

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

25th September 2019

MINUTES

Present: Adrian Whiteley (Chair)

Schools Group

M Bellamy	E Neal
J Bush	D Spencer
H Johnson	T Taylor
T Kelly	J Weise
N Lightwing	R Wood
M Morris	

Non-Schools Group

S Bennett	N Prance
S Davies	S Ralph
G Edwards	A Ryecroft

In Attendance:

S Allen	T Ghosh
S Ashley	C McNally
A Davies	L Rice
C Fenlon	S Talbot

Apologies:

R Bridges	Cllr Lewis
K Brown	E Longbone
L Davidson	R Mahony
M Forber	Cllr Norbury

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Adrian Whitely was elected as Chair and Nikki Lightwing was elected as Vice Chair for 2019-20 academic year.

2. Minutes from the Meeting held on 26th June 2019

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

3. Matters Arising

Energy Update

It was noted that the high increase in the utility costs has not materialised. Andrew Snow has been asked to review this to establish what the actual increases are.

High Needs Working Group Update

It was confirmed that after discussions with the appropriate schools the increased top-up values agreed by the former Head of SEN have now reverted to the previous level and the Exceptional needs funding was re-instated.

4. Library Service Update

Catherine McNally updated the Forum on the Library Service. Most of their funding is through de-delegation from Primary Schools. However, de-delegation has not increased for a number of years, whilst staffing and the cost of books have. The costs will be reviewed with a view to requesting an increase in the de-delegation rate in January. They are continuing to offer a premium service to primary schools and promote services to academies, where there has been further uptake.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

5. Early Years Update

Carol Fenlon informed Forum that the early years team are now working towards their new staffing structure, with only 1 vacancy left to fill. The consultation on the quality supplement runs until October half term. The take up of 2 year old funding has dipped to 80.4% due to increased eligibility, but it is still above the national average, the team are continually working to increase uptake. A further 30 pupils have accessed IPF's since the spring term and 24 pupils have benefitted from the new transitional funding available as they move to F2. This funding will continue to be reviewed.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

6. High Needs Update

The High Needs update report highlighted all the areas and roles within the High Needs Team. Tarun Ghosh highlighted the priorities and areas of interest within this area:

- Compliance with statutory 20-week EHCP assessments
- To provide good quality services
- Good quality EHCPs with annual reviews
- Communications with parent & colleagues
- Preparation of joint local area inspection

- Sufficiency in specialist provision panels
- Performance management of Services
- The impact of High needs funding
- The Personal Funding Arrangement (PFA) process will be reviewed.

Premier Advisory Group have confirmed that they will provide a report by the end of October.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

7. High Needs Funding Report

Shaun Allen briefed Forum on the High Needs Funding Provision. Following the last forum meeting the service has been working with the schools, and the situation regarding the previously agreed increased top-up rate for Gilbrook and Kilgarth special schools has now been resolved, with their top-up bands reverting to their original values.

In primary schools there were 163 pupils with funded EHCPs in summer and 344 with PFAs, while in secondary schools there were 250 and 97 respectively.

£700m additional SEN funding nationally from April 2020 was announced in the Spending Round. It's unclear at this stage how this will be allocated to local authorities, but Wirral may receive up to £4m. It is unlikely that this will be enough to allow for future growth in SEN population and Wirral are likely to be in a growing deficit position in 2 years without changes to provision.

The Head of SEND confirmed there was no way to identify the number of pupils 'stuck in the EHCP system' and will need a formal group to cleanse/audit the data.

Forum requested an update from the Director / Assistant Director at the next Forum meeting on the independent review being conducted by Premier Advisory Group. Also requested further information/clarification from the Head of SEN at a future meeting in respect of:

- Inclusion funding including 1st day exclusion funding, and Specialist funding;
- Review of Pilot Provision;
- Group PFAs;
- Exceptional Needs awards process;

Forum welcomed the report but will need more clarity going forward.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

8. School Balances Update

Sue Ashley informed forum of the current position on School balances. The information is based on budget setting and projections at that time. Based on this information balances will continue to reduce and be in an overall deficit position by March 2021. However, these figures do not take account of Teachers Pay or Pension Grant after 31st March 2020, or any funding announced in the government spending round. On this basis it is expected that future reports may reflect a more positive position.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

9. School Budget Monitoring Report 2019-20

Shaun Allen presented the Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring report, which forecasts an adverse variance of £1.4m, largely relating to High Needs, particularly Exceptional Needs, Independent Placements, and Primary EHCPs/PFAs.

The £1.4m overspend together with a budgeted £2.34m contribution from reserve will leave the DSG reserve in an deficit position at the end of 2019-20.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

10. Schools Revenue Funding 2020-21 and Funding Formula Consultation for 2020-21

Shaun Allen updated Forum on the recent funding announcements, and the consultation on the schools funding formula for 2020-21.

Central Government have announced an additional £14.6m of funding for schools. It is not yet clear how this will be allocated, and there is not enough information available to calculate Wirral's indicative allocation. It has therefore not been possible to produce Schools level models for the consultation, which asks 3 questions:

- retain Wirral's current formula or adopt the National Funding Formula factor rates;
- Minimum Funding Guarantee of +0.5%, +1%, or +1.5%;
- use of Headroom (additional funding).

The consultation is being conducted via Survey Monkey, with a deadline of Friday 25th October 2019.

Forum requested Shaun Allen attend Primary Headteacher Group and WASH to brief on the funding announcements and consultation.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

11. Schools Forum Membership

Sue Ashley updated Forum on the current membership of the Forum. There are 4 new members, with 3 vacancies still to be filled. A full list of the membership was included for reference.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

12. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

The dates of the meetings for the 2019-20 academic year, which will be held in Council Chamber at Wallasey Town Hall unless stated otherwise, are:-

Wednesday 6th November 2019 (**Committee Room 1, Wallasey town Hall**)

Wednesday 15th January 2020

Wednesday 13th May 2020

Wednesday 1st July 2020

A meeting of the High Needs Working Group was arranged for Monday 4th November 2019 at 13:30, Birkenhead Town Hall, room to be confirmed.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business.