

SCHOOLS FORUM

09 JULY 2014

Present: Head Teacher Representatives: Richard Pilgrim, Helen McHale, Gill Cocklin, Alison Penny, Nick Stevens and Stuart Muir.

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

Non- School Representatives: Viv Robinson.

Councillor Bicknell.

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

PART I

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Isabel Cooke, Gillian May, Anne Entwistle, Nathan Aspinall, Gina Kendal and Eileen Hinds.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2014 were agreed as a correct record. It was noted that a report on the Pupil Referral Unit provision would be brought back to a future meeting, that a small working party had been established and would report back in October 2015 and that work was still ongoing in identifying children who should be eligible for free school meals.

2013 SCHOOLS BUDGET FINAL OUTTURN AND REPORT ON SCHOOLS BALANCES 2013-14

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report summarised the final outturn for the 2013-14 schools budget and identified the level of maintained school balances. There was a 2013-14 surplus of £0.548 million, and this would be added to the existing £0.956m DSG reserve. The report detailed that, of the £1.457m resulting amount, £0.418m would be allocated to the 2014-15 Schools Budget as previously agreed with Schools Forum, £0.441m would be allocated to the earmarked reserve for specific projects, leaving £0.599m in the general DSG reserve.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that an options paper on the future use of resources would be brought back to the Forum, that academies financial information would be in the public domain when available and that there were only guidelines on how much a school could underspend and carry forward.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the recommendations in the report.

EARLY YEARS REVIEW OF PROVISION TWO YEARS OLDS FREE ENTITLEMENT 2013-14

David Scott, Head of Education, Strategy & Commissioning, informed the Forum that the report provided an update on the Two year olds free entitlement programme.

The Panel were informed that from September 2014 the eligibility criteria will be widened to include parents on low income or benefits that do not meet the FSM criteria. This had been introduced to help close the gap in attainment for disadvantaged children when they started school. The change will also mean that children would have to be placed on the new financial criteria and not the local criteria that had been used.

The Chairman drew the Forum's attention to table 2 that showed the agreed allocation of the 2 year old funding and table 3 that showed in the 2013-14 financial year 427 eligible 2 year olds were funded and that this was growing. It was noted that the funding rate per hour was per child and not the rate paid to staff.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the report.

DSG SETTLEMENT MARCH 2014 AND IMPACT ON HIGH NEEDS FUNDING

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner, introduced the report that provided an update on the 2014-15 DSG that was announced on 31 March 2014.

The key points highlighted were that the settlement was £99.621 million (before academy recoupment) and that this was £189k less than estimated in January 2014. This reduction was mainly down to the assumptions made regarding high needs placements. It was noted that a revised Section 251 statement would be re-submitted to take account of latest developments.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the report.

IMPACT OF EFA'S 2015-16 "FAIRER FUNDING PROPOSALS" AND INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR RBWM FORMULA

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner, gave a presentation on the School Funding Reform for 2015-16. The presentation covered the context of school funding, the EFA's "Fairer School Funding" proposals for 2015-16, RBWM proposals and further information on funding from EFA.

Some of the key points raised in the presentation were:

- Schools' funding has been protected, however not all education budgets would be protected.
- The EFA proposals to allocate £350 million more funding to the least fairly funded LAs for 2015-16. 'Minimum funding levels' would be used to work out which LAs benefit.
- The Forum were shown a table of the indicative minimum funding levels and how RBWM formula rates compared with the proposed levels.
- The four steps to determine which LAs would be eligible were explained.
- It was estimated that the indicative increase under MFL proposals would result in a 2.7% increase in funding for RBWM, around £2.5 million.

- The Forum were invited to comment on proposals for allocating the additional funding to schools through RBWM's 2015-16 funding formula. The proposals focused on allocating over 70% of the additional funding to all schools through an uplift to RBWM's Age Weighted Pupil Units, 20% to some schools in a more targeted way, and retaining around 10% of the funding centrally.
- Considered high needs funding and issues.

The Forum was informed that it was proposed that the working party examine the proposals in more detail and this would include looking at schools fixed costs that were increasing. The group would also look at how the £400k targeted funding would be used.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the presentation.

SCHOOLS CATERING CONTRACT UPDATE

David Scott, Head of Education, Strategy & Commissioning, informed the Forum that RBWM had been approached by Caterlink who were interested in negotiating for the catering contract. There was also the option to join the contract held by Wokingham that would reduce costs.

The Forum felt that they could not advise on schools views on Caterlink and it was advised that officers contact schools directly to get views.

DFE CONSULTATION ON EARLY YEARS PUPIL PREMIUM AND FUNDING FOR TWO YEAR OLDS

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner, gave a presentation on the DfE Consultation on Early Years Pupil Premium and funding for two year olds. The consultation covered the introduction of Early Years Pupil Premium for disadvantaged three and four year olds and the introduction of participation-based funding for the two-year-old entitlement.

With regards to early years pupil premium it was noted that from April 2015 there would be £300 per year for each eligible child with eligibility being the same for free school meals. It was noted that the parents' National Insurance number would be required to judge eligibility.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the presentation.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the future meeting dates of:

- 22 October 2014 – 2.30pm.
- 10 December 2014 – 2.30pm.
- 14 January 2015 – 2.30pm.
- 25 March 2015 – 2.30pm

MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 2.30pm, ended at 4.20pm.