

## SCHOOLS FORUM

11 JULY 2013

Present: Gill Cocklin (South Ascot Primary Head Teacher), Gina Kendall (PVI Rep), Stuart Muir (Dedworth Middle), Richard Pilgrim (Charters Head Teacher), Cynthia Pitteway (Knowl Hill Primary) and Nick Stevens (Wessex Primary Head Teacher)

Officers: Alison Alexander, Edmund Bradley, Angela Wellings and David Cook.

### **PART I**

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Eynon, Sandy Brown, Isabel Cooke, Ania Hildrey, Dan Jacoby, Gill Labrum, Helen McHale, Alison Penny and Phyllis James.

As the Chairman had given his apologies, Nick Stevens was appointed Chairman for this meeting.

As the Schools Forum was not quorate officers were informed that any decision made by the Schools Forum was not binding on the Local Education Authority.

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

#### MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

It was noted that under the minutes for Early Years Single Funding Formula 2013-14 And Funding Delivery of Free Entitlement to Two Year Olds, 110 2 year olds were being funded with an estimated 60 more being eligible to take up funding. The authorities Early Years team were confident that the numbers of 2 year olds being funded would increase. An allocated hourly rate of £5.30 had been set and this would be kept under review.

#### 2012-13 SCHOOLS BLOCK BUDGET OUTTURN AND SCHOOL BALANCES

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner (Children and Schools), introduced the report summarising the final outturn position of the 2012-13 Schools Block Budget.

The main points highlighted was the outturn position of an underspend of £1.2 million, and the Dedicated Schools Grant reserve (including balances of £208k brought forward from the previous year) stood at £1.456k. Proposals for the use of the unallocated surplus would be considered by the Schools Forum in October 2013. It was also confirmed that maintained schools' balances, after adjusting for income from loans, increased by £370k to £3.412 million (5.2% of budget) during 2012-13.

Alison Alexander, Director of Children's Services, mentioned that as only 20% of children in care were receiving free school meals and that levels of attainment among children in care were below the average of less disadvantaged children, one of the proposals for the use of the surplus would be to help fund this area. Another proposal would be to use some of the surplus to help fund fibre optic broadband installation into schools in preparation for a revised delivery model for IT in schools.

The Forum felt that although the cost of fibre optic broadband was an issue for small schools there may be opposition from schools who had already paid for the installation out of their own budgets. Alison informed the Forum that Dan Jacoby, head teacher representative, could not attend this meeting but had sent a letter of objection outlining the secondary academies views that any underspend should be allocated back to schools for them to decide how best to use it, infrastructure work outside the school boundaries was the responsibility of the local authority. Dan Jacoby's letter would be appended to the options paper due to be brought before the Forum.

With regards to the Special Educational Needs Budget it was noted that there was a large underspend due to the average cost of out of borough placements being less than anticipated and income received from other local authorities sending SEN pupils to the borough exceeding the anticipated budget. The Forum was informed that the 2013-14 budget had seen significant changes to the funding of high needs pupils and at this time it was difficult to say what effect this would have on the allocated budget.

In response to a question from the chair regarding personalised budgets for SEN pupils Edmund informed the Forum that from September 2014 as parents would be given the opportunity to have personalised budgets schools would have to provide information regarding their local offer and publish this on their websites.

It was noted that although schools felt the need to keep reserves for the eventuality of sudden increase in pupil numbers, the Government's view was that allocated funding should be spent on children in year.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the summary of the final outturn position of the 2012-13 Schools Block Budget and maintained school balances be noted.**

#### FINALISED 2013-14 DSG AND ALLOCATION OF SCHOOLS BUDGET

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner (Children and Schools), introduced the report summarising the main changes to the 2013-14 Dedicated Schools Grant settlement since it was last discussed by the Forum on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

The report discussed at the March 2013 meeting of the Forum identified a potential reduction of £314k from the settlement. An updated settlement was announced on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2013 which identified a total settlement £211k more than had been expected. The difference was down to an overestimate of the baseline amount to be deducted for non maintained special schools and further funding transfer from non maintained special schools.

The Forum was reminded that they had agreed at previous meetings to increase support of the Schools Block Budget in 2013-14 to £500k. This position would be reviewed in the 2014-15 budget build process as use of one off funding streams is only sustainable whilst there is a DSG surplus.

The report highlighted funding sources as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 that totalled £108,823,000 funding for the schools budget for 2013-14. The majority of this, £85,285,000 would be going towards individual schools' delegated budget shares.

In May 2013 a further updated was received for the 2013-14 DSG settlement. There was to be a deduction of £5,833 per place for the 28 resource units places in academy schools, this totalled £162,324. There would be an increase of £161,405 in relation to post 16 high needs learner numbers. There would also be a further increase of £163,200 as a result of the moderation panels set up to consider the LEA's request for post 16 high needs student budget review.

The Forum was also informed that from September 2013 the new funding arrangements for high needs pupils in academies would come into place and this had been reflected in the DSG allocation.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the 2013-14 DSG Settlement update report be noted.**

#### DFE REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA 2013-14 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2014-15

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner (Children and Schools), introduced the report regarding the DfE review of the 2013-14 school funding arrangements and changes for 2014-15.

The Forum was informed that the changes proposed were mainly concerned with removing some of the variability that existed between local authorities formulas and a move towards a single national funding formula.

Post meeting Edmund Bradley emailed the following amendment to his report:

*'Dear Schools Forum colleagues*

*This email is to inform you of a correction in the paper "DFE Review of Schools Funding Formula 2013-14 and Proposals for 2014-15" which was recently discussed under item 6 of the agenda of the Schools Forum meeting on 11 July 2013. The first bullet point of paragraph 3.5 concerns the funding that RBWM allocated to schools in 2013-14 through deprivation factors and states that "RBWM is among the lowest four local authorities (out of 152) for the proportion of funding it delegates through deprivation."*

*This relates to comparative information on other local authorities' funding formulae provided by the Department for Education and attached as Annex B to the report. The second graph on page 6 of this annex shows that four local authorities allocated between 0%-2% of delegated funding through deprivation, and that a further 18 authorities allocated between 2%-4%. RBWM allocated 2.7% of funding through deprivation factors. RBWM is therefore not among the lowest four local authorities, as stated in the paper to Schools Forum, but among the lowest 22. The key point is that RBWM allocated a smaller proportion of its delegated*

*funding through deprivation factors than most other local authorities. The correction does not materially change this conclusion.*

*I have asked for this correction to be included in the minutes. I apologise for the error and for any confusion this may have caused.*

*Kind regards*

*Edmund'*

The Forum agreed to set up a working group to develop and make recommendations on the changes to the formula for 2014-15. Stuart Muir and Nick Stevens agreed to be on the working group, Edmund would email dates for meetings.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the changes to the proposed changes to the school funding framework for 2014-15 be noted and to approve the setting of a working group to make recommendations on the changes.**

#### SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner (Children and Schools), informed the Forum that as schools converted to academies there was a need to review the composition of the Schools Forum membership to remain representative.

The Forum agreed that the membership should be reduced from 20 to 17 and it was recommended that the new head teacher at Furze Platt may wish to join the Forum.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the membership of the RBWM Schools Forum be reduced from 20 to 17, consisting of 15 school members and 2 non school members and that the Forum noted the reconstitution membership reflecting academy conversions as at September 2013.**

#### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the future meeting dates and requested that consideration be given to starting the meeting at midday to give sufficient time to consider the reports.

#### MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 4.10pm, ended at 5.30pm.