen	A Moore
E Cogan	S Peach
B Cummings	C Penn
S Duggan	G Pritchard
J Devine	M Walker
K Frost	A Whiteley
B Jordan	P Young
L Ireland	G Zsapka
D Marchant	

Non-Schools Group

S Davies	J Pierce (Nee Kenny)
B McGregor	N Reilly
J Owens	

In Attendance:

D Armstrong	J Hassall
S Ashley	C McGowan
J Bevan	A Roberts
S Blevins	D Smith
C Chow	Cllr P A Smith
S Dainty	

Apologies: J Gordon C Hughes
S Higginson K Podmore

1. Minutes from the Meeting Held on 13th November 2013

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

2. Matters Arising

- Budget Savings were referred to Cabinet on 9th December 2013 and ratified on 16th December. All options affecting schools were passed.
 - Education Social Welfare will be offered as a traded service through the EQ management board.
 - Crossing Patrols will also be offered as a traded service. Schools have already been consulted concerning a flat rate effective from 1st April 2014. The crossing patrol staff would continue to be employed by the LA.
 - There were a number of concerns relating to the Crossing Patrols. Parental pressure means some schools will have no choice but to pay and this funding is taken away from education of the children. There were other concerns related to areas where budgets are being reduced or costs passed to schools, however, it was pointed out that council cuts of £83m

will have an effect on all areas of spend and decisions have not been taken lightly.

- The LA agreed to look into the issue where there is a shared crossing and one school refuses to pay.
- The LA is still waiting for a response to their application relating to increased numbers of High Needs students.
- The LA have not yet had a response from the EFA concerning the application for the exemption from the requirement of using the MFG for High Needs top ups. However, they have indicated that there is no requirement for an MFG for inclusion bases.

3. Data for School Funding 2014-15

Andrew Roberts explained that this report details the data used for the schools funding formula for 2014-15. The report identifies the elements of the formula and the national and local changes that were agreed at Cabinet in October. The tables highlight the changes in the unit values and pupil numbers between 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and the changes in the unit values within the schools funding formula.

4. Schools budget 2014-15

Andrew Roberts outlined the Schools Budget for 2014-15. The first part of the report details how the funding is allocated to the LA and the latter part how it is allocated to schools.

- The Dedicated Schools Grant continues to be received on a spend plus basis and split into 4 blocks, Schools, High Needs, Early Years and Other.
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) remains at -1.5%
- Net falling rolls will continue until 2016.
- Rates increased costs reflect the 20% liability for academy schools and the overall reduction in discretionary rate relief.
- There is headroom/growth of £1.15m in the budget mainly arising from a DSG surplus in 2012-13, a difference between pupil funding within the ISB and DSG and reserves that are no longer required. £732,000 of this growth is for one year only.
- The SEN top up budget for 2014-15 is £17m. This includes provision for schools, 6th Forms and further education colleges and other providers.
- The contribution to combined budgets of £2,499,600, noting that there are no new commitments or increases in expenditure.
- The PPM budget has been reduced by £200,000 in 2014-15 to reflect the council's previously agreed reduction in funding. The remaining PPM budget of £449,000 is now fully funded from DSG.
- The PFI Affordability gap is funded by the LA. There will be a report on this budget saving option at a future meeting.

Resolved

The Schools Forum approved the content of the report as follows:-

- I. The contributions to combined budget.
- II. The reduction of £200,000 in the PPM budget.

- III. The use of headroom totalling £1,215,100 of which £732,000 is only for one year.
- IV. The high needs contingency of £908,900.
- V. The use of the reserves in setting the Schools Budget and reclassifying the remaining balance for Automatic Meters to a reserve for the installation of defibrillators in schools.
- VI. The Schools Budget and the views of the Schools Forum to be referred to the budget meeting of Cabinet on 12th February 2014.

5. De-delegation of Budgets

Andrew Roberts identified areas within the schools budget that could be de-delegated in 2014-15. 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. There was a discussion by the secondary representatives about Trade Union facility time. For the secondary de-delegation it was agreed to split Trade Union costs from the other special staff costs and to vote on the 2 areas separately.

Resolved

1. The Primary Forum Representatives agreed, to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2014-15:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs
 - School Library Service
 - Insurance
 - MEAS
 - FSM eligibility
 - Behaviour support
2. The Secondary Forum Representatives agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2014-15:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs (excluding TU facility time)
 - Insurance
 - MEAS
 - FSM eligibility
 - Behaviour Support
3. The Secondary Forum Representatives did not agree to de-delegate the Trade Union facility time.

6. Pupil Premium 2014-15

Sue Ashley highlighted the pupil premium received in 2013-14 and the in year change to primary FSM premium. In 2014-15 FSM premium will increase to £1300 for primary schools and £935 for secondary schools. LAC Pupil premium will increase to £1900 and will be extended to include adopted children, those leaving care under guardianships and residence orders. Service children will move to “ever 4”. The total Pupil Premium for Wirral is estimated at £16.8m.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

7. Impact of Pupil Premium – Raising attainment

Deidre Smith outlined the work undertaken to identify what schools have spent their pupil premium on and the effects it has had on narrowing the attainment gap between those on free school meals compared to those who are not. Since 2013 Ofsted inspections have focussed more on the performance of children who are eligible for the Pupil Premium.

In 2013-14 Pupil premium amounts ranged from £2,492 to £142,044 in primary schools and £26,119 to £502,122 in Secondary Schools. Schools identified a large number of ways in which they spend their pupil premium such as additional support inside the class room, reducing class sizes and provision of materials or resources. This was similar for primary and secondary schools. Tables identified the gaps between FSM and non FSM children for different key stage levels, with the national average. The results were mixed, in some areas the gap has widened and in other areas it has narrowed.

The Wirral School Improvement team will continue to support and challenge schools, particularly with regard to the 'Narrowing the Gap' target.

Some Forum members were concerned that the statistics should be treated with caution as they are aware that other variables can affect outcomes.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

8 Budget Monitoring Update 2013-14

Andrew Roberts informed the group that there was an anticipated underspend of £950k in centrally managed schools budgets for this financial year. A number of under and overspends were detailed in the report, particularly:-

- The PPM budget which currently has a £200,000 contribution from the council, but it is proposed to fund from DSG.
- The special staff costs budget is projected to overspend (£150,000).
- The SEN Transition reserve which is in place to cover transitional issues as we move to the new funding structure is expected to underspend (£500,000).
- The Automatic Meter Reading reserve is no longer required but it is proposed to use some of the balance to install defibrillators in schools and the remainder to support schools budget in 2014-15 (£165,000).

Resolved

- Forum noted the report.
- Forum agreed to fund the PPM programme in full.
- Forum agreed to a high needs reserve if the MFG is required 2014-15.
- Forum agreed the redesignation of Automatic Reader reserve to fund defibrillators in schools

9 Monitoring Excess Balances

Sue Ashley informed the group of the work done so far monitoring schools with balances in excess of the DfE recommended levels of 8 and 5%. Fifteen schools have provided spending plans. The main spend has been to support falling rolls, contributions to capital, staffing and purchasing equipment.

Balances will continue to be monitored and subject to further reports once the 2013-14 outturn is complete.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

10. National Fair Funding Formula Proposals

Andrew reported verbally on the move towards a national formula. The DfE are considering 2 options:-

- Fund each school directly from EFA
- Review the DSG formula funding to LAs.

A consultation paper is imminent.

11. Working Group Updates

The membership of the working groups were updated as follows:

Early Years working Group

R Longster
J Devine
S Davies
L Ireland
C Hughes
D McDonald

High Needs Working Group

R Longster
K Frost
S Allen
B Jordan
D Marchant

School Funding Working Group

R Longster
K Frost
S Peach
J Gordon
E Cogan
G Zapka

12. Work Plan

The dates of future meetings were noted:-

2nd April 2014

2nd July 2014

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business.