

## SCHOOLS FORUM

7 July 2015

Present: Head Teacher Representatives: Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim (Chairman), Stuart Muir, Ania Hildrey, Heather Clapp and Mike Wallace.

Governor Representatives: Dan Jacoby and Hugh Boulter.

Non- School Representatives: Gina Kendall.

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

### **PART I**

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Heidi Swidenbank, Gill Cocklin, Alison Penny, Nick Stevens, Martin Tinsley, Gillian May, Cllr Bicknell and Alison Alexander.

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

#### MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2015 were approved as a true and correct record with the addition of Dan Jacoby being in attendance.

The Forum were informed that, with regards to funding schools for teachers on long term suspension and expanding this to other staff, officers had contacted HR and were informed that from 2009/10 there had been 14 suspensions of which 8 were eligible for funding. If the scheme had been extended to include non teaches as well as teachers from 2009/10 there would have been an increase in costs of £49k. If the Forum agreed to extend the scheme it was estimated that an additional £8k per year would be required. Only maintained schools which had agreed to 'de-delegate' a part of their budget for this purpose would be covered.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that the scheme covered for suspensions over three months and not sickness, that funding allocated to school under the policy would take account of insurance arrangements in place, and that funding was covered by de-delegation arrangements.

**Resolved that the policy on funding schools for teachers on long-term suspension should be extended to include non-teachers with effect from September 2015.**

The Chairman requested that there be future reports on costs pressures for schools that also included capital works and an update on S106 allocation and the future with CIL.

Dan Jacoby requested that the Forum receive an update on the projects that the Forum had agreed to fund from the DSG reserves. It was agreed to have an interim report at the October meeting with a full report in December.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that they had agreed to have a code of conduct and that the clerk had produced a code for the Forums approval. The Forum were informed that he did not see anything contentious about the code and that although Forum members were representing their sector they agreed items as a group and the Forums views should not be misrepresented.

It was clarified that confidentiality mentioned within the code related to items that the Forum may consider in Private Meeting (Part II) due to a report containing Part II information, that the proper use of Council resources related to the use of Council resources as part of the role as a Forum member and that the Whistle Blowing policy be added as an appendix.

**Resolved: That the Forum adopt the Code of Conduct.**

## 2014-15 SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN AND SCHOOLS BALANCES

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report summarised the final outturn position and the level of balances held.

The Forum were informed that there was an underspend of £105k that had been added to the dedicated schools grant reserve that now totalled £990k for 2015-16 that included earmarked reserves of £286k and general reserves of £704k.

Table one in the report showed where the under / over spend occurred with the biggest variance coming from the High Needs block. The underspend on early years was mainly due to the 2 year old grant being based on DfE estimates rather than actual uptake.

Concern was raised that the build-up of reserves disadvantaged pupils currently on roll in schools as funding regulations did not allow in-year allocations to schools from the reserve. It was agreed to compare with our statistical neighbours and the Forum was informed that it was possible to use the reserve in year but only via central funding.

The report also drew Forum's attention to the level of RBWM's 47 maintained schools' balances at the end of March 2015. After adjusting for outstanding loans, these had decreased in 2014-15 by £0.233m to £3.650m. A discussion followed about reporting school balances and the lack of publicly available comparative data for academies and free schools. Dan Jacoby felt that if schools were reporting an outturn variance over 5% of their forecast then they should also be required to explain the reason for the variance to Schools Forum.

It was felt that schools required clarity on what they should report and that the reporting mechanism should not be too onerous. It was noted that schools may need to build up a reserve over a number of years in order to fund specific

projects. Where there was an overspend the school would have to carry this forward with a plan on how this would be recovered.

The report included a recommendation to transfer £100k from the Two Year Old reserve to the School to School Support reserve. A decision on this was deferred to the October meeting pending further information on how funded projects were progressing.

**RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the report and that the final decision to transfer £100k to the School to School Support reserve be made at the October meeting.**

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBENG – SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

David Scott informed the Forum that following feedback from them, officers had looked at two further proposals for using the DSG reserve:

- Therapeutic support for children and young people with mental health issues (a combination of three presented ideas).
- Support for schools for recruitment and retention.

Alison Crossick, Psychology & Wellbeing Service Lead, presented on the first proposal.

The presentation covered:

- Current mental health and wellbeing provision.
- What a new service could offer.
- Access to the service.
- The drivers behind a new service.
- The proposed structure.
- Monitoring and reporting progress.

The project aimed to employ 3 new full time positions for Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) posts. The roles would offer mental health & wellbeing assessments, supported signposting, individual evidence based interventions, groups around specific needs and support for families and schools. The posts would also offer workshops and training in schools to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of mental illness.

David Scott informed that the proposed project was not a quick fix and thus should be a 3 year programme.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that the posts would:

- Work together with the link EP for each school as well as CAMHS and other services.
- Have clinical supervision.
- Be concentrating on mental health issues.
- Be additional posts and not those shown in the consultation.

- Each post can work with potentially 15 cases at any one time. However the service will be needs led and so if more workshops, training or groups are more appropriate, fewer cases would be held.
- This programme was for school aged young people 5-18 years. An NHS funded project had begun on an early years programme of support.
- Three years had been proposed as if only one year there would be problems with recruitment.

The Forum felt that a progress report should be provided, that the cost of the service was small compared to its potential impact on outcomes and that mental health issues was impacting education.

**RESOLVED: That Schools Forum approved the expenditure proposal of £120k per annum.**

David Scott presented on the second proposal for supporting recruitment and retention of high quality teachers. It was proposed to appoint an officer to help promote RBWM as a great place to work as a teacher and help co-ordinate on teacher accommodation provision. There would also be links to developing our SCITT and Teach Direct activity for future teacher programmes.

The post would therefore have a twin track approach for property issues and teacher developments at a cost of £150k for two years.

Whilst discussing the proposal Forum members mentioned that there was no problem recruiting newly qualified teachers but with the recruitment of more experienced teachers, it was questioned why the post should be funded from the education budget and it was felt that the proposal required more supporting data.

**RESOLVED: Not to approve the proposal to allocate DSG reserves to supporting teacher recruitment and retention at the present time.**

#### 2015-16 DSG SETTLEMENT AND REVISED SCHOOLS BUDGET

Edmund Bradley informed the Forum that the paper summarises further changes to RBWM's 2015-16 Dedicated Schools Grant settlement announced after the last meeting of Schools Forum. It set out how these funding changes would impact on planned expenditure in 2015-16, and the distribution of funding between the Early Years, Schools, and High Needs blocks. The Forum were informed that table 4 on page 20 of the agenda summarised the funding available in the 2015-16 Schools Budget and how this would be allocated across Early Years, Schools, and High Needs budgets.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that there was a pressure on high needs nationally as funding was not keeping up with demand and thus there may be a need to redistribute funding. It was noted that top-up funding was only for RBWM pupils.

It was agreed to report back on how forecasting on pupil numbers worked.

**RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note that:**

- **The funding available to support planned expenditure in the schools budget in 2015-16 had reduced by £118k from the previous estimate at March of £113.439m (before recoupment for academies) to the revised estimate of £113.321m.**
- **This reduction reflects the updated DSG settlement announced by the EFA on 26 March 2015 as well as changes in funding resulting from revised estimates of early years pupil numbers at January 2015.**
- **That the revised budget allocation set out at Annex A be noted.**

#### REVIEW OF 2015-16 FUNDING FORMULA AND LOOK AHEAD

Edmund Bradley, Finance Partner, gave a presentation on a review of RBWM 2015-16 school funding formula.

(Ania Hildrey and Heather Clapp left the meeting.)

The presentation covered:

- 2015-16 formula comparison.
- Considerations for 2016-17.
- Comparisons per school on funding per pupil pre and post MFG.
- Primary pupil led funding comparisons.
- Secondary pupil led funding comparisons.
- Primary AWPU basic entitlement allocation comparisons.
- Key Stage 3 AWPU basic entitlement comparisons.
- Basis entitlement for key stage 4 AWPU comparisons.
- Comparative deprivation funding per FSM pupil unit.
- Looked after children funding comparisons.
- Primary and secondary attainment per pupil funding.
- Comparisons on the % of funding allocated via prior attainment factor.
- English as a secondary language comparative funding data.
- Comparisons between primary and secondary lump sum funding.
- SEN comparative funding data.
- The % of funding allocated through pupil led factors.
- % of funding allocated through non pupil led factors.
- A range of cost pressures facing future school funding.

(Cllr Dudley joined the meeting during the presentation)

During discussion it was agreed to present at a future meeting the effect of increasing the lump sum element for schools to the maximum allowed under the School Funding Regulations, and to fund this increase by a reduction in AWPU rates. The Forum supported the funding formula and agreed that it should remain as it is until Government changes were announced and subject to the findings of the aforementioned modelling.

#### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the future meeting dates of:

- 20 October 2015
- 8 December 2015
- 19 January 2016
- 8 March 2016

## MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 2.30pm, ended at 5.10pm.