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WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 22 November 2022

Present: Adrian Whitely (Chair)

Schools Group

Tony Norbury
Andy Ramsden
Chris Mervyn
Jill Pearson (For E Johnson)
Helen Johnson
Julie Merry
Moirra Loftus
Sue Ralph
Margaret Morris

Non-Schools Group

Joanne Proctor
Anne Rycroft

In Attendance

Sue Ashley
Ian McGrady
James Backhouse
Frances Whiting
Asako Brown

1 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Mr Adrian Whiteley, Chair of the Forum opened the meeting and welcomed members and attendees.

Apologies had been received from:

Emma Johnson (Jill Pearson deputising)
Kathryn Kennedy
Geraldine Fraser
Helen Johnson
Shaun Allen
Simon Goodwin
Andy Ramsden
Mark Bellamy
Lisa Ayling

John Bush
Brian McGregor
Cllr Chris Cooke

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2 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2022**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

As per minute 11 of the previous meeting, an update was provided by Sue Ashley regarding the effect of pay awards.

Members of the Forum heard how at budget setting the Support Staff pay award had now been agreed at £1,925 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) per scale point, which as a percentage range from 3.1% for the highest paid to 10.5% for the lowest paid. They were also informed that the teacher pay award is now 5% for M6 and above, with M1 to M5 remaining the same as budget setting.

The table below demonstrated the additional cost of the pay awards at budget setting estimated as follows:

Table 1 – additional estimated cost of pay award

	Support	Teachers	Total
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Nursery	68,341	5,930	74,271
Primary	2,698,962	734,778	3,433,740
Secondary	207,921	126,143	334,064
Special	688,391	156,491	844,882
Total	3,663,615	1,023,342	4,686,957

Members of the Forum were then advised how the supplementary grant for maintained mainstream schools and nursery schools for the 2022-23 financial year totalled £3.6m. This grant was allocated initially for the increase in national insurance and other inflationary costs. The grant would be incorporated into the 2023-24 formula budget for mainstream schools.

It was then reported how the autumn statement announced an extra £2.3billion for schools for 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years. At present there was no further information on how funding would be allocated in the future. Members of the Forum were informed that Schools balances and deficit positions would continue to be monitored at future Forum meetings.

4 **EDSENTIAL UPDATE**

A report by Ian McGrady, Managing Director at Edsential Community Interest company, reported on the latest impact report and further updates.

The Forum were informed of progress to the Holiday Activity and Food Programme coordination 2022 as set out in the attendance figures. It was reported that all services had continued to return to normal provision post-Covid and highlights included: Edsential musical routes who had worked with 243 schools to support or deliver music education programmes and activities across Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester. Furthermore, a new partnership with Futureyard in Birkenhead had provided opportunities for students to understand the career pathway into the music industry.

It was further reported how the culture team had contributed to 3 All – Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry Sessions for Northern Culture and how the catering service was invited to join the Foodservice working group of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) UK Sustainable Commodity Initiative.

Members of the Forum then heard how there are significant pressures due to inflation in food, staff, energy and transport costs and how difficult decisions had been taken to keep costs below inflation (between 3 and 5%).

Resolved – That the report be noted.

5 **HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

James Backhouse provided the Forum with an update on progress to the High Needs Working Group that had last met 8 November 22, which discussed the on-going pressure in relation to the high needs block and the increased demand on special school places across the local area.

Members of the Forum were appraised with details regarding the provision for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) that could not be accommodated in Wirral and an update on Independent Pupil Funding agreements. The High Needs Working Group also received a presentation entitled 'Newton Europe – Delivering Better Value review,' a report commissioned to address the high needs deficit balance.

A concern was raised by a member of the Forum regarding the delays in the EHCP process and how there had been a lack of communication between SEND departments and schools. In response, the Assistant Director assured the Forum that there was a transformation programme in place in order to target the issues raised and that every school had a named EHCP coordinator who should be a direct contact.

Resolved – That

- 1. The report be noted.**
- 2. A further report be presented in the Spring term from the High Needs Working Group.**

6 DE-DELEGATED BUDGET FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT UPDATE

A report by the Assistant Director for Education provided the Forum with an update on the services delivered from the Behaviour Support and School Improvement functions funded by de-delegated school budgets.

Members of the Forum were informed that Wirral now had increased capacity in relation to behaviour support and there had been the appointment of a senior officer of alternative provision and exclusions, alongside the appointment of induction strategy managers and inclusion officers to support schools. In addition, the Local Authority had launched a new school improvement strategy that would be embedded across Wirral schools with increased capacity in staffing to support.

A query was raised in relation to how the funding was allocated alongside educational psychologist budgets and the Assistant Director advised that he would provide the detail and share this with the Forum. A request was then put that impact data be provided to the next meeting of the Forum.

Resolved – That

- 1. The developments in relation to the strategic use of de-delegated budgets to support school improvement and behaviour support be noted.**
- 2. A further report be received in relation to de-delegated budgets in six months.**

7 WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Members were provided with an update on the membership of the Schools Forum. An overview of the current membership by group was outlined. It was noted that there were 3 Academy vacancies and a vacancy for the 16-19 representatives. It was reported that expressions of interests had been sent out for nominations to the Special Governor representative post, with a deadline of 25th November 2022 for nominations to be received. It was reported that Margaret Morris would continue as the Special Headteacher representative on an interim basis being replaced by Holly Barker early in the new year.

Resolved – That the report be noted

8 DE-DELEGATED BUDGETS - CONTINGENCY, SPECIAL STAFF, AND INSURANCE COSTS

A report by the Assistant Director for Education summarised the current provision for contingency, special staff, and insurance costs that were funded by de-delegated budgets from Wirral's maintained primary and secondary schools.

The contingency budget for 2022-23 was set out within the report and special staff costs and insurance were also explored within the report.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

9 SCHOOLS REVENUE FUNDING 2023-24 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA

A report by the Assistant Director for Education provided the Forum with feedback from the consultation with schools on the 2023-24 Funding Formula and to consider requests to disapply specific the NFF in special circumstances. Members of the forum heard how the outcome of the consultation would inform the allocation of funding to schools which would then be considered in the budget recommendations presented to the February 2023 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

A summary of responses were listed within the report. In addition, a disapplication request in respect of Birkenhead High School Academy was requested on the basis that that the relevant all-through minimum per-pupil

funding levels (MPPL) value for that school was skewed significantly by unusual year group sizes and therefore they were seeking the MPPL rate to be relevant to each phase.

Resolved - That

1. The report be noted.
2. The proposal to include +0.5% Minimum Funding Guarantee with Wirral's funding formula in 2023-24 be approved. (6:0)
3. The proposal to include a falling rolls/growth fund form within the 2023-24 school allocation be approved (6:0)
4. The disapplication request to the DfE in respect of Birkenhead High School Academy be agreed and submitted. (5: with one abstention)

10 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MONITORING AND BROAKERAGE GRANT CONSULTATION OUTCOME

A report by the Assistant Director for Education provided the forum with details of the feedback from the consultation with schools on the de-delegation of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage grant (SIMBG).

Members of the forum were informed that the consultation took place between 12th October 22 to 9th November and sought views on the following:

- Tiered funding model – group the maintained schools into 4 groups by their pupil numbers using the October 21 census 4 groups and each tier's contribution rate were proposed in the table below:

	Rate per school
For Schools with 199 pupils or less	£2,200
For Schools with 200-399 pupils	£3,400
For Schools with 400-699	£5,700
For Schools above 700 pupils	£12,000

- Per pupil model - £13.00 per pupil.

The forum were advised that there were 11 responses to the consultation and the outcome was summarised below:

Tiered Funding Model	6
Per Pupil Model	1
Opposed the de – delegations	1
Pending reply with queries	3

Following a query regarding SEN school entitlement it was agreed that clarity would be sought and reported back accordingly.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

11 SCHOOLS BUDGET VARIATIONS 2022-23

A report by the Assistant Director for education provided an overview of the anticipated variations for the current year 2022-23 schools budget. Members of the Forum were advised how the schools budget was forecast to overspend by £2.974m mainly due to pressure in the High Needs Block, reflecting an increase in the overspend of £1.07m from the position reported at the October 22 meeting.

In response to a query, Members were notified that with regards to the 896 EHCP's as listed within the report, this did not include Pupil funding agreement data.

In response to a further query, members of the Forum were informed of details of SEN bases, including the provision and nature of the provision that had been commissioned and any associated funding.

Resolved – That the report be noted

12 WORKPLAN

Resolved – That the workplan be noted.

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