

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM
14th January 2015
MINUTES

Present:

Richard Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

Cllr W Clements

J Devine

K Frost

A Moore

D Marchant

M Morris

J Pearson

G Pritchard

M Walker

A Whiteley

G Zsapka

Academies Group

E Cogan

S Duggan

S McNamara

K Podmore

Non-Schools Group

M Forber

I Harris

B McGregor

D Stenhouse

In Attendance:

S Ashley

C Chow

J Bevan

S Dainty

D Fitzpatrick

J Hassall

D Kitchen

K Lloyd

C McGowan

A Roberts

Cllr PA Smith

P Ward

Apologies:

D Armstrong

M Brown

B Cummings

S Davies

S Higginson

C Hughes

L Ireland

B Jordan

J Pierce

P Young

The chair welcomed the new members to the Forum.

1. **Minutes from the Meeting Held on 3rd December 2014**
The minutes from the meeting were accepted as a true record.
2. **Matters Arising**
There were no matters arising

3. **School Funding Formula 2015-16 - Outcome from Local Consultation**

There were 34 responses to the consultation, with detailed discussions at Primary Cluster meetings and WASH.

Andrew Roberts outlined the results of the consultation, as follows:-

- Low Cost High Incidence – responses endorsed no change to this element.
- Looked after Children – most responses supported the increase of LAC funding to match deprivation funding.
- Deprivation – There was a mixed response with slightly more agreeing to cap the unit value of the FSM element.
- KS3 and KS4 AWPU – Schools agreed that there should be no change in this area.

Resolved

Members agreed to the formula changes of increasing the Looked after Children element and capping the FSM Deprivation unit value. In respect of the cap the operation of this would be reviewed in 2015-16 prior to its use in future years.

4. **School Budget Report 2015-16**

Andrew Roberts outlined the Schools Budget for 2015-16 and highlighted the following areas:-

- For Wirral the Dedicated Schools Grant continues to be received as 'flat' cash and is split into 4 blocks, Schools, High Needs, Early Years and Other.
- Birkenhead Girls Academy will be included within Wirral's overall DSG and dealt with in the same way as other recoupment academies.
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) remains at -1.5%
- The PFI Costs of £2.3m will be met from permanent reductions to the centrally held budget of which £330k will be met from headroom.
- The application for increased places at Kilgarth, Observatory School, Ellera Park, Orrets Meadow and the Hospital School were not approved by the EFA. However, a decision can be made locally to increase places, but costs will have to be met from reserves until a "lagged" funding system is in place. From September 2015 the changes recommended are:-
 - Kilgarth increase by 5 places to 55
 - Observatory School increase by 5 places to 55
 - Ellera Park increase by 9 places to 99
 - Stanley increase by 9 places to 99

There will be further discussion with the EFA regarding the places at the Hospital School.

- A High needs contingency of £500,000 is required to cover potential unforeseen costs.
- Place funding for Alternative Provision increases from £8k to 10k. This will be cost neutral with top ups reducing by the same amount, from £5k to £3k.
- The introduction of Pupil Premium for 3 and 4 year olds.
- The Contribution to Combined budgets to reduce to £2.1m, a reduction of £221k.

Resolved

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

- I. The contributions to combined budget.
- II. The reduction of £2.3m from central budget in 2015-16 for PFI costs.
- III. The high needs contingency of £500,000.

- IV. The use of the reserves, totalling £894,900 to set the schools budget.
- V. The Schools Budget and the views of the Schools Forum to be referred to the budget meeting of Cabinet on 10th February 2015.

5. De-delegation of Budgets

This report was replaced with an updated copy to reflect the inclusion of Birkenhead High School Academy, in accordance with the change in the Schools budget for 2015-16.

Colin Chow identified areas within the schools budget that could be de-delegated in 2015-16. 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 2015-16:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs
 - School Library Service
 - Insurance
 - MEAS
 - FSM eligibility
 - Behaviour support
2. The Secondary Forum Representative agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2015-16:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs
 - Insurance
 - FSM eligibility
 - Behaviour Support
3. The Secondary Forum Representative did not agree to de-delegate the MEAS Service.

6. Pupil Premium 2014-15 and Estimate for 2015-16

Sue Ashley informed the Forum of the pupil premium received in 2014-15, particularly highlighting the new process for allocating the Looked after Children Pupil Premium to schools. Members commented that the system of tracking pupil's progress should not delay the funding being allocated to schools.

Pupil Premium amounts for 2015-16 are unchanged except for Primary FSM, which will increase to £1,320. Early Years Pupil Premium will be introduced for 3 and 4 year olds with a maximum of £300 per eligible child.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

7. High Needs National Formula – Call for Evidence

Andrew Roberts explained that the High Needs block is currently allocated to Local Authorities (LAs) based mainly on historic data and spend. The EFA aim to introduce

a fairer method of distributing funding for special educational needs and disability (SEND) across all Authorities, using a more formulaic approach, to sit alongside a national funding formula for funding schools and early years.

The DfE have released a consultation paper to seek views on fairer distribution of funds to be completed by the end of February 2015. They have also provided a data pack for each LA on their children and young people with SEND showing comparisons with the national average.

It is proposed that the High Needs working group meet in early February to discuss the data, along with representatives from the Children's Trust and the Special Schools Sector. The representatives in the High needs group are:-

Richard Longster
Ken Frost
Margaret Morris
Brian Jordan
Deborah Marchant

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

The Forum agreed that the High Needs Group discuss this in more detail and respond to the DfE Consultation.

8. Budget Monitoring Report 2014-15

Christine McGowan identified the expected under/overspends in the report, particularly:-

- An overspend of £490k in relation to an anticipated deficit for a secondary school at the point of conversion to an academy.
- The Early Years Grant is expected to underspend by £1m as the take up of 2 year old places is not as high as expected.
- School specific contingency is expected to overspend due to allocating further funding to schools that use more than 90% of their low cost high incidence funding for SEN pupils and backdated rates for Park and Pensby primary schools.

The reserve for the defibrillators has been allocated and many schools have already purchased them.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

9. Next Steps for Funding Reform

Andrew Roberts provided slides from the DfE for information. They highlight the funding reforms so far and some of the challenges moving forward.

10. Home Tuition Service

Phil Ward gave a presentation on the Home Education Service. He outlined the statutory responsibilities, the aims of the service, referral process and admissions criteria, teaching venues, challenges and cost of the service.

11. 2 Year old Update and Take Up

Kath Lloyd updated the forum on the uptake of 2 year old funding in Wirral and the changes moving forward. There are 1846 eligible 2 year olds in Wirral with 70% currently accessing funded places. The Early Years team is working towards a higher uptake through an awareness campaign and proactively following up families who fail to take a place.

Funding for 2015-16 will move to participation based on children attending a setting on census day, January 2015 and 2016.

There is an estimated underspend of £1m in 2014-15, but it is proposed that £0.5m is ringfenced for future 2 year old provision, particularly to meet additional numbers and to support providers who have not felt able to develop 2 year old places.

Although 2 year olds will not be eligible for the new Early Years Pupil Premium they will be eligible as they become 3 year olds.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and agreed to ring fence £500k of the underspend for 2 year old provision in 2015-16.

12. Job Evaluation – Special Schools TA Arrears Update

Andrew Roberts informed Forum that the costs for the JE appeals in Special Schools are much less than anticipated, at approximately £625k. There are, however, still some costs to be identified. The outcome of TA3 and TA4 appeals should be known by the end of February 2015. A further £450k will be added to the reserve at the end of the year to cover outstanding costs.

Resolved

Forum agreed to allocate the special schools TA arrears equally between JE budget and the high needs reserve.

13. Forum Representation Update

Sue Ashley informed the Forum of the recent membership changes. There are currently three vacancies which should be filled before the next meeting:-

- 1 x Academy representative
- 1 x Secondary Governor representative
- 1 x Private, Voluntary and Independent representative

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

14. The Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2014

For information

15. Workplan

The work plan was provided for information.

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

Wednesday 29th April 2015
Wednesday 8th July 2015

15. Any Other Business

Andrew Roberts informed the meeting on the changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools. There were no comments received, the updated Scheme will now be issued.