

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

17th January 2018

MINUTES

Present: Adrian Whitely (Chair)

Schools Group

F Allen (deputy)	M Forber
P Arrowsmith (deputy)	L Ireland
L Ayling	H Johnson
S Baker (Vice Chair)	T Kelly
M Bellamy	N Lightwing
J Billinge	R Mahony
K Brown	E Neal
J Bush	D Spencer
B Cassidy	T Taylor
L Eaton (deputy)	V Woods

Non-Schools Group

M Bulmer	A Donelan
S Bennett	

In Attendance:

S Allen	M Morris
S Ashley	A Roberts
P Boyce	A Rycroft
A Davies	S Talbot
R Edwards	

Apologies:

B Chadwick	Cllr C Meaden
S Davies	Cllr B Mooney
Cllr P Hayes	N Prance
S Higginson	K Podmore
I Harris	T Quinn
S Jamieson	

1. Minutes from the Meeting held on 13th December

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

2. Matters Arising

There were 2 amendments to the minutes as follows:-

- a. Minute 5g (Schools Funding and Formula) - Forum agreed to use element 2 funding in schools for Hearing and Vision from September 18 and develop a *Traded Service* through the High Needs working Group. 9 for, 5 against, 4 abstentions.
- b. Minute 7 resolution II (Transfer of Teacher Conditions from Academy Schools to Maintained Schools) - Forum agreed the terms and conditions of teachers in line with *all* school staff. Unanimous.

3. MEAS Update

Anna Turnbull updated the Forum on the MEAS SLA for the 2017-18 financial year and their service priorities for 2018-19. MEAS are working with 9 further schools this year and the team will continue to develop their service to meet school needs.

The team have been involved with re-settling 50 Syrian refugee children in Wirral schools. The children have a positive outlook to learning and their English is progressing well.

Mayor Ann McLachlan is supporting a new initiative to celebrate Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development in schools with an event to be held on 23rd April 2018

Resolved

Forum thanked MEAS for their work and noted the report.

4. Review of High Needs in Wirral

Margaret Morris informed the Forum of the purpose of the High Needs Review and the current consultation on the recommendations that have arisen.

The Review has broadly identified the following:-

- The number of pupils with SEN statements/EHCPs is higher than Wirral statistical neighbours.
- The number of pupils within special schools has increased significantly since 2007.
- There is a need to invest in a wider range of provision including mainstream schools and resourced provision.

A consultation on the review paper and initial proposals is open until the 16th February and is requesting views of schools. This will be reported to Cabinet in March prior to a formal consultation with all stakeholders

The Special Headteacher representative requested the statement below be included in the minutes:

We have significant concerns around the recommendations in this report. Whilst we welcome a strategic steer to ensure high Needs expenditure is focused towards the most vulnerable children, we would have appreciated the opportunity to engage in the initial review to inform the report.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

5. Schools and High Needs Funding Formula 2018-19 Update

Andrew Roberts reminded Forum that the outcome of the previous meeting was that no decision had been taken with regard to the School Funding Formula. This latest report set out the options for members to consider with regard to the High Needs top slice and schools funding. Where a top slice is agreed members were asked their views on maintaining the existing funding formula or introducing a transitional formula with some National Funding Formula elements. Where a top slice is not approved members were asked to comment on their preferred option including a move straight to the National Funding Formula. Finally a change to the previous recommendation taken on High Needs places was also discussed.

Resolved

Forum members agreed:-

- a) A 0.5% top slice from the Schools Budget to support the implementation of the High Needs review.
- b) A transition formula introducing some elements of the NFF. (Option 4)
- c) Headroom is allocated evenly over all funding elements.
- d) The PFI element is in line with the contract inflation provision.
- e) The Unit value of the LAC element is reduced to take account of the increase in LAC pupil premium from April 2018.
- f) To withdraw recommendation 5e from December 2018 forum minutes concerning special School Places and replace with “a reduction of 8 places at Birkenhead 6th Form college and increase 2 places at Wirral Met College from Sept 18.”

The Forum chair requested the following statement to be included in the minutes on behalf of primary and secondary head teachers:-

Given that this decision has been so difficult to make, and that (although agreement has eventually been reached) there are widely held concerns regarding the capacity to deliver a cost effective solution that meets the needs of all Wirral pupils within the 2020 timeframe. I have been asked to ensure that Forum and Cabinet notes the following:-

- That we acknowledge that this is a one year agreement and that before any decision is made to agree the second year’s top-slice, that both primary and secondary Headteacher groups will have the evidence necessary, in sufficient time, to make an informed decision.
- That the high needs working group reports to forum on the outcomes of the consultation and that an implementation plan, with clearly identified performance indicators is agreed with all stakeholders.
- That the action plan is closely and regularly monitored by the working group, reported back to primary and secondary Headteacher groups and is discussed as a standing item on the forum agenda.
- That the High Needs working group is fully representative across the LA.

6. Schools Budget 2018-19

Shaun Allen outlined the schools budget for 2018-19 highlighting the following changes:-

- The DSG will now include an additional Central Schools Service block
- The NFF will be introduced as the basis for funding LA’s from April 2018

- The Schools block will be ring-fenced with the flexibility of 0.5% transfer to high needs
- The early years block will include a full year funding for the 15 hour extension.
- The High needs block will increase by £0.8m
- A flexible MFG can be set up to +0.5% for local discretion.
- Looked After Child (LAC) and Post LAC Pupil Premium will increase to £2300.
- There is a transfer of £4,000 per place from High Needs to mainstream schools to provide pupil entitlement for pupils in Resource Provision. Where this is the case place funding will be reduced from £10,000 to £6000.

There is no change to the contributions to combined budgets.

It is proposed that any unused reserves at the end of the year are used to support High Needs pressures in future years.

Resolved

The views of the Forum will be referred to Cabinet on 19th February.

Forum Members agreed:-

- a) The MFG would be set at 0% for 2018-19
- b) The contribution for combined budgets of £875,600 in 2018-19
- c) That the uncommitted DSG reserves remaining at the end of the financial year 2017-18 are used as a contingency to support High Needs pressures in future years

7. De-Delegation of Budgets

The following budgets can be de-delegated Contingency, Special Staff Costs (including TU facility time), School Library Service, VA Governors Insurance, School Improvement, FSM eligibility, Behaviour Support.

The main changes this year are that School improvement and ESG budgets for general duties reflect a full year costs.

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 2018-19:-
 - 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 £368,846.
- c) The Secondary Forum Representative agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2018-19:-
 - 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 £60,053
- e) Special Schools Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £71,101.

8. Schools Balances and Deficit Budgets

This report was deferred to the April Forum Meeting

9. Budget Monitoring 2017-18

Shaun Allen updated the Forum on the expected year end position and underspend of £275,600. The variations with regard to the Schools Budget in the current financial year are:-

- DSG has reduced due to the conversion of 4 primary schools in June 2017.
- Reduction of Early Years Grant to reflect the reduction of take up for 3 and 4 year olds and the slow take up of the 30 hour offer.
- Special Educational needs top ups are projected to overspend by £228k due to additional numbers in schools and increased costs within further education and alternative provision.
- Independent special schools are projected to underspend due to a small reduction in placements and unused funds carried forward from the previous year.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

10. Schools Forum Membership and Structure

Andrew Roberts summarised the current structure of the Forum representation. There is currently 1 vacancy for a Primary Governor Rep that will be re-advertised.

Members can nominate deputies to a meeting if they cannot attend.

The request to increase the membership of Early Years representatives was deferred to the April meeting.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

11. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

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

Wednesday 7th March 2018 (Additional Meeting)

Wednesday 25th April 2018

Wednesday 4th July 2018

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business