

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2016

PRESENT: -

School Members: Steve Colledge, Chair - Academy Headteacher
Andrew Henstridge, Primary Headteacher
Ray Williams, Primary Governor
Jackie Smith, Special Headteacher
Wendy Conaghan, Academy Headteacher
Ben Slater, EOTAS
Alison Lowe, Primary Headteacher
David Bell, Secondary Governor
Charles Law, Special Governor
Sue Banks, Secondary Headteacher

Non-School Members: Kate Adams, Early Years Representative
Jo Morris, Early Years Representative
Ram Thiagarajah, BME
Peter Smith, Trade Unions

Officers: Peter Nathan, Head of Education
Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools
Anne Mackay, Finance Manager, Education

Also Present: Councillor Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

Apologies for absence were received from Janet Urban (Primary Headteacher), Rhian Cockwell, (Primary Headteacher), Lauren Costello (Academy Headteacher), Sandra Muir (Academy Headteacher), Jane Wheatley (Primary Headteacher), Andrew Miller (16-19 Partnership) and Graham Taylor (16-19 Partnership).

25. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

26. Public Question Time

In accordance with Standing Order 28, Mr. Alastair Dixon-Patterson, Lydiard Park Academy had submitted questions relating to (a) the number of schools that have Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) following the budget decision made by Swindon Borough Council, (b) the number of schools that will have MFG support in the coming year (2017/2018) assuming that the Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)/per pupil factors remain unchanged, and (c) the overall reduction in MFG payments for the coming year (2017/2018) assuming that AWPU/per pupil factors remained unchanged given it was recalculated annually.

The Chair advised that Mr Dixon-Patterson had been provided with a written response to his questions and that these had been circulated to members for information.

27. 15/16 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Position

Mrs Anne Mackay, Finance Manager, Education, submitted a report advising the Forum on the latest projected 2016/17 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) retained budget position and on the projected year end position against the 2016/17 retained budgets based upon available information at the end of January 2016.

Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools, introduced the report and commented on the changes that had taken place since the last report. In particular, Mr Burbidge highlighted the current projected overspend and explained that this might affect the DSG retained budget held by the Local Authority. He advised that an overspend of £0.722m was projected against the retained DSG Budget for the current financial year and the unallocated balance would be reduced to £0.376m. He confirmed that the DSG figures were subject to change due to top-up funding rates to meet pupil needs. He referred to contingency funding to support unexpected external placements and clarified the position with regard to the 2/3 year old funding arrangements.

Resolved: That the Schools Forum notes:

(1) That the latest projection on the 2015/16 retained budget was an overspend of £0.722m.

(2) That the unallocated Dedicated School Grant balance would be reduced to £0.376m.

28. Projected 2015/16 Year End School Balances

Mrs Anne Mackay, Finance Manager submitted a report advising the Forum regarding the indicative position relating to the level of projected 31st March 2016 school revenue balances as compared to the levels expected when 2015/16 schools budgets were set in June 2015.

Mr Ian Burbidge presented the report and confirmed that by end of financial year, there were 29 schools that had been effective in their financial planning and that only 3 schools indicated a difference in their budgets as opposed to their estimates. The Forum noted that the forecast level for 31st March 2016 was expected to be £3.97m, which was 15% higher than initial estimates of £3.45m.

Mr Steve Colledge, Chair of Schools Forum and Mr Burbidge responded to members' queries regarding:

- Budget variances from the previous year.
- The confirmation that the EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) financial data was not included in the figures presented to members.
- Balances and claw back arrangements for 2016/17.
- The High Needs Funding and Future Funding Model consultations being undertaken by the Department for Education and the need to ensure that all members of Swindon's schools associations responded.
- The confirmation that the 2017/19 Local Formula would be used to

fund Swindon Schools but the amount the LA receives will be determined by the new Government's new National Funding Formula.

Resolved - That it be noted that:

(1) The majority [31 of 41 (76%)] of Swindon maintained schools current estimates of their year end balances were close to the estimates provided when budgets were set as measured by the thresholds agreed by Schools Forum and are commended.

(2) Only 3 of 41 (7%) schools had reported significant variances between their current and initial estimates of their projected year end balances and the narrative explanations for the variances were provided to Schools Forum.

(3) Latest estimated school balances (adjusted to exclude in-year Academy conversions) were forecast to be £3.97m, which was 15% higher than initial estimates of £3.45m.

(4) One maintained school and the Special Resource Provision (SRP) for one mainstream school began the year in a deficit position and both were anticipating being in deficit at 31st March 2015.

(5) Further to (4) above, the maintained school was being supported by the Local Authority as it worked to balance its budget over the current and next two years.

(6) Further to (4) above, Special Resource Provision (SRP) funding was part of an ongoing review by SRP providers, Schools Forum members and the Local Authority.

(7) The Local Authority would present further information on school balances at the July 2016 Schools Forum showing how each school's estimate compared to their final year end positions.

(8) Projected year end balances had also been collected from mainstream schools with a Special Resource Provision (SRP) and from schools providing a commissioned service, Children Centre or community facilities.

(9) Further to (8) above, the rating for the maintained school included the total variances in the projected balances for the additional facilities, as the thresholds agreed by Schools Forum did not include the separation of these facilities.

29. 2016-17 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget

The Forum considered a report by Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools, providing an update on the 2016/17 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement, including (a) changes to the DSG Allocation, (b) an update on Special Resource Provision (SRP) funding, (c) Pupil Growth & Trigger Funding Policy (d) Hearing Impaired Outreach Service (e) Notional Special Education Needs Top-Up Funding, (f) new specialist 16 – 19 and Primary provisions, (g) in-year adjustment to the Notional Special Education Needs (SEN) Top Up funding, (g) Early Years 30 hours pilot and (h) Free School bids.

Mr Burbidge referred to Appendix A of the report which set out communication to headteachers concerning school budgets and reported on the outcome of communication undertaken with the Education Funding Agency. Members noted that following member meetings to discuss School Resource Provision Funding, a sub-committee had been set up to determine a medium to long-term solution within the present funding package. Mr Burbidge advised the meeting of the agreement with the School Resource Provision Group to support the

Robert Le Kyng School Resource Provision Unit on this occasion.

Mr Steve Colledge, Chair of Schools Forum, and Mr Burbidge responded to members' queries regarding the following:

- The difference in pre-opening start up costs between primary, secondary and special schools.
- The reason why set up funding for 19-25 provision was not available for Special Schools.
- That the Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers had discussed the new primary provision at Crowdy's Hill School and they were in support of additional special school places for SEN primary schools students.
- Confirmation that five Free School Bids affecting Swindon were being considered.
- The effect of the Eastern Villages house expansion on school place planning.
- The F40 Group recommendations to Government regarding the proposed funding arrangements.

Mr Burbidge reiterated the importance that all schools, with the support of their governors, respond to the various consultations regarding future funding. Members noted that meetings with SASH, SAPH and ASSSH were being undertaken to form a collected response to the consultation.

Resolved - (1) That the Schools Forum approves that an additional £45k of one off funding package be made available for Robert Le Kyng Special Resource Provision.

(2) That the School Forum notes:

(a) That further to (1) above, officers will propose a long term solution for discussion at the October meeting.

(b) That the continuation of the Hearing Impaired Outreach provided by Red Oaks will cost of £77,483.

(c) The growth and trigger funding policy was not agreed in its current form and therefore will be reviewed and presented to the July Schools Forum meeting for approval.

(d) That officers intend to review the Notional Special Educational Needs Policy and will present options to the July meeting for discussion.

(e) That a report will be presented to the July Schools Forum with draft Post 16 funding allocations for the 2016/17 academic year.

(f) That the Forum gave their view on the intention to open a new 16 – 19 Form provision at Crowdy's Hill Special School.

(g) That the Forum gave their view on the intention to open a new primary provision at Crowdy's Hill Special School.

(h) That Swindon has been selected to pilot the 30 hours of Early Years provision.

(i) That five bids have been submitted to the EFA to provide new free schools in Swindon.

(j) That the Strategic Planning Manager will be requested to circulate the link regarding the Eastern Village expansion.

(k) That the Head of Finance advised that links to the various consultations regarding funding were available via schools online.

(l) That members of the Forum will meet in April to discuss a formal response to the consultations regarding future funding.

30.

Chair's Announcement

The Chair informed members that this was the last meeting he would be Chairing as he was retiring. On behalf of the Board, Councillor Fionuala Foley thanked Mr Steve Colledge for his dedication and valuable contributions and wished him well in his retirement. Members noted that Janet Urban (Primary Headteacher) would chair the next meeting of the Schools Forum.