

SCHOOLS FORUM

6 DECEMBER 2012

Present: Mark Eynon (Chairman & Furze Platt Senior Governor), Gill Cocklin (South Ascot Primary Head Teacher), Clive Haines (Wessex Governor), Gill Labrum, Phyllis James (Windsor Girls Governor), Cynthia Pitteway (Knowl Hill Primary), Gaynor Goodman (Churchmead Head Teacher), Ania Hildrey (Manor Green School), Nick Stevens (Wessex Primary Head Teacher), Kathleen Higgins (Altwood Head Teacher), Alison Penny (Woodlands Park Primary Head Teacher), and Richard Pilgrim (Charters Head Teacher).

Also present: Councillor Phill Bicknell.

Officers: Dominic Asater, Edmund Bradley, Ian Hunt, and Michael Rosen.

PART I

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Liz Clark, Helen McHale, Gillian May, and Angela Wellings.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

MINUTES

The minutes from the 16 October 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

Matter arising from the minutes:

- a) Vacancy for an Academy Head Teacher and Pupil Referral Unit Head Teacher – It was reported that there were now two vacancies to fill following the resignation of Dave Rooney. Clive Haines reported the process that had been undertaken to fill the initial vacancy and reported that two individuals had come forward. It was agreed that they should both be invited to fill the two current vacancies.
- b) Page 4 – Questions 4 & 5 – Pupil Number growth – It was agreed that the first sentence should be amended to read as follows: “The Forum believed funding for Pupil Number Growth should be topsliced from the Primary phase for allocation to Primary Schools only at this stage.

SCHOOLS FORUMS OPERATIONAL AND GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE SCHOOLS FORUM (SEP 2012)

The Forum was informed that the Department for Education had updated its operational and good practice guidance to support schools forums in line with the provisions of the Schools Forums Regulations 2012. Members noted that it was designed to provide schools forums, local authority officers, and elected members

with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of schools forums. Also presented for the Forum's consideration was an updated one-page summary of the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities, which also set out the respective powers of the Local Authority, the Schools Forum and the DfE.

The Chairman reported that, since the last meeting of the Forum, he had met with Karen Williams in Democratic Services at RBWM to discuss the issue of substitutes. He circulated a letter to all Members of the Forum, reporting on this meeting.

The Chairman commented that he had explained to Miss Williams that the Forum believed that named substitutes were not an option open to them as matters discussed were too complicated and due to tight constraints, fully briefing substitutes was not always possible. However, the Chairman reported that the legislation and the DfE guidance "Schools Forums: Operational and Good Practice Guide, September 2012" was explicit in that it stated that "the local authority must make arrangements to enable substitutes to attend and vote", and "the arrangements must be decided in consultation".

The Chairman outlined the arrangements that were therefore being proposed by the local authority as a result of the legislation and guidance, as follows:

- Each member of the Schools Forum to have a named substitute, agreed if necessary by the body that chose that member.
- That the representative member of the Schools Forum is responsible for briefing the substitute and ensuring they are able to take full part in discussion, providing any additional support required beyond that provided by the Local Authority.
- The Local Authority will ensure that substitutes are invited to attend Schools Forum and receive the same information and other support, e.g. training as their Schools Forum representative.
- Whenever possible the substitute will attend Schools Forum as an observer if not required as a substitute, to ensure they are able to contribute or vote if their representative member is present.

The Chairman recommended the Forum to accept these proposed arrangements as he commented that they addressed the Forum's concerns about the capacity of substitutes to contribute effectively. It was noted that the Chairman's letter to Forum Members would be circulated by the Local Authority.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the updated Schools Forum operational guidance and the revised summary of Schools Forum powers and responsibilities, be noted, and the proposals outlined in relation to substitutes be approved.

CENTRAL SCHOOLS BUDGET 2012-13 PROJECTED OUTTURN

Members of the Forum was presented with the latest projected outturn position against the DSG funded central schools budget for 2012-13, together with proposals for the use of the DSG carry forward from 2011-12 and 2012-13.

It was noted that the Acting Director of Children's Services had reported to Cabinet in November that the central schools budget of £9.3 million was projected to underspend by £636,000 at the end of the 2012-13 financial year. The main variances from the budget were presented for the Forum's consideration. It was noted that there were two minor amendments to the figures presented – the figure in 2012/13 for maternity should have been +73, and the figure for schools contingency & other budgets for 2012/13 should have been (59). It was reported that these amendments did not alter the final underspend figure presented.

It was noted that the main areas currently under-spending related to central SEN, including SEN recoupment out-borough special school placements, expenditure on therapies, and allocations to schools for exceptional need. It was reported that where these variances were deemed to be structurally recurring underspends, they would be addressed in the 2013-14 budget build, and the starting point for 2013/14 on certain of these budgets would be likely to be lower than the 2012/13 budget.

Members of the Forum were reminded that the outturn projects were subject to change, and that since the latest monitoring figures had been reported to Cabinet, further underspends had come to light. This suggested that the year-end outturn underspend could be between £750K and £800K based on current estimates, and further updates would be presented at future meetings of the Forum.

Edmund Bradley then commented that the Schools Forum had been notified in June that the DSG surplus at the end of March 2012 would be £1,025k. This had been made up from an £880k underspend in 2011-12 and £145k from previous years. £317k of this had been allocated to the 2012-13 Schools Budget, leaving £709k still to be allocated.

It was also reported that Forum Members had agreed at the June meeting that this unallocated surplus should be delegated to schools and PVLs on a per pupil basis as a one-off allocation in-year. Figures for 2012-13 suggested there would be a further surplus of around £750k-800k available for use in 2013-14 or beyond, making a combined surplus of £1,509k. It was noted that this funding would not be available on an ongoing basis.

Edmund Bradley recommended a revised proposal on the use of the projected carry forward DSG surplus, that spread out the available funding equally over three years, with £500k allocated to schools and PVLs in the current year 2012-13, £500k allocated to the Schools Budget to help mitigate turbulence arising from the new funding arrangements, and that the remaining surplus to be allocated in 2014-15 to continue this support.

Discussion took place, and Members of the Forum were disappointed to note that the decision they had taken in June in relation to the unallocated surplus had not been actioned. In considering the recommendation now being presented to them, the Forum discussed this in detail and noted that by distributing £500K now to schools on an equal amount per pupil basis, this would result in £26 per pupil being allocated. The Forum supported this proposal.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That it be noted that the estimated 2012-13 year end and outturn projection for the central Schools Block Budget of £9.3 million, reported to Cabinet in November, is an

underspend of £636,000, and that the proposals in relation to the projected carry forward DSG surplus be agreed, to include the allocation of £500k to schools and PVIs in the current year.

RBWM SCHOOL FUNDING PRO FORMA SUBMITTED TO EFA 31 OCTOBER 2012

The Forum received and noted for information, a pro forma submitted to EFA on 31 October 2012.

2013-14 DSG SETTLEMENT AND DRAFT 2013-14 SCHOOLS BUDGET

Members of the Forum considered the first draft budget for the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2013/14. It was noted that the detailed report covered the following aspects:

Funding

- Final 2012/13 DSG Settlement
- Impact of significant changes arising from the Department for Education's (DfE) proposals contained in its March 2012 document titled 'Schools Funding Reform; The Next Steps'.
- Changes to the 2012/13 DSG Baseline arising from the DfE's proposals
- Presentation of the new notional DSG blocks (Early Years, High Needs and Schools Block) and the calculation of the new Guaranteed Units of funding
- Impact of the October 2012 Pupil Count on DSG for 2013/14
- An estimate of RBWM's 2013-14 estimated DSG allocation taking account of the National Funding Changes and using draft data arising from the October 2012 School Census.
- Further increases to DSG arising from the transfer of responsibility for Early Years funding for 2 year olds and Post 16 funding for FE / Sixth form colleges and Independent Service providers
- A summary of surplus funding available in 2013/14 arising from under spends of DSG in prior years.
- A presentation of other funding streams available in 2013/14 (Pupil Premium and EFA Post 16 funding and DSG surplus balances)

Expenditure

- The impact of DSG baseline adjustments on expenditure budgets
- Individual Schools Budgets (delegation formula changes)
- Impact of Pupil Number Growth on the ISB
- De-Delegation of funds from ISB
- Creation of High Needs ISB for Special Schools, Resourced Units and PRU
- Creation of High Needs Top-Up Funding Budgets
- Other SEN Budgets (Independent Special Schools, Post 16 and SEN support services and services supporting Inclusion)
- Other centrally held Schools Block budgets (Historic Commitments and Statutory functions)
- Early Years block budget
- Expenditure Summary

Savings And Growth

- An analysis of structural under spends in existing budgets and proposals for using released funding in support of the Schools Budget.

Dominic Asater outlined the paper in detail. It was noted that, at the time of writing the paper, the figures presented represented officers' best estimates of the budgets for 2013/14. The Local Authority was still awaiting the finalisation of the October pupil count and consequent final DSG settlement. It was noted that until these figures were received in December, all budgets would remain provisional. Further reports would be presented to the Forum on the 2013/14 budget position at meetings of the Forum in January and March.

In relation to the proposals on the £406,000 additional schools block budget referred to in paragraph 29 of the report, and the reallocation of the NNDR funding for Academy converters outlined in paragraph 31, The Forum agreed that Dominic Asater should undertake further work on modelling, with proposals to be presented at the Forum's next meeting.

The Chairman placed on record his thanks to Dominic for his work in pulling the paper together, and for comprehensively taking Members through it.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That

- a) the use of the DSG surpluses outlined in paragraph 9.4 of the report be approved.**
- b) The historic commitments and statutory services set out in table 18 of the report at paragraph 25.5 of the report, be agreed in principle.**
- c) The Savings and Growth proposals of £1.314m outlined in paragraphs 26 and 27 of the report be agreed.**
- d) Further modelling and work be undertaken in relation to the £406K additional schools block budget (outlined in paragraph 29 of the report), and the reallocation of the NNDR Funding for Academy converters (outlined in paragraph 31 of the report), and proposals be presented to the next meeting of the Forum.**

UPDATE ON EARLY YEARS AND HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP

The Forum received a verbal update on the above working group, and noted that there had been two recent meetings. Members noted that a lot more work was needed to be done.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that he had received a letter of resignation from the Forum from Dave Rooney earlier in the day. He informed the Forum that he had acknowledged receipt of the letter, noting the comments contained within, and had thanked Mr Rooney for his time and work in the role.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of the future meetings were noted as follows:

- 28 January 2013 – Council Chamber, Town Hall, Maidenhead.
- 5 March 2013 – Ascot/Bray, Town Hall, Maidenhead.

MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 3.30pm, ended at 6.10pm.