

## SCHOOLS FORUM

25 MARCH 2015

Present: Head Teacher Representatives: Ania Hildrey, Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim (Chairman), Gill Cocklin, Alison Penny, Stuart Muir, Heather Clapp and Martin Tinsley.

Non- School Representatives: Gina Kendall.

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

### **PART I**

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Heidi Swidenbank, Helen McHale, Nick Stevens, Phyllis James and Gillian May.

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received. David Scott reported that he had taken advice regarding the Schools Forum adopting a code of conduct and would report back at the next meeting.

#### MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2015 were approved as a true and correct record.

#### FUNDING SCHOOLS FOR TEACHERS ON LONG TERM SUSPENSION

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report was requesting clarification of the policy for funding schools additional costs incurred when a teacher was suspended to bring it in line with School Funding Regulations.

Edmund Bradley informed the Forum that payments for suspended teachers were funded from the maintained schools' de-delegated contingency budget. School funding regulations make clear that such costs should come from the de-delegated 'Staff costs' budget. It was proposed that future payments would therefore no longer be covered under the Contingency Panel arrangements but instead be funded from the de-delegated staff costs budget. As academies and free schools are not allowed to be part of the 'de-delegation arrangements' the policy only applies to maintained schools, and only if de-delegation has been approved by the relevant school sector.

During discussion on this item it was suggested that the policy be broadened to include other school staff who may be suspended and whose wages may be equal to or more than that of a teacher. Edmund replied that officers would need to consider the financial implications if this change was made.

David Scott recommended that the suggestion to widen the policy to other school staff be taken to the Council's HR department to assess the implications and the report being brought back to a future Forum meeting.

**RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum receives an updated report on this item to include the implications of expanding the policy to all school staff.**

### COST PRESSURES IN SCHOOLS

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report sets out the potential cost pressures in relation to the cost of employment facing all schools in 2015-16 and 2016-17 as a result of local and national changes in pay that will see a decrease in funding and an increase in staff costs. It was important that schools be made aware of the difficult budget decisions they will be facing. The Chairman used the example of Charters School that could be facing a possible £550k per year due to the potential cost pressures.

During discussion on the item concern was raised about the recruitment and retention of teachers due to the high cost of living within the borough and surrounding areas. Schools had to look at increasing pay and conditions to help attract teachers and this included offering re-location packages.

It was recommended that the report be circulated to all schools so they were aware of the potential problem before they start planning next year's staff budgets. Edmund reported that the report would be circulated to business managers after this meeting.

**RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the report.**

### UPDATE ON 2015-16 DSG SETTLEMENT AND ALLOCATION OF 2015-16 SCHOOLS BUDGET

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report looked at adjustments to expenditure plans on services to schools in light of the updated 2015-16 DSG Settlement notified by the EFA in March, and that the Forum had to approve the specific central expenditure budgets where such approval was required by Schools Finance Regulations.

Edmund Bradley informed the Forum that in January they received a paper on the initial 2015-16 DSG December settlement. The first section of this report followed on from that report and summarised the total funding available for distribution in 2015-16 based on the updated settlement. The report also set out RBWM's plans for distributing the funding available across services within the Early Years, Schools and High Needs Blocks.

Edmund drew the Forum's attention to the tables on page twelve of the agenda that showed the RBWM's total DSG funding of £105m with an additional estimated £8m of other funding, mainly for post-16 pupils, being available to support the Schools Budget giving a total of £113m.

Table three of the report detailed the £4.4 million increase in the School Block, £222k increase in the High Needs Block and the £0.351m reduction in the Early Years Block.

The next section of the report dealt with planned expenditure and Edmund highlighted that this year planned expenditure overall would be increased by £4.278m. The Forum were informed that £4.127m (96.5%) of this increase would be delegated to schools and early years providers' in their delegated budgets, as previously discussed by Schools Forum.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that it was proposed to allocate funding to cover the cost of school placements including maintained and non maintained boarding schools for pupils on the edge of care. It was expected that there would be about two pupils per year and we had to account for the accumulative effect. The benefit would be better outcomes for the children and help prevent them going into care. If the children were kept in a mainstream setting there would be emotional needs that schools were not in the best position to deal with.

Edmund informed the Forum that page 15 of the agenda provided a comparison of expenditure by funding block and it showed that £374k of schools block funding had been used to support growth expenditure in the high needs block.

**RESOLVED: That Schools Forum approved the expenditure proposals in the report and formally approve the planned central expenditure:**

- within the Schools Block, set out in table 8 and 9.
- for under 5s set out in table 10.

#### PROPOSALS FOR USE OF DSG RESERVE

David Scott, Head of Education, Strategy and Commissioning, informed the Forum that the presentation was to seek the Forum's views on how we might use the reserves.

The forum were informed that the DSG funding from previous years was currently held in ear-marked and general reserves. Of the £1.039m, £0.441m had been earmarked for school to school support, capacity building for free entitlement for two year olds and support for children in care. It was proposed that there should be £150k held in general reserve.

David Scott informed that the reserve used in 2015-16 must be used on expenditure commitments that are centrally commissioned or managed by the LA and must be devolved and not delegated.

The proposals put to the Forum were:

- Support for the Pupil Premium Working Group initiatives.
- Support recruitment for staff.
- Supporting children's health and wellbeing.
- Mental health and wellbeing.
- Support for school restructures.
- Multi family group for anxious school refusers.

Following discussion on the presentation the Forum felt that a further report was required focusing on the proposals that supported mental health.

**RESOLVED: That: The Schools Forum receive a report focusing on the three areas around mental health.**

#### MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner, informed the Forum that there were currently two academy vacancies and one primary vacancy.

#### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the future meeting dates of:

- 19th May 2015
- 7th July 2015
- 20 October 2015
- 8 December 2015
- 19 January 2016
- 8 March 2016

#### MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 2.30pm, ended at 4.30pm.