

## SCHOOLS FORUM

16 OCTOBER 2013

Present: Head Teacher Representatives: Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim, Gill Cocklin, Alison Penny, Stuart James, Ania Hildrey, Eileen Hinds.

Governor Representatives: Dan Jacoby, Cynthia Pitteway, Phyllis James.

Non- School Representatives: Gina Kendall.

Officers: Alison Alexander, Edmund Bradley, David Scott and David Cook.

### **PART I**

#### ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Richard Pilgrim was elected as chairman of the Schools Forum.

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Helen McHale, Liz Clark, Gill Labrum, Nick Stevens and Gillian May.

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

#### MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

#### SERVICE PROPOSALS

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner (Children and Schools), introduced the report that presented four proposals to the Schools Forum on the use of the £956k Dedicated Schools Grant surplus. The surplus had arisen from accumulated underspends brought forward from previous years.

The Forum was informed that at its July 2013 meeting the Schools Forum received a report on the 2012-13 Schools Block Budget outturn, this identified an accumulated non-recurring surplus of £956k.

In March 2013 Forum members agreed a budget that committed £500k to supplement the 2013-14 DSG allocation in support of central expenditure and schools' delegated budgets. As some members of the Forum highlighted the risk of using one-off funding to support recurring expenditure proposals to discontinue this support would mean having to find savings of £500k from central expenditure and delegated budgets in 2014-15. This reduction would be taken in two stages, £250k from the budget in 2014-15, and a further £250k in 2015-16. This approach reduced the overall surplus from £956k to £706k.

The Forum were asked to comment and support four proposals for the £706k surplus, they were:

- Capacity building for 2 year old provision.
- Support for a replacement IT network in schools.
- Support for narrowing the attainment gap of children in care.
- School to school support for education improvement.

The Forum questioned why any underspend should not be given back to schools and were informed that as the money could not be given back this year it would have to be built into next years base build. As this would be one off funding adding it to the base would create future allocation problems when funding was guaranteed for future years.

Alison Alexander, Strategic Director of Children's Services, outlined the rationale behind the four options:

- Capacity Building for 2 year old provision.

The Forum were informed that to support the expanding 2 year old free entitlement programme it was proposed to allocate £87,500 from the DSG surplus and £100,000 from the 2013-14 underspend. Funds would be used to build additional provider capacity in readiness for the second phase of the programme in September 2014.

- Support for a replacement IT network in Schools.

The Forum were informed that to enable schools to continue to access the internet and external service providers it was proposed to allocate £291,000 of the underspend to a programme of investment.

Forum members questioned the need to upgrade to fibre optic internet provision and the need to increase capacity, especially in light of the 'Superfast Berkshire' project that would be providing high speed broadband to Berkshire. Concern was raised that Schools had been informed of the need to investigate broadband service providers and invest in improvements without knowing about the proposals mentioned in the report.

Forum members recommended that BT be approached to prioritise superfast broadband provision to public bodies such as schools and hospitals.

- Support for narrowing the attainment gap of children in care.

The Forum were informed that the proposal asked for approval for the allocation of funding to Children in Care, targeted through their personal education plans, to drive forward progress and attainment. The report requested allocation of £100k from the underspend to all schools with children in care in the Royal Borough to the value of £900 for each child for 2014/15. Funding would be held centrally and would be released by the Head teacher of the Virtual School on the approval of the planned priorities identified in the personal education plan.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that the funding would only be used for children who were taken into care by the Borough, that although children

in care did receive the pupil premium extra funds were requested due to their poor attainment levels and that the funding would be one off to build capacity and infrastructure.

- School to school support for education improvement.

The Forum were informed that funding was requested to improve pupil outcomes through a programme of school to school support. Schools would be funded to release outstanding school leaders and curriculum expertise in order to support others and spread proven good practice; this would complement advisory support from Borough officers. School to school support would be commissioned, quality assured and monitored by the Local Authority, and used strategically as an integral part of the Borough's Education Improvement Plan. It was proposed that £200k be allocated from the underspend.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that the funding would be for three years with money being made available to schools for support and that officers would be there to provide advice and support when looking for extra support.

**RESOLVED: That the following proposals be funded from the accumulated DSG surplus:**

- **Capacity building for 2 year olds (£88k).**
- **Support for narrowing the attainment gap (£100k).**
- **School to school support for education improvement (£200K).**

It was agreed that a report would be brought back to the Forum on the use of the remaining budget that would include allocating some, all or none of the balance to schools and the implications.

#### 2013-14 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT SETTLEMENT

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner (Children and Schools), introduced the report regarding the finalised 2013-14 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement received on 19 July 2013. The report updated the Schools Forum about changes to RBWM's DSG allocation since it was last discussed at Schools Forum on 11 July 2013.

The final 2013-14 DSG settlement confirmed further funding adjustments totalling £244k. The report on the DSG settlement to Schools Forum in July alerted members of the Forum to the first two of these, but not to the last two:

- An increase of £161k in the funding for post 16 high needs.
- An increase of £163k, also for post 16 high needs, following the consideration of RBWM's request in March for a post 16 High Needs budget review.
- A reduction of £72k in Early Years funding.
- A reduction of £8k relating other minor adjustments.

These changes increase the total funding in the 2013-14 Schools Budget from £108.823 million to £109.067 million when the DSG surplus allocation and post 16 funding was added.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the report be noted.**

PRESENTATION ON RESPONSES TO RBWM MAINSTREAM SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION FOR 2014-15

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner (Children and Schools), gave a presentation on the results of the RBWM 2014-15 mainstream pre 16 school funding formula consultation.

The presentation covered:

- The journey towards the national funding formula.
- Allowable factors in 2014-15 and main changes.
- Background to the RBWM School funding consultation.
- Responses to consultation.
- Deprivation Comments.
- Low prior attainment / LCHI SEN
- Lump sum account.
- Children in Care.
- Other Comments.
- Next Steps.

During the presentation a number of points were made regarding the presentation results, in particular;

- 44% of schools responded to the questioner.
- Increasing funding through deprivation formula via a decrease in AWPU was supported. More primary supported the question than secondary schools.
- More schools felt that an increase in deprivation funding should be done via an increase in to Free School Meals rate, whilst when respondents' results were weighed by pupil number funding via FSM6 and IDACI was supported.
- The DfE change to secondary LPA indicator required a reduction in the unit rate to ensure the total allocation remained the same.
- Support was given to helping small primary schools via increasing the lump sum.
- The majority of schools supported helping small primary schools via a reduction in AWPU, however when weighed by pupil numbers support was evenly split.
- Children in care had lower attainment levels than children not in care.
- Consultation results supported increasing funding for each child in care.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the presentation be noted.**

## DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the future meeting dates and requested that when possible the meetings start at 2.30pm at the Town Hall Maidenhead.

## MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 4.00pm, ended at 6.20pm.