

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 4 JULY 2017

PRESENT: -

- School Members:** Jackie Smith, Vice-Chair - Special Headteacher
Rhian Cockwell, Primary Headteacher
Wendy Conaghan, Academy Headteacher
Charles Law, Special Governor
James Povoas, Academy Headteacher
Ben Slater, Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher
Ray Williams, Primary Governor
Clive Zimmerman, Academy Headteacher
- Non-School Members:** Peter Smith, Trade Unions
Ram Thiagarajah - Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)
- Officers:** Ian Burbidge (Head of Finance, Technical)
Anne Mackay (Finance Manager, Education)
Peter Nathan (Head of Education)

Apologies for absence were received from Janet Urban (Primary Headteacher), Mark Edwards (Governor - Secondary), Alison Lowe (Primary Headteacher) and Jo Morris (Early Years).

Also in attendance: Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member, Children's Services and School Attainment.

1. Appointment of Chair

Resolved – That Janet Urban (Primary Headteacher) be Chair of the Schools Forum for the Municipal Year 2017/18.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved – That Jackie Smith be Vice Chair of the Schools Forum for the Municipal Year 2017/18.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28th March 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Public Question Time

No public questions were asked.

5.

Schools Forum Membership

The Head of Education updated the Forum on Membership matters. He advised that, by September 2017, there would be five vacancies within the Academy block and that he had been in contact with the Academy Trusts regarding the election process.

The Head of Finance, Technical, explained that a report on membership of the Forum would be submitted at the October meeting as the term of office for some members would be expiring in August 2017.

Resolved: That Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers, Swindon Association of Secondary Headteachers and Association Swindon Special School Headteachers liaise together before the next meeting of the Schools Forum to elect five representatives to the Forum.

6.

Post 16 High Needs Funding Update

The Education Commissioner, submitted a report updating the Forum on the level of funding available and the proposed funding allocations for 2017/18 for post 16 high need students that included students attending further education colleges, independent specialist college and other training providers. The Commissioner explained that whilst the budget for this year was less than that allocated last year, the banding values had not changed. The Forum noted that the Local Authority would fund element 3 top ups for a total of 453 students during the 2017/18 academic year and this was an increase of 146 pupils over the Education and Skills Funding Agency approved placements collated through the High Needs Return in October 2013.

Resolved – (1) That it be noted that:

(a) The Local Authority's latest estimate was that a total of 453 Full Time Equivalent ('FTE') post 16 (excluding sixth form) high needs students will need to be financed during the 2017/18 academic year, as detailed in Para. 3.1 – 3.5.

(b) The estimated annual net costs of 53 places at Independent Service Providers ('ISP') was £0.487m and would be charged to the 2017/18 financial year budget as detailed in Para. 3.6 – 3.12.

(c) The annual allocations for Further Education ('FE') College and Training Providers totalling £1.207m would be charged to the 2017/18 financial year as detailed in Para. 3.6 – 3.12.

(d) There was a contingency budget of £0.198m for 88 identified high needs students with no confirmed destination in the financial year as detailed in Para. 3.6 – 3.12.

(e) The current budgeted figures would result in an overspend of £17k, and that the banding values / contingency would be reviewed as part of the October Schools Forum report as detailed in Para. 3.6 – 3.12.

(f) The overall financial year and academic year budget position shown in Table 2 is detailed in Para. 3.6 – 3.12.

(2) That it be agreed that the 2017/18 indicative banding values shown in Table 2 and that these will be reviewed if there was significant variance due to actual take up of places as detailed in Para. 3.6 – 3.12.

7.

2016-17 Actual Year End School Balances

The Finance Manager, Education, submitted a report advising the Forum

regarding the final position on 31st March 2016 school revenue balances compared with the estimated position as forecast by schools in December 2015. The Forum noted that the Local Authority was required to monitor the level of school balances held by schools to provide assurance to the Council's Chief Finance Officer, Director of Children's Services and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools Attainment regarding the financial sustainability of individual schools. The Finance Manager referred to Table 1 of the report, showing how the Local Authority monitored the accuracy of school financial forecasting.

The Finance Manager, Education, elaborated on the financial positions of Red Oaks, Robert Le Kyng and Westrop Primary Schools. The Head of Education responded to a query regarding the request for funding for Robert Le Kyng SRP as submitted at the Forum's meeting on 28th March 2017. The Chair requested that schools be advised what a reasonable brought forward balance should be at the end of the year. The Forum discussed the issue of carried forward balances and how a benchmark might be selected and adopted.

Resolved – That it be noted that:

(a) 26 of 39 (66.7%) of schools final year end reported balances were close to the estimates provided in December as measured by the thresholds agreed by Schools Forum.

(b) 9 of 39 (23%) of schools were reasonably accurate in forecasting their year end balances.

(c) Only 4 of 39 (10.3%) schools have reported significant variances between their final and December estimates of their projected year end balances.

(d) Final school balances, adjusted to exclude in-year Academy conversions, are forecast to be £4.6m which is 32% higher than the December estimates of £3.54million.

(e) One maintained school and the Special Resource Provision ('SRP') unit at one maintained school opened the year with a deficit, two maintained schools and one SRP unit were in deficit at 31st March 2017. The two maintained schools will be submitting balanced approved budgets for 2017/18.

(f) The Local Authority will present further information on the planned use of school balances to the October 2017 Schools Forum.

(2) That the Finance Manager, Education, be requested to submit further information to the Schools Forum on the surplus accrued by Robert Le Kyng Schools at the October 2017 Schools Forum.

(3) That the Finance Manager, Education, be requested to submit further information to the Schools Forum on Robert Le Kyng's SRP financial balance at the October 2017 Schools Forum.

(4) That the Finance Manager, Education, be requested to include information regarding best practice for carrying over financial balances at year end in the next report at the October 2017 Schools Forum.

8. Final Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2016/17

The Finance Manager, Education, presented a report regarding the final position of the 2016/17 retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget following closure of the Local Authorities 2016/17 final accounts. The report provided information on the final spend against the 2016/17 centrally retained budget including commentaries on those areas of the budget where forecast figures proved to be inaccurate. The Finance Manager advised that the retained DSG is monitored in accordance with standard Council budgetary control procedures and submitted

monthly to the Education Leadership Team and periodically submitted to the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet. The Finance Manager referred to the decrease in the final turn-out position and explained that the reasons for the variance from the previous position of £0.424m were the increase in High Needs Top ups following banding adjustments, costs of a new tri-partite funded with Children Social Care and Health and the increase in pressure in Tuition service for pupils that were not funded.

Resolved: That it be noted that:

- (a) The final outturn position (subject to external audit) on the 2016-17.
- (b) Following the out-turn position, the unallocated DSG balance will increase to £0.568m.

9. 2017-18 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Position

The Finance Manager, Education, submitted a report on the latest projected 2017/18 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) retained budget position. It was noted that the latest projection on the 2017/18 retained budget was an out-turn position that would be £0.142 above budget with the projected out-turn position for the unallocated DSG balance would decrease to £0.426m. The Finance Manager explained that Appendix A gave a detailed breakdown of figures and that this information was submitted to the Education Leadership Team at the end of May 2017. The Schools Forum noted the main budgetary pressures were an increase in the overall numbers of pupils in External Placements and High Needs Top-ups and the recoupment by the Education Funding Agency of 26 additional post 16 Element 2 payments that the Local Authority needs to pay for the academic year 2017/18.

Resolved: That it be noted that:

- (a) The final outturn position (subject to external audit) on the 2017-18 retained budget was £0.142m above budget.
- (b) Following the projected out-turn position, the unallocated DSG balance will decrease to £0.426m.

10. 2017-18 DSG budget and Forward Look

The Forum considered a report by the Head of Finance, Technical, updating members on various budget issues that remained unresolved following the Forum's meeting on 28th March 2017. The Head of Finance, Technical, advised that the report included information on the latest position of the 2017/18 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlements and budget. The Head of Education gave an update on the High Needs review being undertaken and advised that with the help of a steering group, a range of areas will be reviewed and these included commissioning of services and funding issues.

The Head of Finance, Technical, explained that St Luke's School had requested funding from reserves to help with its reorganisation of the school. It was noted that DSG would be affected when new schools open across the Borough.

Following the introduction of the report, the Chair, with the Head of Education, responded to members' comments and questions in respect of the following matters:

- High Needs Review. There was no model to benchmark the Review against other local authorities and the consultant was using best practice from

various models.

- Composition of the High Needs steering group.
- Funding for St Luke's School. The school would be unable to obtain an external grant.
- Financing new schools and the financial effect on current schools after the opening of the new ones.

Resolved - That it be noted that:

(a) An update relating to Robert Le Kyng PD SRP will be submitted at the next meeting of the Forum in October 2017.

(b) The current state of the High Needs review as detailed in Para. 3.4.

(c) The Local Authority was looking for a sustainable financial model for the Oakfield project as detailed in Para. 3.7 – 3.10.

(d) Forecasts of required pupil growth funding will need to be considered as part of future budget setting processes as detailed in Para. 3.11 – 3.12.

(e) The current review of the apprenticeship levy arrangements for maintained schools as detailed in Para. 3.13.

(f) The Forum discussed the views of SAPH in relation to the Nylands Campus Outreach Team as detailed in Para. 3.14 - 3.15.

(2) That the Schools Forum approve the use of £22k of reserve to support St Luke's School.

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