

SCHOOLS FORUM

THURSDAY, 17 JANUARY 2019

PRESENT: Martin Tinsley (Chairman), Mike Wallace, Hugh Boulter, Chris Tomes, Amanda Dean, Joolz Scarlett, Sarah Cottle, Frances Walsh

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Kevin McDaniel, Tracey Anne Nevitt and James Norris and Sarah Ward.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Isabel Cook, Amanda Hough and Alison Penny.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2018 be approved.

SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Kevin McDaniel, Director of Children's Services (AfC) listed the following vacancies:

- Academy school
- Maintained school
- Maintained PRU
- Non Schools Early Years.

Dr Andrew Morrison Headteacher Furze Platt Senior School was appointed to the Academy School vacancy.

The Director of Children's Services (AfC) stated he would approach Haybrook PRU and ask if they would be interested in nominating a representative and he would keep in contact with the Early Years settings.

The Director of Children's Services (AfC) said he had been contacted by a union with a request to be added as a member to the Schools Forum. He stated it was not a statutory requirement to add them and he felt it was not appropriate to add them as a voting member of the Forum. Chris Tomes stated it was a public meeting so they could attend. Mike Wallace said if they were added as a member, it could set a precedence for other bodies to become Forum Members. The Director of Children's Services (AfC) stated he would take the comments back to the union and let them know they could attend the meetings but would not be co-opted as members.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Schools Forum noted the contents of the paper and approved the current schedule of Members and encouraged new applications to fill vacancies.

BUDGET MONITORING AND FORECAST 2018/19

James Norris, Head of Finance (AfC), informed Members that the report was an updated projection on the forecast and he had a positive update. The updated projected in-year deficit was a £134,000 a net favourable movement of £257,000 to the previously reported position. The Head of Finance (AfC) listed the following headline movements:

- Adverse movements
- Savings plan underachievement £158,000
- School costs in year business rate revaluations £85,000
- Favourable movements
- Receipt of High Needs Block in year allocation (£368,000)
- Early Years in year underspend on providers due to lower volumes than budgeted (£100,000)
- Others net (£32,000).

The Head of Finance (AfC) stated the Borough had received funding for the High Needs Block of £368,000 for both 2018/19 and 2019/20 so that had been released into the forecast; additionally there was an underspend in Early Years of £100,000. He directed Members to table one which listed all the details and table two which gave comments.

Chris Tomes asked if the High Needs money was used for the deficit to offset it. The Head of Finance (AfC) responded it was unexpected so the forecast had been updated to reflect this favourable movement. The Director of Children's Services (AfC) explained that as part of the budget setting 2018/19, the Forum agreed a one year only £416,000 transfer into the High Needs Block. The Head of Finance (AfC) confirmed most of the £416k was still available and that no bids for transformation funding had been received from the schools.

The Director of Children's Services (AfC) confirmed a DSG deficit of 1% would require the Forum to submit a recovery plan to the DfE. This is a new responsibility on all authorities exceeding a 1% deficit position. He added that the Borough was striving to drive down the overspend position.

James Norris, Head of Finance (AfC), stated any underspend of the £416,000 would be rolled over and ring fenced.

James Norris, Head of Finance (AfC), added the net overspend of £134,000 would be an additional pressure on the dedicated schools grant reserve which as at 31 March 2018 was a deficit of £1,212,000; the revised projected deficit as at 31 March 2019 had increased by £134,000 to £1,346,000.

The projected reserve balance as at 31 March 2019 of £1,346,000 excluded the Risk and Opportunities Register net balance estimated of £200,000 overspend, therefore the projected reserve balance as at 31 March 2019 could increase to £1,546,000.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Schools Forum noted the contents of the report including the reported variance, schedule of Risks and Opportunities and the projected deficit balance carried forward as at 31 March 2019.

REPORTING ON THE RESULTS: CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO EARLY YEARS DEPRIVATION FUNDING 2019/20

Kevin McDaniel, Director of Children's Services stated the paper looked at consultation feedback. There were two model options. Model one was to introduce category 3 to the deprivation formula and increase the rates by 18% to ensure more pupils received the funding. Model 2 was to introduce category 3 to the current deprivation formula and increase the base hourly rate to £4.34 to ensure more pupils received the funding. The Director of Children's Services asked the Forum which model they preferred and stated following their comments he would take a view before making a decision on which model to approve.

The Chairman stated both models would mean an increase in funding for settings, with model 1 being more targeted and model 2 more universal.. Tracey Anne Nevitt, AfC Finance, stated there was a small group that would not receive funding from model 1 which was probably why most respondents opted for model 2, resulting in all settings receiving an increase. Members noted there was only five schools that would lose under model one. The Director of Children's Services directed Members to 3.2 of the report where it informed that one third of settings responded to the consultation so it could be assumed, that this marginal funding increase, was not generally viewed as a significant issue. It was a local authority decision but would he would take guidance from the Forum. The Chairman stated the Borough was a relatively affluent area and the children that were disadvantaged needed more support so his opinion was to go with model 1. Chris Tomes stated from a moral stance he viewed model 1 was appropriate Members agreed to recommend model 1.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Schools Forums considered the responses to the consultation and recommended model one for the Early Years funding as from 1 April 2019. This view was agreed by the Director of Children's Services.

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT INDICATIVE SETTLEMENT 2019/20

The Head of Finance (AfC) stated the report showed the allocations for the schools block and central schools services block but they were only indicative for the early years and high needs block. A total of £116,495,000 funding has been allocated to RBWM and the table in the report showed the blocks allocation and net allocations. The biggest changes since autumn / winter were illustrated in paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the report.

There was additional growth funding of £293,000, additional funding for census data of £1,300,000 and the details were listed in paragraph 5.3 of the report.

Tracey Anne Nevitt, AfC Finance, stated she had the government data set figures and all schools census data had been collated. She went through what was agreed at the Schools Forum and applied the Authority Pro-Forma Tool and that ended up with marginal negative headroom. She added the negative headroom was due to a 17% increase in secondary schools for free school meals and the reason for the increase could be down to a number of factors. The Chairman asked if parents were more aware of claiming for the free school meals. Tracey Anne Nevitt responded there was a change in attainment which changed who was eligible, so that brought down the rate and gave out more funding in that area. LPA had impacted on year nine. The EAL numbers dropped by 7.3% which was the first time that change had been seen. Tracey Anne Nevitt explained business rates were funded on the lag and there had been a 3.3% increase so, impacting no headroom. She had put the figures through

model one, applying minimum funding levels implementing scaling and capping. Scaling was not as high as modelled or as high as 2018/19; To get the model balanced, she had rescaled and the Borough still got an increase in 2019/20 but not the level proposed in model one. She added EAL funding had been reduced. The overall impact of funding was an additional £2.1m which would be ratified at Full Council 26th February 2019. She would arrange for the school budgets to be sent to schools early February 2019.

Joolz Scarlett stated 5.8 showed £100m cap investment. She asked when the Forum would hear back regarding the Borough's free school application. The Director of Children's Services confirmed he had not heard back yet and had been told all reasonable bids would be considered. But he was not told what a reasonable bid was and there was no timeline on that.

Joolz Scarlett asked what the budget reductions in paragraph 5.10 of the report were. Tracey Anne Nevitt responded they were direct funding reductions which was money that went directly to academies and the BCA. Those organisations that received money were in the Borough's geographical area.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Forum noted the allocation for the DSG; Schools Block, Central School Services Block and High Needs Block for the 2019/20 financial year.

WINDSOR SCHOOL PLACES FALLING ROLLS

Ben Wright, Education Planning Officer stated the Borough was in a different position compared to recent years, with falling rolls in Windsor after several years of growth. He said it was due in part to lower birth rates and outward migration, particularly in reception year. In 2016 there were 537 children on roll in reception in Windsor and the forecast for 2020/21 is 437. The Borough was trying to achieve a 5% surplus of school places to support parental preference but also wanted to avoid schools becoming economically unviable. The Education Planning Officer explained Windsor had hit a peak for middle schools already so the Borough did not need to worry about Windsor Upper Schools in the short to medium term.

The Education Planning Officer stated the Household Cavalry were to move out of Combermere Barracks in Windsor with the Welsh Guards moving in. he was not able to obtain sufficient information from the Welsh Guards about how many children would be requiring school places. Schools in Windsor would be losing 120 children from the Household Cavalry and the Education Planning Officer was hoping that when the children from the Welsh Guards families arrived, that would even the numbers out again.

Section 4.1 of the report listed potential options to deal with the forecast reduction in numbers. Option A would be to do nothing and option B would be to introduce temporary reductions in PANs.

If the Borough did nothing, and a first school in Windsor lost another 35 children, the school could be financially unviable at relatively short notice. The risk for larger schools is they get cohorts of 32 or 35 and would need to employ an extra teacher due to infant class size legislation requiring one qualified teacher per 30 children; however, the school would need at least 39 children for the funding to be in place for that extra

teacher. The Education Planning Officer added it only took a small reduction to take some schools into an unviable situation.

If a temporary reduction in PANs option was employed, there were already consultations ongoing regarding the 2020/21 academic year so, it was too late to change that year group PAN. But, that could go to the School Adjudicator who could change the numbers at a later date. It was very easy to go up in numbers but, more difficult to reduce the PAN.

Windsor Schools had coped with 10% surplus places before but, the figures forecast suggested the surplus could be double that. It was recognised that redundancies might be required if a PAN was reduced for a school, however that was also true in the event of low pupil numbers.

If Schools Forum were to consider using the Falling Rolls fund provision, that is a topslice and would be deducted from delegated budgets so there needed to be agreement about how any PAN reductions were handled. With the schools that were able to.

The Chairman asked how temporary the temporary changes would be. He added there was a lot of new housing being built and he queries how much of that housing would be affordable. The Education Planning Officer responded the Borough could be looking at a more permanent temporary reduction. He did not know how much of the new housing would be for affordable housing.

The Chairman said Windsor was experiencing an aging population so, housing was not changing hands and some houses were being sold for over £1,000,000; he was concerned that not many families with children could afford those kinds of prices. The Education Planning Officer stated new houses would bring in families but, he was unable to say how many. He had been starting conversations with partners now to see how to best manage it.

Kevin McDaniel, Director of Children's Services (AfC) said there was an option C which would be schools working more closer together. There were lots of different ways to change or restructure and the Borough and schools needed to look at different ways that could work. The Director of Children's Services stated if two schools wanted to merge and become one, that could take up to six to nine months. Closing a school took more than a year and to build a school had many issues and was the slowest option of all.

The Chairman stated it was an issue schools were facing and if they waited to act, the would likely increase the impact further down the line. If the deficit needed to be clawed back, it would have to be taken out of the DSG budget. The Director of Children's Services agreed and said it would include cutting back and reductions in staff. Mike Wallace asked if any schools in Windsor had offered to reduce their PAN. The Education Planning Officer said he had written to all Windsor schools and asked them if they would consider reducing their PAN but, he had only received one response which gave their case as to why they should not have their PAN reduced. The Chairman commented that schools recognised the solution had to come from within, but they needed some help getting there. The Director of Children's Services responded that those at risk needed identify what they might do. Radical ideas were needed and he was happy to provide officer support to evaluate solutions and ideas.

Mike Wallace stated that other work needed to be carried out at the same time as action on PANs as a plan B. The Chairman stated that was true as there was potential long-term impact for every school in the area, including Middle and Upper schools.

In summary the Education Planning Officer said schools could go down to any PAN they needed. The Chairman responded that conversations were ongoing to see if schools were happy to reduce their PAN. There were smaller schools at significant risk and the burden could fall on the five smallest schools that were not part of a trust or an academy. The Education Planning Officer confirmed the Borough needed to act now for the 2019/20 academic year.

The Chairman said there were a number of schools that were holding on to find out how many children they would have on roll in September 2019.

The meeting, which began at 2.00 pm, finished at 4.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....