

# **WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM**

**18<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

## **MINUTES**

**Present:** Jill Billinge (Chair)

### **Schools Group**

L Ayling	J Lawrenson (substitute)
S Baker	N Lightwing
B Chadwick	R Mahony
M Forber	D Marchant
J Goalen	A Whiteley (Vice Chair)
A Heron	V Woods (substitute)
T Kelly	

### **Non-Schools Group**

S Bennett	I Harris
M Bulmer	N Prance
A Donelan	

### **In Attendance:**

S Allen	M Johns
S Ashley	M Morris
P Cleary	A Ryecroft
Cllr W Clements	A Roberts
A Davies	A Snow
R Edwards	S Talbot
S Harper	A Turnbull
J Hassall	

### **Apologies:**

E Cogan	J McCallum
S Dainty	J Pearson
S Davies	K Podmore
S Duggan	T Quinn
S Higginson	T Taylor
L Ireland	P Young

#### **1. Minutes from the Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

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

#### **2. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes that were not covered on the main agenda.

### **3. Insurance Update**

Andrew Roberts summarised the Insurance Service 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 SLA now requires schools to inform the Insurance Team of their intention to convert to academy.

Due to a procurement exercise for Liability Insurance the expected average increase for Schools Insurance SLA in 2017-18 has reduced from 6.6% stated in the report to 0.5%.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

### **4. Energy Update**

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 wholesale markets keeping costs down for schools.

Utility costs are starting to rise again, but there is no firm indication of the implications for schools in 2017-18. An update will be provided at the April Forum Meeting.

The high costs of Surface Water Drainage has been discussed at previous meetings. Defra have now reviewed their guidance and have decided that there should be no amendment to charging policies by water companies. As a result water costs will remain high in the North West.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

### **5. MEAS Update**

Anna Turnbull updated the Forum on the SLA that has been provided to schools since September 2016 for MEAS. 63 schools bought back services to March 2017. The team has reduced but has maintained the breadth of services offered. The team will continue develop the service, which is now also offered to Cheshire West Schools.

MEAS will work with 4 refugee families moving into the area this term.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

### **6. PFI Support**

Mary Johns outlined the work of the PFI team, which provides contractual, legal and financial support to PFI schools. Discussions are ongoing with the PFI Providers to ensure that the 2 PFI CLCs are occupied as soon as practicable. A further report will be presented later in the year to update Forum Members on this progress. Members noted the valuable work the team provides to the PFI schools.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

## **7. Budget Monitoring 2016-17**

Shaun Allen updated the Forum on the expected position and variations with regard to the Schools Budget in the current financial year, particularly:-

- Special Educational needs top ups projected to overspend by £170k due to additional top ups and increased costs within further education and alternative provision.
- Education Health and Care Plans projected to overspend £195k
- Independent Special Schools overspend of £365k mainly due to students moving into 6<sup>th</sup> form provision.
- Support for SEN projected underspend of £300k

DSG has reduced due to the conversion of St Marys Catholic College to academy status in November 2016 with £2.88m being recouped.

The expected additional costs of £345k will be met from DSG reserves.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

## **8. Schools Funding Formula 2017-18**

Richard Edwards highlighted the changes in the dataset which will affect the schools 2017-18 funding formula:-

- Pupil numbers for both primary and secondary sectors have increased by 503 in total.
- Free School Meal numbers have increased by 173 due to the opt in process
- IDACI bands have been adjusted to ensure funding is distributed appropriately to all bands (the numbers in more deprived bands has increased)
- Children eligible for EAL has increased by 71.
- The New PFI affordability Gap and PFI Facilities elements allocating funds to PFI schools
- Exceptional Sum Factor for Pensby amalgamation of £40k

Resolved

Forum notes the report

## **9. Schools Budget 2017-18**

Andrew Roberts outlined the Schools Budget for 2017-18 of £252m and highlighted the following areas:-

- Pupil Premium and UIFSM rates remain the same for 2017-18.
- The Early Years block will increase by £1.4m and the hourly rate for providers will increase.
- Additional Grant will be available to cover the 15 hour extension for working parents
- High needs growth of £550k.

- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) remains at -1.5%
- Education Services Grant (ESG) transitional funds of £943k to August only
- Confirmation of permanent funding for High Needs place changes from September 2016 as follows:-
  - Ellera 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
- And further changes to high needs places from September 2016:-
  - Clare Mount increase by 12 to 216
  - Townfield ERP increase by 1 from 11 to 12
  - Hilbre ERP increase by 15 to 30
  - Kingsway Academy ERP closure and reduce by 20
  - Birkenhead Park closure and reduce by 10
  - Emslie Morgan AP increase by 20 to 100
  - Birkenhead 6<sup>th</sup> Form increase by 5 to 65
  - Wirral Met College increase by 45 to 117
- Centrally held budgets - The changes required for 2017-18 are:-
  - Continuing premature retirement costs of teachers and staff that have arisen from closing schools reduced to £60k
  - Budget for the PFI affordability gap will be delegated from April 17. There will be no DSG funded costs held at the centre.
  - The Schools budget will contribute £730k to the councils ESG
  - The funds for ESG General Duties of £759,300 was described, together with the revised arrangements for School Improvement of £862,000.
- The Contribution to Combined budgets are to be agreed by the Forum.

#### Resolved

- i) Forum noted the contents of the report
- ii) Forum agreed that the PFI are delegated to schools, subject to finalising amended schools agreements and confirmation from the EFA
- iii) Forum agreed the following Contributions to Combined budgets for 2017-18
  - Discretionary Rate Relief top ups
  - School Improvement
  - LSCB Contribution
  - School Intervention
  - PFI - CLCs
  - LACES
  - Governors Forum
  - PFI Support Team
- iv) Forum agreed to use £568,900 reserves to set the 2017-18 budget.
- v) Forum agreed the contribution of Retained Duties of £730k
- vi) Forum agreed to transfer £106k from the schools block to the high needs block following the transfer of central budgets to schools.
- vii) The High Needs Working group will review budget and demands along side the National Funding Formula proposals
- viii) The schools budget and views of the forum to be referred to the budget meeting of Cabinet on 20th February 2017.

## **10. School Improvement Funding Changes and De-delegation**

Sue Talbot briefed Schools Forum on the changes to School improvement in 2017-18. ESG Funding ceases from September 2017 which reduces school improvement funding within Wirral. Moving forward the plan is to develop a new service, but in the meantime:-

- Maintain a central contribution for 3 school improvement staff, 2 consultant heads and admin support
- From September de-delegate funding for maintained schools and provide an SLA for academies & special schools of £190,800.

Resolved

Forum Noted the Report

## **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 2017-18. 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

- a) The Primary Forum Representatives agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2017-18:-
  - Contingency
  - Special Staff Costs
  - School Library Service
  - Insurance
  - School Improvement
  - FSM eligibility
  - Behaviour support
- b) Primary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £217,761
- c) The Secondary Forum Representative agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2016-17:-
  - Contingency
  - Special Staff Costs
  - School Improvement
  - FSM eligibility
  - Behaviour Support
- d) Secondary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £32,373
- e) Special Schools Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £41,466

## **12. High Needs Consultation**

Margaret Morris shared the outcomes of the consultation for High Needs Funding for 2017-18. There were 14 responses to the consultation.

- Most respondents agreed that the planned place changes for September 2017 should go ahead, (identified in Minute 9 above).

- There was no consistent response to increasing the Notional SEN Budget (Low Cost High Incidence Element of the mainstream funding formula), therefore there is no planned change.
- The rate of £1090 for IPFA's and statements will not reduce for 2017-18 as the growth requirements identified will be met next year.
- Most responses supported the proposal to only pay double top ups where pupil numbers exceed planned place numbers. A Forum Member expressed his concerns at this change and the impact it would have on SEMH schools. However, double top-ups would still be provided where place numbers were exceeded.
- There is no proposed change to the exceptional needs allocation process, but this will continue to be reviewed.

### Resolved

Forum agreed the following recommendations:-

- place changes identified with effect from September 2017
- from September 2017 double top ups will only be paid where place numbers are exceeded
- there is no change to the definition of the Schools Notional SEN budget or the systems of allocation exceptional needs
- Forum and the High Needs working group will consider plans to support a strategic review of provision and resources.

## **13. Early Years Update and Consultation**

Andrew Roberts summarised the new funding model for early years, with the main changes being:-

- Hourly rate received by the Council to increase to £4.31 per hour, providing an extra £1.5m per annum to Early Years.
- Cap supplements to 10% of allocated budget
- Supplementary resources for maintained nursery schools for life of this parliament
- Introduce a Disability Access Fund

The Early Years working group considered how best to distribute the increased funding to the early years sector taking into account the base rate, supplements and how they could be reduced to 10% of funding, nursery schools, SEN inclusion, Central costs and 2 year old funding.

### Resolved

Forum agreed to:-

- Increase the Early Years Formula base rate to £3.60 per hour from April 2017
- Supplements are set at 10% of the funding distributed, Option 1, whereby all supplements are scaled back equally
- Increase the SEN inclusion budget to £450,000
- Increase the central budget to £518,700
- Increase the 2 year old funding to £5.12 per hour
- The Early Years Working Group continues to review rates paid and supplements

#### **14. National Funding Formula Consultation**

Andrew Roberts updated the Forum on the latest information regarding the National Funding Formula for schools and High Needs. This second consultation provides information on the proposals for:-

- A soft formula for schools up to 2019
- A hard formula for schools from 2019
- A breakdown of the proposed formula
- Illustrative budgets based on the new formula
- New high needs formula
- A new formula to fund centrally the LAs duties for maintained schools and academies.
- Continuation of the MFG at 1.5%
- No LAs to receive less High Needs funding

The Illustrative tables, from the DfE indicate a small, overall, increase in funding of 0.5% for Wirral Schools, with an average 1% increase for Primary schools, a decrease of 2% for Secondary schools and an increase of 5% for High Needs.

Most formula elements are similar to Wirral's current formula, however, the Looked After Children Element will be removed.

##### Resolved

Agreed that the Forum's Formula and the High Needs Working Group should consider the consultation papers and report back to the March Forum Meeting to agree an overall response to the DfE.

#### **15. Update on School Balances**

Sue Ashley updated the Forum on the indicative school balances for March 2017 and 2018. The overall financial position has improved compared to earlier reports. There are a number of schools projecting a deficit for the financial year 2017-18 that have received letters requesting plans to manage their deficit position. The LA will continue to provide support to help balance budgets.

##### Resolved

Forum noted the report.

#### **16. Membership Update**

This report was provided as an update for members and to be noted.

#### **17. Schools Forum Powers & Responsibilities**

This report was provided as background information for members.

#### **18. 2017-18 School Funding: Historic Commitments**

This report was provided as background information for members.

### **19.Apprenticeship Levy Update**

This circular from the DfE was provided for information.

### **20.Workplan**

The workplan was provided for information.

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

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017 (Extra Meeting for NFF Consultation response)**

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017

### **21.Any Other Business**

There was no other business