

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

27th April 2016

MINUTES

Present: A Whiteley (Vice Chair)

Schools Group

L Ayling	L Ireland
A Baird	N Lightwing
B Chadwick	D Marchant
E Cogan	J McCallum
S Dainty	J Pearson
J Goalen	K Podmore
A Heron	T Taylor (S)

Non-Schools Group

M Bulmer	N Prance
A Donelan	A Rycroft (S)

In Attendance:

S Ashley	M Morris
S Bennett	A Norbury
P Cleary	T Ramzy
A Davies	A Roberts
C Flemming	A Smith
S Gibbs	Cllr P A Smith
J Hassall	A Snow
M Lane	A Turnbull
C McGowan	

<u>Apologies:</u>	J Billinge (Chair)	S Higginson
	S Davies	C Hughes
	J Devine	B Jordan
	S Duggan	S McNamara
	K Frost	T Quinn
	I Harris	P Young

- 1. Training Session** – Andrew Roberts provided training on the Role of the Schools Forum before the meeting, which was well attended.
- 2. Minutes from the Meeting held on 13th January 2016**
The minutes from the meeting held on 13th January 2016 were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes however Forum members asked that they be kept up to date with any national developments on water charges (Minute 3).

4. Insurance for School

Mike Lane summarised the scope of the Insurance services that maintained schools receive. Insurance premiums are competitive and most schools continue to buy in to the SLA.

A service has also been developed for schools who have converted to academies and there is a strong take up of this offer.

The service is responsive to changes in school needs. From April 2016 full malicious damage has been extended to school buildings and their contents. The Diocese of Shrewsbury has made a decision to insure buildings and contents directly, however the council will continue to provide other classes of insurance cover.

As more schools consider converting to academies the Insurance team have requested that they are informed as soon as possible so they can provide advice on the best options for schools moving forward.

Resolved

Forum noted the range of services available and the request that schools inform the insurance team of their intention to convert to academy status as soon as possible.

5. Energy Contract for Schools

Andrew Snow outlined the school electricity and gas contracts. 118 Wirral schools, including PFI Schools and Academies, purchase energy through the Local Authority's contract. Electricity and gas are purchased by the Crown Commercial Service on behalf of the wider public sector, which allows them to buy on the wholesale markets and keep the costs down for schools.

The energy team provide general support to schools with their utility costs, as well as providing advice for energy certificates, energy and sustainability awareness and training opportunities.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

6. MEAS update

Anna Turnbull updated the Forum on the service level agreement that will be provided to schools from September 2016 for MEAS Services. So far 53 schools have bought back services to the value of £66k for the 7 months to March 2017. Although the restructure of the service means there will be a reduction of staffing the team will keep much of its breadth of skills enabling it to provide a broad based service to schools.

Tuyet Ramzy summarised the services provided from September 2015 to March 2016 and the positive feedback from school staff and pupils.

Forum members requested that the restructure and costs be brought to a future meeting.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

7. Early Years Working Group

The early years working group met in February to discuss the implementation of the extended 30 hour funding offer for 3 & 4 year olds.

The main issues/concerns discussed by the group were:-

- There are still too many uncertainties around the 30 hour offer.
- The offer relates to working parents. Is this reaching those in greatest need?
- Staffing costs are increasing, through Living Wage and changes to NI and pensions.
- Capital funding to ensure setting have capacity
- Recruitment/quality of staff
- Impact on children with SEN

Future meetings will be led by Carol Fenlon. The remit of the group should also cover EYPP and the expansion of the 2 year old offer. Future representation on the group will include Penny Bishop to represent SEN and Andrew Roberts for Finance.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

8. School Admissions Update

Sally Gibbs summarised the work of the Admissions Team for admission to primary and secondary schools. There were over 7,500 applications for entry to school in September 2015 and 2,000 in year transfers between schools. The team has made further progress in the use of on-line applications, through e-Admissions with 87% of applications processed in this way. The e-Admissions system will be replaced during the year. A new Capita module aims to improve the link between admissions and SEND and enable better information sharing.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

9. Arrangement for High Needs/SEND

Margaret Morris highlighted the main areas of SEND funding, especially the Exceptional Needs spend and a proposal for the future allocation of this money.

Most children and young people with SEND will have their needs met in a mainstream setting with no extra funding other than that provided within the formula budget.

Early years settings apply for funding where a child's additional needs cannot be met from their allocated budget.

Mainstream schools apply for Individual Pupil Funding Agreements (IPFAs). A maximum of 7 additional units can be provided.

There is an exceptional needs budget for special schools, alternative provision and school resource bases. As this budget was £370k overspent last year, all cases will be examined by a panel. Funding will be child specific and will provide up to a maximum of

30 additional TA hours. This will be time limited and will be regularly reviewed. There is an appeals process in place.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and the ongoing work around high needs.

The implications of the National High Needs Funding review will be considered by the working group.

10. White Paper Educational Excellence Everywhere

Julia Hassall gave a brief outline of the Educational Excellence Everywhere paper.

- Every school to become an academy by 2022.
- School expected to convert as multi-academy trusts – sharing skills and resources
- Responsibility of school improvement to be removed from LA control and transferred to teaching schools.
- Education Services grant to be removed by 2020
- National funding formula to be introduced
- Pupil Premium will continue to be paid separately.
- LA responsibilities to ensure all children have a school place and that the needs of children are met.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

11. National Funding Formula for Schools Update

Andrew Roberts summarised the main proposals from the school funding consultation as detailed below:-

- The National Funding Formula will be in 2 parts
 - A soft formula in 2017-18 which will determine the funding from a national to local level.
 - A hard formula from 2019-20 where the funding for each school will be determined by a national formula.
- No significant changes to the formula elements used.
- MFG will continue, however, LAs may be able to set it at a lower amount than the current -1.5%.
- De-delegation of services will be withdrawn from 2019.
- LAs will not provide school improvement services from September 2017.
- Funding for combined budgets is to be reviewed.
- A new formula funding LA for High Needs will be introduced and will be based on pupil numbers, health and disability, low attainment, deprivation and 2016-17 historic spend.
- There will be a new formula for early years. More detail is needed to understand the implications from these changes. A further consultation is expected over the summer.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

12. PFI Costs

Andrew Roberts updated the Forum on the costs of PFI and an exercise to compare the PFI facilities management costs with other similar schools. This compared PFI costs with school data from 2013-14. There is a small difference for FM services of 11p per square metre. However, there are other costs that are unique to PFI, particularly in relation to risk and profitability. A PFI factor is permitted within the school funding formula. Since there is no additional funding available if this was introduced it would reduce funding allocated to other factors. This needs to be discussed further through the Forum Funding working group.

Resolved

- Forum endorsed the work undertaken to date.
- Forum agreed that the introduction of a PFI factor is referred to the Forum working group for further discussion.

13. Schools Budget Provisional Outturn 2015-16

Christine McGowan informed the Forum that the expected position of the Schools Budget outturn for 2015-16 has improved slightly with forecast overspend of £150k, mainly due to SEN costs. This overspend will be met from existing reserves. In total DSG reserves have reduced from £3.5m at 31st March 2015 to £2.6m at 31st March 2016.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

14. Update on School Balances

Sue Ashley updated the Forum on the expected future level of school balances. Due to the hard work of Headteachers and governors the expected position in March 2017 has improved significantly and is now indicating a credit of £3.5m. The report describes the ongoing actions that will be taken by schools to ensure that budgets are robust as we move forward.

Resolved

The Forum noted the report

15. Schools Budget 2016-17 Update

Andrew Roberts informed the Forum of the Schools budget changes that have been made since the previous report in January. They are:-

- The primary budget is now £93m after taking account of changes for CLCs, wellbeing, de-delegation and academies.
- The secondary budget is now £27m after taking account of changes for CLCs, de-delegation and academies.

- Early Years Census is finalised and the DSG has increased by £129k following an increase in 3 & 4 year olds.
- A reduction of an estimated 44 eligible 2 year olds.
- Early Year pupil premium grant of £65k. This slow take up is in line with other authorities.
- Places in resource bases have reduced from 283 to 258 places from September 2016.
- Orrets Meadow places will increase from 66 to 70. Initially the increased cost will be met from contingency.
- CLC combined budget is supported until July 2016.
- Wellbeing and School Staff Surveys costs are supported until July 2016.
- Further changes to the DSG may be made during the year to reflect academy conversions and the Early Years census in January 2017.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

16. Forum Membership Update

Sue Ashley updated the forum on the membership changes. There is currently one non-teacher vacancy. As schools convert to academies the weighting between primary, secondary and academy places will change based on pupil numbers.

Resolved

The Forum noted the report

17. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

The date of the next meeting is:-

Wednesday 6th July 2016

18. Any Other Business

There was no other business