

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2016

PRESENT: -

School Members: Janet Urban, Chair - Primary Headteacher
Jackie Smith, Vice-Chair - Special Headteacher
Rhian Cockwell, Primary Headteacher
Wendy Conaghan, Academy Headteacher
Alison Lowe, Primary Headteacher
Charles Law, Special Governor
Sue Banks, Secondary Headteacher
Clive Zimmerman, Academy Headteacher

Non-School Members: Kate Adams, Early Years Representative
Peter Smith, Trade Unions

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

Also Present: Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Karen Reeve (Director of Children's Services), Marie Horton (School Improvement Advisor), Paul Davis (SEN/High Needs and Finance Officer), Andree Ferguson (Head of Litigation and Personal).

Apologies for absence were received from Ben Slater (EOTAS), Ray Williams (Primary Governor) and James Povoas (Academy Headteacher).

11. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

12. Public Question Time

In accordance with Standing Order 28, Mr. Alastair Dixon-Patterson, Lydiard Park Academy had submitted questions relating to (a) the constitution and membership of Schools Forum, (b) the review of the regulations and (c) the election of the current members.

The Chair thanked Mr Dixon-Patterson for his question and advised that a written response would be provided.

13. Schools Forum Membership

The Head of Education submitted a report advising members that a review of the Schools Forum had been conducted. Mr Peter Nathan, Head of Education, advised that the review had been undertaken to ensure that the current membership was appropriate in light of the evolving balance of schools in Swindon and with

regards to the 2002 Education Act, Schools Forum (England) regulations 2012 and Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide 2015. He referred to the membership structure and advised that to ensure proportionality, there was only one member from the maintained secondary school and that an extra member be elected by the mainstream Academy proprietors at a later date.

Mr Nathan responded to members' queries regarding the representation from Special Schools and the election of an academy representative by the Academy proprietors.

Resolved: That the Schools Forum recommends to Council that:

(a) The maintained school members within each group are drawn from headteachers, senior members of staff and governors.

(b) The number of mainstream Schools Forum members remains at 12 (21 Schools Forum members in total).

(c) The vacant maintained secondary governor position is deleted.

(d) That one extra member is elected to represent mainstream academies, to be elected at a later date by the proprietors of mainstream Swindon Academies.

(e) The Proposed membership structure and representatives of Schools Forum at Appendix 1 of the report.

(f) The Terms of Reference for Schools Forum be revised as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

(g) It notes there is currently a vacancy for a representative of Special Academies and the proprietor of the special academy is requested to seek a representative for Schools Forum.

(h) That the Head of Education be requested to contact the Academy proprietors to request they nominate a representative to the Schools Forum.

14. Education Funding Agency Funding Changes for Post 16 (Education Other Than At School) Pupils

Mrs Marie Horton, School Improvement Advisor, presented a report to inform Schools Forum members about the changes to Education Funding Agency (EFA) funding regulations for learners who require additional high needs funding in post 16 organisations. Mrs Horton advised that historically, the Local Authority provided funding for all learners from Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) settings as they progressed into post 16 education irrespective of their Special Educational Need (SEN) and that this included a one off payment to providers of £250 per pupil to support transition.

Mrs Horton responded to members' queries regarding:

- The settings that would benefit from these changes.
- The implementation date for these changes.
- The work pressures on the Special Educational Needs Assessment Team (SENAT) and if they would be able to deliver the service within timescales.

Resolved: That it be noted that:

(a) The Local Authority was reviewing its practice with regard to post 16 high needs funding for EOTAS pupils.

(b) That from September 2017, high needs funding will only be provided for those post 16 learners who have an Education Health and Care Plan.

(c) That the School Improvement Advisor be requested to circulate information before the next meeting of the Forum on how the Special Educational Needs Assessment Team would be delivering this service.

15.

Post 16 High Needs Funding Update

Mr Paul Davis, SEN/High Needs and Finance submitted a report updating the Forum on the level of funding available and the proposed funding allocations for 2016/17 for post 16 high need students that included students attending further education colleges, independent specialist college and other training providers.

Mr Davis commented on the various issues that influence funding allocations particularly regarding the contingency funding for 81 unconfirmed placements

Resolved: That it be noted that:

(a) The latest projected 2016/17 financial year costs arising from the Local Authority funding responsibilities for Post 16 High Needs Students was estimated at £1.954m for an estimated 311 post 16 (excluding school sixth form) high needs students.

(b) Further to (a) above, this included costs of 36 placements at Independent Specialist Providers (ISP) of £0.383m and indicative allocations to Further Education colleges and training providers of £1.323m for 275 students.

(c) That banding values for the 2016/17 academic year remain at the indicative values notified to Schools Forum in July 2016, which have reduced slightly since the 2015/2016 academic year to fit within the available funding envelope.

16.

2016-17 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 August 2016.

Mrs Mackay introduced the report and commented on the changes that had taken place since the last report and advised that to the end of August, finances were in a better position than indicated in past reports and that the balance would be added to the existing unallocated DSG balances.

Resolved: That it be noted that:

(a) The latest projection on the 2016-17 retained budget was £0.407m below budget.

(b) Following the projected out-turn position, the unallocated Dedicated School Grant balance will increase to £0.616m.

17.

Monitoring School Balances

The Forum considered a report submitted by Ms Anne Mackay, Finance Manager, Education, setting out the level of school balances, particularly regarding the planned use of 2014-15 surplus balances during 2015-16 and the use of 2015-16 surplus balances in 2016-17 and beyond.

Mrs Mackay referred to the estimated school revenue balances expected to be held on 31st March 2016 as forecast by schools in December June 2015. She referred members to the planned use of 2015/16 surplus balances during 2016/17 and the use of 2016/17 surplus balances in 2017/18 and beyond. Mrs Mackay advised members of the estimated school revenue balances expected to be held on 31st March 2017 as forecast by schools in June 2016 and estimated school revenue balances expected to be held on 31st March 2018 and 31st March 2019 as forecast

by schools in June 2016.

Mrs Mackay, Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools and Mr Peter Nathan, Head of Education, responded to members' queries regarding the financial impact on special schools, particularly relating to non-teaching staff and the difficulty for schools to monitor budgets.

Resolved: That it be noted that:

(a) The final 31st March 2016 school revenue balances as compared with the estimated position as forecast by schools in December 2015.

(b) The planned use of schools' surplus balances brought forward at 1st April 2016 and the schools' committed use of these balances in 2016/17.

(c) The schools projected 31st March 2017 surplus balances and the schools' committed use of these balances in 2017/18.

(d) Based on the survey forms received, nineteen schools plan to hold uncommitted balances on 31st March 2017 which exceed the target per pupil values agreed by the Schools Forum.

(e) The analysis of schools' planned use of March 2016 surplus balances in 2016/17.

(f) The indicative future balances to be held by schools at 31st March 2018 and 31st March 2019, taken from the three year budget plans submitted by schools in June 2016.

(g) The number of schools forecasting low balances on 31st March 2017, 31st March 2018 and 31st March 2019.

(h) The school balances claw back mechanism remains in place and the circumstances that need to apply for it to be implemented by the LA.

(i) That the Finance Manager, Education, be requested to circulate the Control of Balance Scheme to maintained schools.

18. Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

Mrs Anne Mackay, Finance Manager Education, submitted a report (a) updating the Forum on the findings of the review of the 2015/16 Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) self-assessments, as required by the Department for Education and (b) proposing a consistent process across all relevant schools for future submission.

Mrs Mackay introduced the report and referred to the requirements of SFVS assessments which non-academy schools were required to complete once a year and submit to the Local Authority, to demonstrate that they have sound financial management practice and processes in place. She referred to guidance to be issued by the Local Authority and drew members' attention to Appendix 1 of the report that reflected best practice sample answers. Mrs Mackay thanked the schools for their collaboration in supplying the model answers.

Resolved: That it be noted that:

(a) The Local Authority was issuing guidance on how best to complete the Schools Financial Value Standard return and future submissions should follow this guidance.

(b) The Schools Financial Value Standard assessment forms part of the LA's financial health check of schools and schools may be contacted to verify evidence in support their assessments.

The Forum considered a report by Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools, that included information on the latest position of the 2016/17 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlements and budget. He explained that following the Forum's meeting on 12th July 2016, the report addressed (a) an update on the Early Years 30 hours testing, (b) an update on the notional Special Educational Needs top-up funding, (c) the Tuition Services review, (d)) the Special Schools Primary provision, (e) the free school bids affecting Swindon, (f) the impact of the apprenticeship levy on schools in Swindon, (g) the de-delegation of funding, (h) the SALT review, (i) the High Needs moderation and (j), an update on the Early Years Consultation.

Mr Peter Nathan, Head of Education referred to the successful implementation of the 30 hours free childcare offer being tested at Great Western Hospital, the Brunel Centre, Honda and BMW. Mr Burbidge explained how the Notional SEN was assessed and confirmed that whilst a budget of £709k was required, the current budget sat at £400k and proposed a number of changes to the formula to reduce the pressure on the budget.

Mr Peter Nathan and Mr Burbidge responded to members' queries regarding:

- The three Notional SEN calculation proposals submitted for consideration and how they affected main stream provision.
- The proposed consultation regarding the increase in the number of places at Brimble Hill Special School and the infrastructure required if the proposal was approved.
- The promotion of apprenticeships within the Local Authority and the offer of support for schools wishing to employ apprentices.
- The pressures faced by special school staff as the Special Educational Needs Assessment Team would no longer be undertaking the High Needs moderation exercise.
- The impact in Swindon of the Early Years Pupil Premium funding allocation, particularly for pupils with special educational needs.
- The distribution of the 5% Early Years Block funding retained by the Local Authority.

Resolved: That it be noted:

(a) That all mainstream High Needs funded pupils will be included in future calculations.

(b) That a percentage of Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) is included in the Notional Income calculation and that this was anticipated to be between 1.3% & 1.75%.

(c) The outcomes and recommendations from the tuition service Review.

(d) That the Local Authority intends to consult on increasing the number of pupils at Brimble Hill Special School.

(e) That the Local Authority intends to increase the number of pupils at Crowdys Hill Special School.

(f) The current status of the bids that have been submitted to the Education Funding Agency to provide new free schools in Swindon.

(g) The potential impact of the apprenticeship levy on schools in Swindon.

(h) That members of the Forum be requested to consult with their relevant Headteacher Associations in order that in January 2017, they can vote on de-

delegation arrangements of Free School Meals eligibility, Trade Union and the Nylands Campus Outreach Team.

(i) That the Local Authority will be undertaking a review of the Speech and Language Therapy Service.

(j) That the Minutes of the SEND Project Board be submitted for noting at the next meeting of the Committee on 17th January 2017.

(k) The changes to the High Needs moderation process.

(l) The main aspects of the Early Years funding reform consultation.

20.

Any Other Business

Mr Gareth Cheal, Strategic Planning Manager, explained that in 2014, the Great Western Academy was granted permission to open a Free School in North Swindon and he referred to the work being undertaken in the area.

He advised that the Department for Education (DfE) was reviewing future forecast of school places and decided that a minimum of 120 pupils would be required as the schools' first intake to make it viable. Discussions with the DfE had been undertaken and it was agreed that Swindon would underwrite the first cohort of 120 pupils.

Resolved: That members of the Committee submit comments to the Strategic Planning Manager regarding this arrangement by 4th November 2016.