

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

16th January 2019

MINUTES

Present: Adrian Whiteley (Chair)

Schools Group

L Ayling	T Kelly
M Bellamy	N Lightwing
R Bridges	C McKenna (deputy)
K Brown	M Morris
J Bush	E Neal
L Davidson	T Taylor
M Forber	J Weise
H Johnson	R Wood

Non-Schools Group

S Bennett	N Prance
I Harris	S Ralph

In Attendance:

S Allen	A Davies
S Ashley	S Talbot
J Wood	A Ryecroft
P Boyce	C Fenlon
S Gibbs	

Apologies:

E Atkinson	R Mahoney
B Cassidy	D Spencer
S Davies	A Waller
A Donelan	

1. Minutes from the Meeting held on 7th November 2018

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

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

3. 2019-20 Schools Funding Formula and Minimum funding Guarantee (MFG)

Paul Boyce highlighted the work that has been carried out since the last meeting to resolve the concerns about the 2019-20 funding formula. Cabinet requested that no children should be disadvantaged as a result of the change in formula and minimum levels of funding (£3500 per pupil for primary schools, and £4800 per pupil for secondary schools) should be met.

Shaun Allen confirmed that the funding formula to be recommended to Cabinet will therefore be the formula that was supported by schools in the consultation and Schools' Forum (Wirral's current formula with the National Funding Formula values Low Prior Attainment but with an additional factor to ensure schools receive the minimum amount per pupil that is included in the National Funding Formula. A Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of 0% will also be recommended. These proposals ensure that Cabinet's criteria are achieved, and will be considered at Budget Cabinet on 18th February.

The chair thanked all those who have worked towards this solution since the last meeting.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

4. Primary Place Planning

Sally Gibbs provided an update on places in the primary sector and projections going forward. Based on birth rates there will be an estimated 720 less pupils in 5 years. When reviewing school places housing developments are taken into consideration as they can affect school numbers within the vicinity. As pupil numbers reduce the LA has to take into consideration national guideline of less than 10% surplus places in schools for maximum efficiency and parental choice.

This subject is on the agenda for the upcoming Education Summit.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

5. Early Years Update

Carol Fenlon updated Forum on the discussions at the Early Years Working Group. The take up of Early Year's free entitlement for 2, 3 & 4 year olds is very good with 93% of eligible 2 year olds accessing funds and, which is high in each area.

The charging policy consultation sought views of a number of proposals for the early childhood service. Key areas were Principles, training cancellation fees, admin charges. Early Years providers felt there should not be any charges as the LA retain 5% of the funding to provide services. Discussions with Early Year providers is ongoing.

Although referrals for Inclusive Practice Fund (IPF) are increasing, there is still a reluctance to seek support for additional needs so the following have been recommended to improve and support this:-

- Increase the hourly rate from £4.30 an hour (Basic element for 3&4 year olds) to £5.12 an hour
- Support the transition from F1 to F2 with IPF continuing for the 1st half term in F2
- Fixed term post to support the above changes with specialism in early language development.

IPF funding is monitored termly by a multi-agency review panel. Settings have to prove that they are using the funding appropriately. A Forum representative suggested that pupils should be tracked over time to establish how many progress to an EHCP. To ensure continuity of support the Early Childhood service attends regular SENCO meetings.

Further work is required for EYPP take up as GDPR has meant that processes need to be updated.

Resolved

- Recommendation 6.1, to apply charges to training, cancellation and administrative discrepancies of headcount submissions was deferred to the Next forum Meeting as this is being discussed further at a meeting next week.
- Forum agreed to increase the base rate of the IPF, the transition support into F2 for 1st half term, and a fixed term post to support these changes.

6. High Needs Working Group Update

John Wood outlined the current position of the High needs budget which, at the time of the working group was projecting an overspend of £1.43m. There has been growth in mainstream top ups, including EHCPs, and 6th form and FE provision. Half of the 2018-19 top slice has been used for trial bases which will continue until the review has been completed.

The High needs budget has not been looked at in isolation, but the DSG as a whole. As budgets are tight in all areas it was considered that a 0.5% top slice for High Needs from the Schools block will just shift the problem from one funding area to another and would not solve any fundamental problems, so will not be recommended to Forum.

There are limited short-term savings within the High Needs budget but any opportunities need to be maximised to relieve the current pressures. Pressures do not only come from EHCPs but also poor early identification and management of behaviour along with inefficient processes. Any solutions are likely to take 3 years, and a long term plan is required

The SEND review was initially for one term, but has been extended to a 12 month period particularly due to the weakness of management information due to paper records. There is a push to transfer the paper records to an electronic system which will take 2-3 months.

The SEND review is looking at current provision and changes required to be more efficient, and an initial report is anticipated by the end of February 2019.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

7. Budget Monitoring 2018-19

Shaun Allen advised the Forum on the expected position and variations with regard to the Schools Budget in the current financial year, particularly an overspend of £1.13m within the high needs budget.

A further 3 schools have converted during the autumn term which will result in a further reduction of the DSG (and corresponding reduction in spend).

Resolved

Forum noted the report

8. Revision of Support Staff Salary Scales

Sue Blevins updated Forum on the assimilation of the support staff pay scales from April 2019 to ensure there is an incremental 2% step between spine points, with an estimated cost to maintained schools of £1.8m, with a further £0.5m cost to Academies should they also choose to implement the revised pay scales.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and endorsed the approach to the implementation of the revised pay scales for Wirral maintained schools.

9. Schools Budget 2019-20

Shaun Allen outlined the schools budget for 2019-20 highlighting the following:-

- The proposed budget for 2019-20 is £267,661,400, which includes an in-year deficit of £2.34m
- The LAs will continue to determine local formulae for an additional year in 2020-21
- The Schools block will be ring-fenced with the flexibility of 0.5% transfer to high needs
- The High needs block will receive an extra £1.7m, this includes the additional £712k announced by the Department for Education in December.
- Pupil Premium rates, Universal infant Free School Meals, PE and Sports Premium and Year 7 Catch Up will remain the same in 2019-20
- Teachers Pay Grant will be paid for the full year.
- The £1.9m headroom, mainly from increased pupil numbers will be split proportionately between Primary and Secondary budgets.
- Contribution to combined budgets remains the same

- Changes to High Needs Places

- Full Year Effect of changes made in 2018-19

- Birkenhead 6th Form College reduce by 8 places to 57
 - Wirral Met College increase by 2 places to 119
 - The Observatory increase by 21 places to 76
 - Foxfield increase by 5 places to 138
 - Elleray Park increase by 18 places to 128
 - Stanley increase by 21 places to 141

- Full Year Effect of Trial bases introduced in 2018-19

- Woodslee additional 8 places
 - The Observatory additional 6 places
 - Oldershaw additional 5 places
 - Hilbre additional 1 place

- Changes from September 2019

- Foxfield increase by 2 places to 140
 - Townfield reduce by 1 place to 10
 - Woodchurch High increase by 5 places to 20
 - Oldershaw increase by 6 places to 26
 - Emslie Morgan AP reduce by 20 places to 80
 - Weatherhead reduce by 1 place to 0
 - Wirral Met College increase by 14 places to 133

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

The views of the Forum are that Wirral's DSG is underfunded by government and the chair will put together a letter to express the Schools' Forum's view that there is not enough money to support the children of Wirral, especially pupils with additional needs. There are increasing pressures within schools where services from other parts of the Local Authority have been withdrawn.

It was noted that from the end of 2019-20 LAs will have to provide a recovery plan if DSG is overspent by more than 1%.

Resolved

- 1) The views of the Forum will be referred to Cabinet on 18th February.
- 2) The contribution for combined budgets of £875,600 in 2019-20 will remain the same
- 3) That the uncommitted DSG reserves remaining at the end of the financial year 2018-19 are used as a contingency to support High Needs pressures in future years.
- 4) The School Budget be referred to Cabinet on 18th February

10. De-delegation of Budgets

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

An increase of TU Facilities costs has been built in to take account of past pay awards, which will be reviewed annually.

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 2019-20:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs (Maternity & Paternity)
 - Trade Union Facilities time at the increased rate
 - School Library Service
 - Insurance
 - School Improvement
 - Behaviour support

The Primary Forum Representatives did not agree to de-delegate FSM eligibility, so schools will instead receive an in-year charge of £350.

2. Primary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £363,256.
3. The Secondary Forum Representative agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2018-19:-
 - Contingency
 - Special Staff Costs (Maternity & Paternity)
 - Trade Union Facilities time at the increased rate
 - School Library Service
 - Insurance
 - School Improvement
 - Behaviour support

The Secondary Forum Representatives did not agree to de-delegate FSM eligibility, so schools will instead receive an in-year charge of £550.

4. Secondary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £65,373
5. Special Schools Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former ESG costs for General Duties of £71,101.

11. Update on School Balances and Deficit Position

Sue Ashley updated the Forum on indicative school balances and the projected deficit position of schools moving forward. The indications show that balances will continue to reduce to £1.7m at March 2020.

These indicative balances do not include the effect of the increase in Teachers Pension Employers Contributions from September 2019 or the increase of more than 2 % to some of the lower scales within the support staff from April 2020 however; these costs will be built into period 9 monitoring reports.

Forum acknowledged that schools continue to face significant and ongoing financial challenges and headteachers and governors are working hard to

review and set sustainable budgets moving forward and in doing so often have to make difficult staffing decisions as part of the process. However, balances are still reducing despite this.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

12. Membership Report

Sue Ashley updated Forum on the current membership and vacancies. The new PVI representative is Ellie Longbone.

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 15th May 2019

Wednesday 26th June 2019

14. Teachers Pension Consultation

Shaun Allen advised Schools Forum of the ESFA consultation concerning the funding of the teachers' pension increase from September 2019. The consultation closes on 12th February 2019, and only seeks views on the institutions that will be funded, not allocation mechanisms. Shaun will circulate details of the consultation to members for them to distribute to their representative groups.

15. Any Other Business

The chair noted that his term of office is due to finish so Forum needs to consider how we nominate the chair and vice chair going forward.