

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

15th July 2015

MINUTES

Present: Richard Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

L Ayling	D Marchant
J Devine	A Moore
S Duggan	M Morris
K Frost	G Pritchard
L Ireland	M Walker
B Jordan	A Donelan (substitute)

Non-Schools Group

S Davies	B McGregor
D Fitzpatrick (substitute)	N Prance

In Attendance:

S Ashley	J Hassall
P Arista	C McGowan
S Blevins	I McGrady
J Bevan	R Ghataora
C Chow	A Roberts
Cllr W Clements	A Simpkins
S Dainty	P Ward
A Davies	

<u>Apologies:</u> E Cogan	D Stenhouse
B Cummings	K Podmore
I Harris	J Pierce
S Higginson	L Wheatley
C Hughes	A Whiteley
S McNamara	P Young
J Pearson	G Zsapka

The Chair welcomed Andy Simpkins, SEN Consultant, to the meeting.

1. Minutes from the Meeting held on 29th April 2015

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

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Schools Budget Outturn 2014-15

Christine McGowan outlined the year end position for the 2014-15 Schools budget and the DSG carry forward of £934,400, which will be applied to future years budgets. The outturn is higher than previously reported due to additional DSG received for Early Years numbers and reduced contingency costs.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

4. School Balances as at 31st March 2015

Sue Ashley reported that the school balances reduced at 31st March 2014 to £10.7m, a reduction of £371k. There were 12 schools with deficit budgets at the end of the 2014-15 financial year. Six schools require a licenced deficit in 2015-16 and there are a further 2 schools in the second year of their 3 year deficit recovery plan.

There are 39 schools with balances above the DfE thresholds of 8% of their delegated budget for primary and special schools and 5% for secondary schools.

Resolved

- Forum noted the report
- School balances will continue to be monitored.

5. Schools Budget Monitoring 2015-16

Christine McGowan informed the Forum that although there are no specific variations to the Schools Budget 2015-16 at present there are a number of cost pressures identified within High Needs. The budget will be monitored closely throughout the year.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

6. School budgets 2015-16 and 2016-17

Andrew Roberts highlighted the need for schools to consider their budget plans in the medium term due to continued cost pressures. In 2016-17 the school pay bill is likely to increase by 5% due to changes in Teachers Pensions, Employers National Insurance contributions and expected pay awards of 1-2 %.

Based on indicative estimates from schools if no action is taken balances will reduce by half to £5.5m at the end of March 2016, then fall a further £8m to an overall deficit in March 2017.

The report highlighted the need for early planning by schools to consider what actions are required.

Resolved

- i. Forum noted the report
- ii. Forum Representatives to take this information back to their Headteacher and Governor meetings.

7. De-delegated Services

Andrew Roberts brought this report to the Forum to inform the group about the de-delegated services held centrally and how budgets are currently applied.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

8. Trade Union Costs Update

Sue Blevins updated the Forum on the provision of TU Facilities Time for school employees. TU Facilities Time is a legal requirement for schools to support employees and enable collective consultation and negotiation with employers. The Facilities funding comes from maintained primary and secondary de-delegation of funds and buy-back of service from special schools and some Wirral academies. A list of the activities carried out over the last 12 months by the union representatives was highlighted.

The secondary and academy representatives requested an SLA for TU Facilities time to include how funds should be spent and a grievance procedure. Sue Blevins agreed to develop and to discuss best practice with other LAs.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

9. Review of High Needs Funding Formula

Andy Simpkins presented a report reviewing the High Needs funding formula in Wirral. The report will contribute to a consultation with schools to be prepared over the summer. The main areas of the report were highlighted covering the banding structure and top ups as follows:-.

Support in mainstream schools – Most support is met from the notional element in the delegated budget, Low Cost High Incidence (LCHI). In Wirral this is based on prior attainment only, but could be based on a number of other elements. Additional funding is allocated where more than 90% of the LCHI element is used to cover the first £6k of costs (Element 2).

High needs banding in specialist provision - Wirral has 5 high needs funding bands. Compared to other North West authorities Wirral's band 1 is the lowest at £1k. The LA should consider a Band 1+ in certain circumstances to deliver extra resource for an agreed fixed period.

High needs descriptors – Wirral's descriptors should take account of the 4 areas of need in the Code of Practice – cognition and learning, communication, physical sensory needs and social, mental and emotional health.

Exceptional Needs budget – This currently provides financial support for 36 pupils with exceptional/complex needs. This funding is provided in addition to the existing funding bands. Consideration may be given to embedding this budget within existing bands.

Double top ups – This is used to recognise the intake of pupils between census dates and provides head teachers funding to support staffing commitments from the start of the academic year.

Maintained special schools – A time limited band 4+ could be considered to allocate the exceptional needs funding in a more structured way.

Early Years and post 16 funding was not reviewed in detail, however work is required around the differential funding provided to Private Voluntary Independent and Maintained Nurseries.

The report outlined 10 questions to be considered as part of the High Needs consultation that will take place in the Autumn term. Forum requested for a piece of work to be undertaken around the differences in pupil numbers and funding between Band 1 in special schools and bases compared to provision in mainstream schools. Another member suggested the value of Band 5 should be reviewed.

The consultation paper will be considered at the next Forum High Needs Working Party in September.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

10. Early Years and Children's Centres

Rajinda Ghataoura reported the current position in respect of Early Years and Children's Centres to the Forum. The following points were highlighted:

- Day nursery provision will cease in summer 2015.
- 3 schools have agreed to deliver the 2, 3 & 4 year old education offer, with another school still in discussion. Some trajectory funding has been provided to support the transition of these facilities to a school setting.
- Schools are no longer required to register separately for 2 year old provision with Ofsted as long as required exemptions are met.
- An Early Years Portal is to be purchased to enable funding applications and paperwork to be processed more efficiently.
- The remaining trajectory funding will be used to target 2 year old funding in the lowest take up areas.
- The take up of 2 year old places has increased from 65% to 70% in the summer 2015 term.
- An Early Year Pupil Premium was introduced in April 2015 providing approximately £300 a year per eligible 3 & 4 year old child.

The PVI representatives recorded their disagreement with the use of the trajectory funding in schools. However, providing funding for this purpose is in accordance with the DfE's agenda to expand 2 year old provision.

A consultation paper will be published by the DfE concerning the increases in nursery hours from 15 to 30 hours in autumn 2016 the details of which will be considered at the next meeting. The PVI sector is concerned that based on current funding levels this will not be sustainable. It was noted that this issue has been raised nationally.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

11. School Traded Services

Ian McGrady updated the Forum on the set up of the new company Edsential. It is still on track to launch operationally in September, with the business plan to be finalised at the end of July. Ian has been visiting schools in Wirral and is piloting some new initiatives developed from customer feedback.

12. Pensby High Schools Amalgamation

Colin Chow informed the group that school funding guidance allows amalgamating schools to receive 85% of their combined lump sum in the following year. The Pensby High Schools amalgamate in September 2015. For the second year after amalgamation the Local Authority can apply to the EFA for a further 85% lump sum protection to support budget management.

Resolved

Schools Forum agreed that the LA should apply for an exceptional factor for the additional lump sum for Pensby High School in 2017-18.

13. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

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

Tuesday 20th October 2015

Wednesday 13th January 2016

Wednesday 27th April 2016

Wednesday 6th July 2016

14. Any Other Business

Julia Hassall thanked Richard Longster, the Chair, for all his work on the Wirral School's Forum both as a member and then Chair. This was his last formal meeting as chair as he is retiring. The appreciation for Richard's work was endorsed by the Forum members.