

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

4th July 2018

MINUTES

Present: Adrian Whitely (Chair)

Schools Group

K Brown (Sub)	N Lightwing
B Cassidy	J Whisker (Sub)
L Ireland	

Non-Schools Group

S Bennett	A Donelan
S Davies	A Rycroft (Sub)

In Attendance:

S Allen	Cllr A Gardner
P Arrowsmith	S Gibbs
S Ashley	N Lenihan (ESFA)
S Bellerby	M Morris
A Davies	P Molyneux
C Fenlon	A Snow
	S Talbot

Apologies:

L Ayling	T Kelly
S Baker (Vice Chair)	R Mahoney
M Bellamy	Cllr C Meaden
J Bush	Cllr B Mooney
L Davidson	E Neal
M Forber	N Prance
I Harris	M Taylor
S Higginson	A Waller
H Johnson	

Note: Forum is not Quorate, so decisions may be deferred until the next meeting.

1. Minutes from the Meeting held on 17th May 2018

The minutes from the meeting were accepted as a true record, except minute 10, in respect of the Growth Fund, which did not reflect the dissatisfaction of some Forum members that the introduction of a growth fund was not brought to a previous meeting. This was due to the ESFA submission deadlines not fitting in with Forum dates and that the Growth Fund was set up on the advice of the ESFA.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Energy Update

Andrew Snow updated the Forum on the procurement of utilities on behalf of schools. Although the increases have been minimised by the CCS Framework for the 2018-19 financial year, costs will continue to rise.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

4. Wirral Traded Services Update

Stuart Bellerby updated Schools Forum on the Traded Services provided by the LA, particularly the new services including Data Protection & Legal Services. Forum requested income and expenditure statements for each service to ensure the cost are transparent and best value. There were concerns that this information is commercially sensitive, and should not be published as it could give competitors an advantage.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

5. School Formula

Shaun Allen briefed the Forum on the proposed consultation process and the formula models agreed by the Formula Working Group:-

- The consultation will run from Early September until half term.
- There will be 5 financial models, each costed with a 0% MFG and a -1.5% MFG.
- Data will be based on October 2017 pupil data budget to enable a comparison.
- Any potential top-slice from the Schools Block to support High needs will be consulted on after the formula consultation.
- The LA will recommend a funding formula to the November Forum.

There was a request from Forum Members to make the consultation process more electronic, rather than paper format and that the consultation deadlines and timetable are clarified when the consultation is issued.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

6. Early Years Working Group Update

Carole Fenlon gave feedback from the Early Years working group. This includes a proposal to retain the previously temporary £140k on a permanent basis to enable a restructure of the service including, 3 project officers with designated themes. The LA will remain within the 5% threshold of grant passported to providers. Inclusive Practice and Disability Access Fund underspends from 2017-18 should be ring-fenced. Inclusive Practice Fund (IPF) and Disability Access Fund (DAF) information has been distributed to all settings, including primary schools. It can also be found on the Local Offer. There will be a further distribution of leaflets to all settings to raise further awareness.

A 'proxy' vote, through e-mail, will be carried out in respect of the recommendation to secure £140k permanently to remodel central staffing functions, to ensure the HR process is not delayed.

Resolved

6.1 A 'proxy' vote as detailed above will be actioned before the end of term

6.2 The recommendation in respect of underspends for IPF & DAF will be brought to the next Forum meeting.

7. School Budget Monitoring

Shaun Allen presented the first quarter budget monitoring position and highlighted the cost pressures, particularly in high needs due to extra places required following EHCP assessments in Special Schools with limited capacity to admit children over their place numbers

Resolved

The Report was noted

8. High Needs Update

Margaret Morris updated Forum on the proposal to increase places in a number of special schools for 12 months, as well as setting up some pilot schemes for base provision, until the external review has taken place. The Pilot schemes will be paid from the 0.5% High Needs top slice and were offered to schools who bid for them. Forum had some concerns about an exit plan for the children on the pilot schemes if they did not continue after 12 months. The Review is currently on the Chest for tenders and is expected to commence in September, with recommendations to be provided in November. It was noted that Wallasey Headteachers, through their Forum representative, were concerned that the long term plan did not include training and intervention for mainstream schools.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

9. Admissions Update

Sally Gibbs outlined the main functions of the admissions team. The report also highlights the change, from September 2019, to end primary school involvement in grammar school selective processes and the potential change to the independent assessment Board for secondary school admissions.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

10. High Needs Working Group – Verbal Update

This update was covered in agenda item 8, the High Needs Update.

11. Hospital School Update

Phil Arrowsmith informed the Forum of the functions and processes of the Wirral Hospital School and the pressures on the budget. A proposal was put forward to charge schools who place pupils at the Hospital School after 12 weeks of attendance. This charge

would be £80 per week, which reflects similar charges in other alternative provision, including the Home Education Service.

The funding for the Wirral Hospital School is based on a historic amount by the ESFA by the EFA, and is not based on place funding like special schools. Further work is required to ensure appropriate process is followed before this charge is implemented.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and the further work required to review the introduction of a charge.

12. School Balances and Reserves

Sue Ashley updated the Forum on School budgets received so far from schools. For 2018-19 the indication is that balances at 31st March 2019 will be £5m (updated on the night) reducing to a deficit £50k at March 2019.

There are significant and ongoing financial challenges faced by all schools. The work by headteachers and governors to review and set sustainable budgets is acknowledged.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

13. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

The dates of the meetings for the 2018-19 academic year are:-

Wednesday 26th September 2018

Wednesday 7th November 2018 (outcome of consultation)

Wednesday 16th January 2019

Wednesday 15th May 2019

Wednesday 26th June 2019

14. Any Other Business