

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2016

Present: Head Teacher Representatives: Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim (Chairman) Heidi Swidenbank, Alison Penny, Nick Stevens (Vice-Chairman), Stuart Muir, Ania Hildrey and Heather Clapp.

Non- School Representatives: Gina Kendall.

Also Present: Ms Hough (St Lukes) and Mr Tomes (Churchmead).

Officers: Edmund Bradley, Kevin McDaniel, Alison Alexander, Alison Crossick and David Cook.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Hough Boulter.

The Chairman informed the Forum that following the recent bereavement of Dan Jacoby he wished to record his thanks for all the work and contribution Dan Jacoby made as a member of the Schools Forum.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declaration of interest.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the 20th October 2015 were agreed as a true and correct record subject to Nick Stevens being added as in attendance.

The Chairman asked if there was any update on the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and was informed that RBWM was awaiting the inspector to review the rates, that the interim policy had been agreed by Cabinet and it was expected that the Local Plan would be approved by the end of the year.

2016-17 PRE 16 SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA

The Chairman informed the Forum that the report due for consideration provided details of the 2016-17 School funding formula for pupils aged between 4 to 16. The main funding formula remained largely unchanged from 2015-16 with the exception of an increase in the IDACI band and FSM6 funding rates, and the low prior attainment rates.

The Forum were asked to note the final funding formula set out in appendix A and the indicative individual school budget shares as set out in appendix B. Edmund Bradley informed the Forum that for calculating schools' budget shares LAs were required to use the October 2015 school census data provided by the EFA. One of the most significant changes in the dataset had been the use of the recently published 2015 IDACI values, instead of the 2010 IDACI values used previously. This had resulted in a significant degree of movement of pupils between bands at an individual school level.

This change had resulted in 953 fewer primary pupils and 935 fewer secondary pupils in IDACI bands who attract funding for deprivation than last year. There were also now no pupils at all in the highest three IDACI bands compared with 179 such pupils previously. This would have resulted in a significant loss of funding to schools. Deprivation rates had therefore been increased for 2016-17 to compensate for this.

It was noted that 17 schools would be protected through Minimum Funding Guarantee at a cost of £309k, this was an increase of 9 schools compared to last year. The Forum questioned if it was known out of the 17 schools using MFG how many had sizeable underspends carried forward and if so what they were being used for.

The maintained sector representatives were asked to vote by sector on each de-delegated service shown in table 3a and 3b of the report. Stuart Muir raised concern that under the new de-delegation arrangements, middle schools, deemed secondary, would have funding deducted for their primary pupils even though this was against their collective wish. The Chairman mentioned that Annex C did show that they would be paying more.

It has subsequently been clarified with the Education Funding Agency that an adjustment can be made to middle schools budgets to ensure no deduction is made for behaviour support or school contingency.

It was decided that for the vote on the de-delegated services the middle schools' vote would be taken and recorded separately. The following table shows how each sector voted on each de-delegated option for 2016-17:

De-delegated service	First, junior, and primary schools	Middle and secondary schools
Contingencies including schools in financial difficulties and deficits of closing schools	Approved	Not approved
Behaviour support services	Approved	Not approved
Licences/subscriptions	Approved	Approved
Staff costs supply cover (e.g. maternity, trade union duties, suspended staff reimbursement)	Approved	Approved

Members were reminded that where approval for 'de-delegated' services had been given, these will be provided to maintained schools at no extra charge in 2016-17. Academies and maintained schools which have not approved the de-delegation will receive the funding for these services will be expected to purchase services from their delegated budget.

INDICATIVE 2016-17 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT SETTLEMENT

Kevin McDaniel introduced the report that informed about RBWM's 2016-17 indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement announced on 17th December 2015. Overall there was an increase of £1.234m over the 3 funding blocks compared with the 2015-16 final settlement. This was mainly due to an increase of 201 pupils (4-16) , and £266k of additional high needs funding – RBWM's share of £92.5m extra funding being made available to all Las.

Ania Hildrey questioned if the increase of £266k in the high needs block would cover the increased demand for high needs places. The Forum were informed that a paper would be brought to the March meeting setting out proposals on how DSG funding would be allocated, and taking account of the estimated budget needed for high needs pupils in 2016-17.

The Chairman said that this would be major discussion item at the March 2016 meeting.

GROWTH FUND AND FALLING ROLLS FUND

The Chairman informed the Forum that the report provided information about plans to postpone in-year adjustments to growth fund allocations that was agreed by the Forum at its October 2014 meeting and detailed at paragraph 3.4 of the report.

Financial modelling of potential clawback of funds showed that this would put undue financial pressure on certain schools' budgets; especially as staffing levels had already been set in schools. It was therefore proposed not to take any clawback action in respect of 2015-16 growth fund allocations until the new financial year.

The Chairman asked if this was a proposed change in policy or just for this year. Concern was also raised about giving schools money for growth where the expected increase in pupils did not happen.. The Forum were informed that funding schools in advance and then clawing it back made it difficult for schools to manage their budgets. In some cases, clawbacks would be as high as 3% of the school's budget. The Chairman said that officers would look at the present mechanism for allocating growth funding and bring alternative proposals to the March meeting.

It was questioned what happened to schools with high mobility rates and the forum were informed that although there was a mobility funding factor, this was not currently used.; This could be revisited for future years.

It was mentioned that any future growth fund needed to be set at a correct level as to not be an incentive when not required, that if there was a change in policy then schools would be aware and make appropriate mitigating actions and any clawback could be mitigated by budgets carried forward.

The Forum agreed with the proposal not to clawback money given during 2015-16.

Resolved that: an alternative model for allocating growth funding would brought back to the March 2016 Forum meeting,

The Chairman mentioned that the second part of the report dealt with the Falling Rolls Fund; a fund given to support a school with a temporary fall in number pupils.

The Forum were informed that there was a number of areas that would impact RBWM schools that may require the use of this fund; there was a drop in demand for primary school places, increased capacity in Slough having an impact on Churchmead CE Secondary School and the boroughs policy to hold a 10% surplus in places to allow for parental support and future growth.

(Isabel Cook left the meeting)

It was questioned how did the MFG impact on the formula and the Forum were informed that it was outside the formula but some criteria did take into account MFG.

Resolved that: the forum establish a working group to look at more detailed proposals and existing policies on 'falling rolls funds' used at other authorities.

MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman suggested to the Forum that as the 17 Forum membership places had not been filled it was proposed to reduce numbers by 1 or 2. The Forum agreed to keep membership figures at 17, appointed Chris Tomes and requested that officers contact academy trusts and MATS about Stuart Muir filling one of their vacancies and requesting any further nominations.

Note for Forum

As Dedworth Middle has not yet converted to academy, Stuart Muir will continue to hold the secondary maintained post until the school converts. On conversion to academy, Chris Tomes of Churchmead will become the secondary maintained school representative, and Stuart Muir will take up one of the three vacant academy posts, subject to any expression of interest from other academies and MATS that would necessitate an election.

The meeting, which began at 2.40 pm, finished at 4.25 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....