

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Water Charges in Schools

Mike Woosey informed the Forum of higher charges for Surface Water and Highways Drainage paid by North West Schools compared to other areas, particularly the South East. This is because United Utilities charge schools on the basis of a site's area. DEFRA is currently reviewing its charging guidance and concessionary schemes and may consult on charges in the future.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and endorsed the approach being taken on behalf of the schools.

4. Update on Free School Meal (FSM) Opt Out

Andrew Roberts updated the group on the Opt Out scheme to register pupils for free school meals. This process has enabled 605 pupils to be registered for Free School Meals that previously were not. These additional numbers should increase Pupil Premium funding in 2016-17 by approximately £600k. A permanent increase of £10,000 has been allocated to the Benefits Team from the Schools Budget to continue this work. The Forum thanked the Benefits Team for their work in this area.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

5. Wirral Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB)

Simon Garner informed Forum that the WSCB is a multi-agency body that fulfils statutory functions set out in the Children Act 2004 to:-

- Develop multi agency policies and procedures for safeguarding
- Communicating the need for safeguarding
- To monitor and evaluate effective safeguarding
- Undertake serious case reviews

Schools should ensure that staff have access to the WSCB [Annual Report](#) which gives full details of the board's activities and the business plan for the current academic year as well as all the policies and procedures that are available on the website:

<http://wirralscb.proceduresonline.com/>

The funding for the board comes from a number of agencies, with Schools Forum providing £30k a year and the high needs budget providing a further £10k.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

6. CLC Update

Sue Talbot outlined the services delivered by the City Learning Centres (CLCs) for the year 2015-16. The CLCs provide workshops to pupils, training for teachers, outreach

services and a loan equipment service. During 2014-15 there were 44,157 pupil visits and feedback was positive.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

7. Budget Monitoring 2015-16

Christine McGowan identified the expected position and variations with regard to the Schools Budget in the current financial year, particularly:-

- Early Years is expected to underspend by £1.23m. Take up by 2 year olds is 75% of the indicative entitlement
- School Licence cost are less than expected saving £36k
- School Specific Contingency overspend £40k
- Special Staff Costs overspend £80k due to higher than expected maternity costs in Primary and Special Schools
- Special Educational needs top ups projected to overspend by £502k due to additional top ups and increased costs within the exceptional needs budget.
- Independent Special Schools overspend of £326k due to increased number and cost of placements.

The expected additional costs of £500k can be met from a reserve set aside for the expansion of 2 year old provision.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and the use of reserves. A detailed report will be brought to a future meeting to review SEN costs and options to manage additional cost pressures.

8. DfE Spending Review

Andrew Roberts summarised the main announcements from the Chancellor's Spending Review in November 2015. This included the introduction of a National Funding Formula for Schools from 2017-18. The Formula Working Party should meet to discuss this when more information is available.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

9. Schools Funding Formula

Andrew Roberts informed the Forum that there are no changes to the Schools funding formula for 2016-17, however there are some external changes that affect the distribution of the funding:-

- The deprivation funding distributed by FSM has reduced as the numbers of FSM have fallen. This amount has been re-allocated through pupil entitlement.
- The IDACI bands have been updated in 2015. The numbers in the highest bands have reduced which has broadened the distribution over schools.
- Prior attainment has improved. This change will allocate the same percentage of funding over fewer pupils and increase unit values.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

10. School Budget Report 2016-17

Andrew Roberts outlined the Schools Budget for 2016-17 of £243,273,400 and highlighted the following areas:-

- For Wirral the Dedicated Schools Grant continues to be received as 'flat' cash and is split into 3 blocks, Schools, High Needs and Early Years.
- Pupil Premium rates remain the same for 2016-17, except for Summer Schools which will not continue.
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) remains at -1.5%
- Confirmation of permanent funding for High Needs place changes from September 2015 as follows:-
 - Kilgarth increase by 5 places to 55
 - Observatory School increase by 5 places to 55
 - Elleray Park increase by 9 places to 99
 - Stanley increase by 9 places to 99

And further changes to high needs places from September 2016:-

- Elleray Park increase by 11 places to 110
- Stanley increase by 21 places to 120
- Lyndale Reduction of 40 places
- Clare Mount increase by 10 to 204
- Bebington ERP reduce by 5 to 20
- Birkenhead Park ERP reduce by 10 to 10
- Kingsway Academy ERP reduce by 10 to 20
- There is growth of £532,000 within the High Needs Block. This provides funding to increase top up budgets and to increase budgets for independent schools. The increases for Exceptional Needs of £260,800 are funded from reserves.
- Centrally held budgets - The changes required for 2016-17 are:-
 - Special Staff costs to increase by £60,200
 - FSM costs to increase by £10,000
 - Continuing premature retirement costs of teachers and staff that have arisen from closing schools reduced by £40,000
 - Cost of licences to reduce by £30,200
- The Contribution to Combined budgets are to be agreed by the Forum.

Resolved

- i) Views were sought from the School Forum representatives on the School Budget for 2016-17 including the use of Headroom and the increases within SEN. The Forum also approved the changes in central costs.
- ii) Forum agreed the following Contributions to Combined budgets for 2016-17
 - Discretionary Rate Relief top ups
 - School Improvement
 - LSCB Contribution
 - School Intervention
 - LACES
 - Governors Forum
 - PFI Support Team
- iii) The following comments and changes to combined budgets were made:-

- Forum members requested a review of the LACES service during the next financial year.
 - Forum Members have noted the retention of CLC PFI costs and agreed to retain a third of the remaining CLC budget to enable the service to continue until July. The remaining CLC budget should be delegated to schools.
 - Forum Members agreed to retain 5/12th of the Wellbeing and Staff Surveys funding to enable the service to continue in the summer term, the remaining budget to be delegated.
- iv) Forum agreed to use £568,900 reserves to set the 2016-17 budget.
- v) The schools budget and views of the forum to be referred to the budget meeting of Cabinet on 22nd February 2016.

11. De-delegation of Budgets

In addition to the changes to the schools budget Report above the following budgets were identified that could be de-delegated in 2016-17. 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 2016-17:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs
 - School Library Service
 - Insurance
 - FSM eligibility
 - Behaviour support
 -

The Primary Forum Representatives only agreed to de-delegate 5/12 of the MEAS service, to enable MEAS to review their service and develop a traded service with schools by September 2016.

2. The Secondary Forum Representative agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2016-17:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs (maternity/paternity)
 - Insurance
 - FSM eligibility
 - Behaviour Support

The Secondary Forum Representatives only agreed to de-delegate 5/12 of the MEAS service 2016.

The Secondary Forum Representative did not agree to de-delegate Trade Union Facilities time.

12. Facilities Time SLA

Sue Blevins briefed the Forum on the background for the Trade Union Facility SLA. The draft TU facilities SLA document was provided for the Forum to comment prior to its use with Academy and maintained secondary schools.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

13. School Budgets and Indicative Deficit Balances

Andrew Roberts updated the Forum on the indicative deficit school balances. This anticipates an overall deficit of £2m in March 2017.

Since the last report the following actions have taken place:

- briefings for Headteacher, governors and school finance staff
- Proposed changes to the redundancy policy
- Bursars highlighting projected overspends for future years at Period 6 review.
- Financial review meetings with schools where projected deficit exceeds £100,000.

Projected balances will be reviewed again at Period 9 monitoring and further action will include:-

- Providing school budgets earlier
- Schools identifying a shortfall will be required to identify savings/efficiencies
- Further meetings with those schools who have the highest projected deficits
- Schools will be encouraged to share costs between schools
- Schools who cannot agree savings may be issued with a Notice of Concern.
- Additional support for the LMS team due to the extra work required.

Resolved

The Forum noted the report

14. School Redundancy Policy

Andrew Roberts summarised the responses to the consultation on the proposed changes to the School Redundancy policy. The redundancy policy changes will be referred to Cabinet with the following views from the consultation and Forum:-

- To consider delaying the implementation date to 1st September 2015.
- To introduce the changes over a period of time.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and their views for Cabinet.

15. Early Years – Review of Childcare Costs

A report from the DfE was included for information.

16. Funding for Disadvantaged Pupils (LGIU Report)

A report outlining the work of the Public Accounts Committee and their comments on disadvantaged pupils was included for information.

17. Scheme for Financing Schools Changes

Sue Ashley informed Forum of the consultation responses to the scheme changes. The changes will be actioned except the change concerning tenders and quotes will be changed to read:-

(c) to seek **Three** tenders **or quotations** in respect of any contract with a value exceeding £10,000 in any one year.

There has been a further change that enables Local Authorities to charge schools for the cost of administering admission appeals where these cost have already been delegated, which will be considered.

Resolved

The Forum noted the report

18. School Finance Regulations – consultation response

Responses to the DfE consultation were provided for information.

19. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

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

Wednesday 27th April 2016

Wednesday 6th July 2016

20. Any Other Business

There was no other business