

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2017

PRESENT: Head Teacher Representatives: Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim (Chairman), Heidi Swidenbank, Helen McHale, Nick Stevens (Vice-Chairman), Stuart Muir, Joolz Scarlett, Mike Wallace, Chris Tomes and Martin Tinsley.

Governor Representatives: Hugh Boulter and Jo Haswell.

Non- School Representatives: Gillian May.

Also in attendance: Mr J Wilding (Claire's Court) and Mrs Farnden (Forest Bridge).

Officers: Kevin McDaniels, David Cook, Phil Herd, Alan Abrahamson, Geoff King.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Gina Kendell and Amanda Hough.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 11 October 2016 were approved as a true and correct record subject to Gillian May attendance replacing Anne Entwistle.

DSG 2017-18 SETTLEMENT AND STRATEGY FOR MANAGING DSG IN FUTURE YEARS

The Chairman informed the Forum that this item and agenda item 8 were interrelated. It was planned to discuss the DSG then the other agenda items were pertinent to the final decision that would be taken at agenda item 8.

The Head of Education and Schools informed the Forum that the report summarised RBWM's 2017-18 DSG allocation and set out proposals for managing the DSG for the next two years in light of the 2017/18 funding arrangements. The Forum were informed that since they had met as a task group in December 2016 there had been an unexpected addition of £390k into the high needs block.

Although the additional funding was welcome and the report showed the difference between the Forum's December discussion and the current position section 3.5 of the report did highlight future potential pressures. The DFE had now released draft proposals for the re-distribution of high needs funding with the indicative figures showing that RBWM could lose £2.3m if this new formula was to be implemented.

The report went on to show, as illustrated in table 4.2, that if we continue on the current direction of travel regarding spending then there would be a £5.8 million overspend. Potential options to manage the pressures within each block were explained in the report's annexes. It was proposed that a task group be established to look at saving proposals and that the Forum would be asked to approve a reduction in AWPU of 0.5% to support high needs pressures.

Alison Penny asked why some schools had not been affected by the proposals shown in the report and was informed that some schools would be protected by the minimum funding guarantee.

The Chairman asked that with regards to agenda page 23 paragraph C what the implications would be if our base line was incorrect. The Forum were informed that the DFE would look to see how much we had borrowed from the school block for high needs and compare our spending with other authorities. LEA's have been told they can no longer keep borrowing from the schools block. The Chairman also mentioned that it was worth noting that out of borough placements was the biggest budget growth regarding high needs.

Gillian May asked if the working group to look at out of borough placements had been established and was informed that the report was proposing setting up a task group that would look at those placements but also other saving opportunities.

The Chairman had agreed that Mr James Wilding, Claire's Court, could address the Forum on this item.

Mr Wilding informed that he had been head teacher since 1981 and the school was very popular and approximately 700 pupils choose the school because of their special needs. The school worked with a number of local authorities and each authority had their own rules regarding placements. At their nursery school approximately 85% of students were PVI's. one of their challenges was not being able to communicate effectively with RBWM. He mentioned that Buckinghamshire had the provision that if urgent action was required then there would be funding made available. He understood that there were funding challenges but as a private institute it was difficult to get support.

Mr Wilding noted that the RBWM consultation submission on the green paper had said that independent schools should not get funding for high needs placements. He had held discussions with the Head of Education and understood that a liaison officer would be appointed and he offered his help to the Schools Forum in their deliberations regarding high needs placements.

The Chairman mentioned that the funding situation was not going to get any better soon so it was important that a working party be established as soon as possible. The vice-chairman mentioned that the terms of reference and timescale needed to be clear and relevant to have an impact.

The Forum had been circulated a list of High Needs Expenditure and Jo Haswell informed that it had been difficult accessing SEN services and a lot of the services on the list had not been known to her.

The Head of Education and schools informed that a link officer was being put in place and would work with local independent schools and that moving to Achieving for Children would enable the LA to have a dedicated officer looking at the local offer.

Martin Tinsley asked if the Forum should also engage with the public health, for example over CAMHS, as part of the review and was informed that this was important especially regarding mental health.

The Chairman had agreed that Elizabeth Farnden, Forest Green School,, could address the Forum on this item.

Elizabeth informed the Forum that Forest Bridge opened four terms ago and had 29 RBWM pupils with the rest being from other LA's. There were temporary accommodation on site and due to challenges with planning they could not get the school to its 96 capacity. Any cut in funding would hit the school hard. The Forum were also informed that the school had children with significant behaviour problems and thus a key priority was keeping children safe. She understood the need to make savings and said that she would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the working group and see how we bring more pupils back into the borough.

The Forum were informed by both secondary and primary head representatives that both sectors were not supportive of the proposed cut in AWPU.

It was noted that a reduction in high needs placements out of borough would help and the Forum were informed that although they did not need to identify savings at this meeting the Forum did need to agree the level of savings required so the DFE could be informed.

The Chairman asked what the consequences would be if a zero balance could not be achieved and was informed that the consequences were not known. The national funding formula would split the high needs and the school block and it was expected that either schools, the LEA or both would have to pay any difference.

The Forum noted the report and the recommendations would be reviewed under agenda item 8.

EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA 2017-18

The Forum considered the report regarding the implications of the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) and the suggested options for implementing a new local Early Years Funding Formula within the EYNFF framework.

The Forum were informed that the likely implications to RBWM of the EYNFF were covered in October's forum meeting. Since that meeting the response to the Government's consultation had been published and the early years block for 2017-18 was now estimated at £9.666m based upon the latest census data, the components of this was shown in table 2.3.

The Forum were informed that section 4 of the report showed the consultation questions put to local providers. Section 5 showed the final proposals which were:

- There will be one universal base rate for all providers.
- There will be three deprivation tiers.
- The deprivation tier will start at 10%.
- The quality supplement will be based upon staff qualifications.
- The saving from not having a leadership supplement would be put into the staff qualifications supplement. (this could be reviewed for 2018-19 given the lack of clarity over this).
- There will not be a sparsity or flexibility supplement.
- There will not be an EAL supplement for 2017-18 but this will be reviewed for 2018-19.

The proposed hourly rates were shown in section 5.2 of the report.

Resolved unanimously: that the Schools Forum note the implications of the EYNFF as outlined in the DFE's publication dated 2nd December 2016 and summarised in the report. That the recommendations would be reviewed in one years time and specifically would look at the leadership supplement due to the lack of clarity at the present time.

2017-18 SCHOOLS BUDGET AND CENTRALLY RETAINED BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Chairman informed the Forum that the figures contained within the report were based on the assumption that there was no decrease in AWPU.

The Forum were informed that the report summarises RBWM's proposed schools budget allocation and the schools block central budgets. The Forum were asked to approve the final 2017-18 funding formula as set out in Annexe 3 to this report and the indicative individual school budget shares set out in annexe 4. Maintained schools were asked to vote by sector on individual centralised services as set out in the report.

Resolved unanimously: that the secondary sector approved the Secondary De-delegated services 2017-18 as set out in 3.7 of the report.

Resolved unanimously: that the primary sector approved the Primary De-delegated services 2017-18 as set out in 3.7 of the report.

With regards to Early Help advisors in schools the Forum raised concern that they had previously agreed to fund the services and after an initial good start the social workers had been re-allocated into the MASH. The Forum were informed that this had now been reversed and the service should be available and officers would check why schools were finding it difficult to access the service.

Resolved unanimously: that the Schools Forum approved the Central schools expenditure 2017-18 as set out in section 4.2 of the report.

Resolved unanimously: that the combined services budgets allocation be deferred until March 2017.

It was noted that in October 2016, Schools Forum gave their approval to retain £315k in 2017-18 to pay for the services that were previously funded by the retained duties element of ESG.

Resolved unanimously: that the final 2017-18 funding formula as set out in Annexe 3 of the report and the individual school budget shares set out in annexe 4 be approved.

NEW ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The Forum considered the report that informed that the Department for Education (DfE) funding strategy had made changes to the way schools were funded. As a result of this the LEA was required to change the way it provides schools (the term schools and colleagues with High Needs funding for children and young people with special educational needs (replaced by EHC Plans).

The Schools Forum had previously agreed in to a period of consultation, leading to a revised process for allocating High Needs Funding to support Children and Young People eligible for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or statement of Special educational needs. This consultation had taken place and it was planned that a change in methodology would be implemented from April 2017.

The report detailed the consultation methodology and the findings.

Gillian May reported that she currently had a funding gap and wanted reassurance that the £6k additional funding would be available. The colleague currently had 140 SEN pupils but only received funding for 82. The Forum was informed that the funding was available and there was a line in the handout previously provided that showed funds taken from the DFG. It was not proposed to change the amount of funding provided but how it was divided.

Joolz Scarlett mentioned that it was disappointing that behaviour had not been included in the matrix and was informed that it was not intended to be included as you could not distinguish between the child's behaviour and the environment. There was a disagreement on this statement and it remained a moot point.

The Chairman mentioned that as the report was to note the issues it raised could be considered as part of the working group that was to be established as per agenda item 4.

DSG 2017-18 SETTLEMENT AND STRATEGY FOR MANAGING DSG IN FUTURE YEARS

The Chairman informed that the Forum were asked to make resolutions on the recommendations in agenda item 4, DSG 2017-18 Settlement and Strategy for Managing DSG in Future Years.

Resolved unanimously: That the Schools Forum approves:

- **The retention of headroom to support the high needs block.**
- **The increased early year's retention to support high needs.**
- **The carry forward of the DSG Deficit be acknowledged.**
- **The Forum did not approve the proposed reduction in AWPU of 0.5% to support high needs pressures.**

The Forum endorsed the establishment of a working group to look at savings for the high needs block.

OUTCOME OF DFE SECOND CONSULTATION ON NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA

The Chairman asked if the Forum would like to hold a separate meeting to respond to the consultation and it was approved that the forum would meet on 2nd March 2017, details to be confirmed.

The Forum were informed that the LEA would make its own submission and individual schools were encouraged to respond to the consultation as well as the Schools Forum.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 2.30 pm, finished at 4.45 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....