

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

30th April 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Richard Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

S Allen

A Moore

J Devine

S Peach

S Duggan

C Penn

K Frost

K Podmore

J Gordon

G Pritchard

D Marchant

A Whiteley

G Zsapka

Non-Schools Group

D McDonald

J Pierce

S McNamara

N Reilly

In Attendance:

D Armstrong

D Hollomby

S Ashley

G Monument (EFA)

S Bellerby

C McGowan

S Blevins

J Pearson

C Chow

A Roberts

S Dainty

P Sheridan

J Hassall

Clr PA Smith

P Ward

Apologies:

M Brown

B Jordan

E Cogan

B McGregor

B Cummings

Clr B Mooney

S Davies

J Owens

S Higginson

M Walker

C Hughes

P Young

L Ireland

The chair welcomed Gavin Monument from the EFA who explained his role of observer.

1. **Minutes from the Meeting Held on 22nd January 2014**

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

2. **Matters Arising**

- The Crossing Patrol savings option has been withdrawn for the time being.
- The LA has withdrawn its application to the EFA in respect of the exemption from the requirement of using the MFG for High Needs top ups.

3. **Narrowing the Gap**

Dave Hollomby outlined some of the work being carried out in Wirral to Narrow the Gap, through the RADY (Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters) project. This Project highlights the fact that lower attainment targets for disadvantaged children can often be set. The LA has been working with a small number of pilot Wirral secondary schools to address this by setting broadly similar targets for disadvantaged children compared with other pupils. Initial findings indicate that this single measure helps to raise attainment levels.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

4. **Proposals for Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)**

Phil Sheridan explained the changes to the allocation of Looked after Child (LAC) Pupil Premium from April 2014. Prior to allocation of the PPP the Virtual School Headteacher and school the child attends will agree plans to help achieve improved attainment. This will be incorporated in the Personal Education Plan of the looked after child.

It was noted that, unlike Wirral, some Local Authorities will not pass the full PPP funding to schools, but use this to cover the cost of corporate programmes.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

5. **Schools budget Update 2014-15**

Andrew Roberts updated the forum on the changes to the Schools Budget for 2014-15 since the last meeting:-

- PFI affordability gap – reduced council funding of £0.6m
- Primary budget reduced for de-delegation and one primary academy - £2.5m
- Secondary Schools reduced for de-delegation agreed and for 13 Secondary academies - £57m
- Special School 6th form funding - £1.2m transferred to the EFA who will pass it on to schools
- Early years increase in 3 and 4yr old funding - £0.2m
- High needs reduction of £0.6m - representing additional headroom and transferred to the EFA for Academy and independent school place funding.

Centrally held budgets will be discussed further at the School Funding Working Group.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

6. **Trade Union Facilities Time**

Sue Blevins outlined a report that was due to be sent to the governing bodies of maintained secondary schools and academy schools, which outlines:-

- the statutory requirements of schools to provide Trade Union support within schools
- the drawbacks of schools not contributing to facility time

- a traded service that the LA can provide to support schools collectively.

As primary schools agreed to de-delegate the trade union facility time this only relates to secondary schools. However the report will go to primary school governing bodies for information. Sue Blevins was thanked for her work on this issue.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

7. Special School Inclusion Funding

Andrew Roberts explained that the special schools receive inclusion funding as part of the High Needs Formula to promote inclusion of their students with other neighbouring schools. The reports highlight the work the schools are doing.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

Forum agreed that the inclusion reports are to be referred to the SEN Working Group for further consideration.

8 Budget Monitoring Update 2013-14

Andrew Roberts informed the group that there was an anticipated underspend of £400k in centrally managed schools budgets for this financial year. There were a number of small changes compared to the January Report.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

9 Consultation on School Funding Reform 2015-16

Andrew Roberts explained the next steps in the DfE's school funding reform. The plan to move to a single funding formula has been deferred, until the next spending review. In the meantime the DfE are consulting on a Minimum Funding Level (MFL) for all authorities. This will allocate £350m extra funding authorities that are furthest away from the MFL. Wirral will not receive any of this funding.

The Schools Funding Working Group previously provided a response to the DfE's consultation paper due to the tight deadlines.

Resolved

The Forum endorsed the response and noted the report.

10. Traded Services Update

Stuart Bellerby outlined the ongoing work that Wirral Education Quality Services (WEQS) is doing to bring all school traded services under one umbrella and improving services to schools with a co-ordinated approach. There are 18 services which generates £9m of income.

Wirral are working with Cheshire West and Chester Council after a recent successful bid for a shared school's traded services project, which will provide £100k of consultancy support to transform services.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

11. High Needs Update and Workplan

Phil Ward highlighted the continued areas of High needs development in the coming year. From September Education Healthcare Plans (EHCP) will start to replace statements. The SEN Working Group will commence work around the arrangements for personal budgets. The group will also review and develop the high needs banding structure and changes to high needs places.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

12. Implementation of Universal Free School Meals for Infants

Andrew Roberts briefed the Forum on the introduction of universal free school meals (UFSM) for infants from September 2014 and the Cabinet report in March 2014. The report resolved that:-

- the price of a paid meal be increased to £2.30 from September 2014
- the number of Metro kitchen staff are increased to take account of additional meals
- the capital grant for UFSM be included in the capital programme

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

13. School Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Costs

Andrew Roberts outlined the background to the School PFI costs that the LA contributed to. Due to council savings the council will reduce its contribution by £600k in 2014-15 and by a further £1.7m in 2015-16.

The School Funding Working Group will consider different options to fund PFI. If it was top sliced from the schools budgets then the amount of DSG allocated to all schools would reduce, including academies. There is no option to ask the DfE for a subsidy as they already pay a grant of £5.5m. Gavin Monument confirmed that the DfEs preferred option is to introduce a PFI element in the formula.

Resolved

The forum agreed that the School Funding Working Group will review and identify the funding options and report back to the July meeting.

14. Work Plan

The work plan was provided for information. The date of the next meeting is 2nd July 2014.

15. Any Other Business

The Chair thanked Gavin Monument for his support and advice.