

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2017

PRESENT: -

School Members: Janet Urban, Chair - Primary Headteacher
Mark Edwards, Governor - Secondary
Ben Slater, Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher
Charles Law, Special Governor
Clive Zimmerman, Academy Representative

Non-School Members: Emma Lindsay – Diocese of Bristol

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member, Children's Services and School Attainment and Rhian Cockwell (Primary Headteacher), Mark Edwards (Governor - Secondary), Emma Leigh-Bennett (Mainstream Academy), Jackie Smith (Special Schools Headteacher), Peter Smith (Trade Unions) and Ray Williams, Primary Governor.

11. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

12. Public Questions

In accordance with Standing Order 28, Mr Alastair Dixon- Patterson of Lydiard Park Academy, Swindon, submitted written questions regarding (a) school charges for permanent exclusions under the charging policy approved by the Schools Forum; (b) the "money to follow pupil" paid to the school the pupil joined once a new place was allocated; and (c) EOTAS calculations of funding between exclusion and placement in the new school allocated. Written responses had been prepared and these were tabled at the meeting.

13. Schools Forum Membership Update

The Head of Education updated the Forum on Membership matters. He advised that a short review of current membership had been undertaken to ensure that the current membership was appropriate in the light of the evolving balance of schools in Swindon.

Resolved – (1) That the Schools Forum confirms the following appointments: Emma Lindsay - diocesan representative from the Bristol Church Of England Diocese, Emma Leigh-Bennett, Bob Linnegar, Sammy Edge and Karen Pyman as Academy Member representatives .Nick Capstick - Special Academy representative.

(2) That it be agreed that the number of members of the Schools Forum be maintained at 22 members and that it be noted that there were no changes to the membership structure nor to the current representation on the Forum.

(3) That it be noted that there was a vacancy for a Black and Minority Ethnic representative and that nominations will be sought through the Equalities Advisory Forum.

14. 2017-18 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Position

The Finance Manager, Education, submitted a report advising the Forum on the latest projected 2017/18 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) retained budget position and on the projected year end position against the 2017/18 retained budgets based upon available information at the end of August 2017. She introduced the report, commenting on the changes that had taken place since the last report, and advised that, to the end of August, the projected out-turn position was forecast to be £0.18m above the overall budget. This deficit was the result of an increase in funding for high risk areas, as reflected in Appendix A of the report, and included an increase in High Needs Top Ups due to the rise in number of pupils supported by these and adjustments made to the bandings in special and mainstream settings.

In response to a query regarding the budget deficit, the Head of Education advised that the shortfall may either be clawed back from DSG reserves, or added to the DSG figures as a brought forward deficit. Alternatively, it may be deducted from the Schools Block Funding. Schools Forum members were advised that the final option choice will be taken following consultation with schools.

Resolved - That it be noted that:

(a) The latest projection on the 2017/18 retained budget was £0.180m above budget.

(b) Following the projected out-turn position, the unallocated Dedicated School Grant balance will decrease to £0.366m.

15. 2017-18 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget and Forward Look

The Forum considered a report by the Head of Finance – Technical, providing an update on the latest position of the 2017/18 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlements and budget. He explained that the report included updates on (a) work of the Admissions team (b) 2 Year olds' education (c) 30 hours of provision for 3 and 4 year olds, (d) education support grant and education function charge, (e) de-delegation, (f) new schools affecting Swindon's mainstream budget, (g) National Fair Funding, and (h) the Oakfield Project.

Following his presentation of the report, the Head of Finance – Technical, with the Head of Education, responded to the members' questions and comments in respect of the following matters:

- Management of the Local Authority's capital programme, including the financial outlay for the day to day management of PFI staff.
- The new schools opening in Swindon over the next year and how these were affecting funding and next years' budgets.
- The collection of Schools' census data.

Resolved – (1) That it be noted that:

- (a) an update from the admissions team was detailed in Para. 3.1.
- (b) an update on arrangements for 2 year olds education was detailed in Para. 3.4.
- (c) an update relating to 30 hours of provision for 3 & 4 year olds was detailed in Para. 3.8.
- (d) it costs £0.991m for the Local Authority to discharge the statutory duties it provides for all pupils.
- (2) further to (d) above, Schools Forum members be requested to consult with their head teacher associations about these charges before the January Schools Forum.
- (3) That Maintained Schools Forum members note the cost of providing statutory duties by the Local Authority for 2017/18.
- (4) further to (3) above, Maintained School Forum members be requested to consult with colleagues before the January Schools Forum about de-delegation costs for the following services:
- Free School Meals eligibility
 - Trade Union
 - Nylands Campus Outreach team
- (5) That Schools Forum members be requested to consult with their relevant head teacher associations in order to that they can vote on this issue at the Forum's meeting on 17th January 2018.
- (6) That it be noted that:
- (a) the forecasts of required pupil growth funding that will need to be considered as part of future budget setting processes was detailed in Para. 3.21.
- (b) in November, a consultation exercise will be undertaken with schools on the local formula for funding schools in 2018/19, as per the conditions of the National Fair Funding Formula detailed in Para. 3.22.
- (7) That it be agreed that an extraordinary Schools Forum meeting be held on 5th December 2017.
- (8) That it be noted that Schools Forum members received a verbal update on the Oakfield Project.
- (9) That further to (8) above, the Head of Education be requested to circulate the consultation paper regarding the Oakfield Project to Scholl Forum members before its meeting on 5th December 2017.

16. Alternative Provision and Exclusions Report

The Head of Education presented a report updating members on changes to the funding of EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) and Tuition services and the impact this could have on the High Needs Block funding. An update was also provided on the alternative provision working group which included the consideration of introducing a charge for permanently excluded pupils. He explained that exclusions, fixed term, permanent and withdrawn, continue to increase and that this was putting pressure on alternative provision capacity, EOTAS, and the high needs budget and did not fit with the aims of the Swindon Challenge.

The Head of Education elaborated on the model to be adopted to ensure the needs of the child were met within the Councils' budgetary constraints. He referred to the Alternative Provision Working Party 2017-18 stating that the groups' aims were to reduce the rate of fixed term and permanent exclusions to below the

national average, to increase the number of alternative provision re-integrations and reduce the percentage of children who attended more than one secondary school between Years 7 to 11 due to exclusions.

In response to a comment regarding the percentage of schools excluding pupils, the Chair referred to the different practices across schools on how to deal with pupils on the point of exclusion and that good practices should be shared for the benefit of the child.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That an update on changes to the funding of EOTAS and the Tuition services be submitted to the Schools Forum meeting on 5th December 2017.

17. Monitoring of School Balances

The Forum considered a report submitted by the Finance Manager, Education, setting out the level of school balances, particularly regarding the planned use of 2016/17 surplus balances during 2017/18 and the use of 2017/18 surplus balances in 2018/19 and beyond. She referred to the estimated school revenue balances expected to be held on 31st March 2018 as forecast by schools in June 2017 and elaborated on the estimated school revenue balances expected to be held on 31st March 2019 and 31st March 2020 as forecast by schools in June 2017. She commented on the target balances to be held by schools on 31st March 2018, based on the per pupil values previously agreed by Schools Forum.

In response to a query regarding St Luke's Special School, the Head of Education gave a verbal update and stated that the local press had reported on the staffing difficulties at the school. He referred to the actions being undertaken to support the school and confirmed that there may be financial implications for these actions in the future.

The Schools Forum welcomed the Finance Manager, Education's offer of working closely with schools. Referring to members' concerns regarding Robert le Kyng's Primary School and Specialist Resource Provision expenditure, the Finance Manager, Education, confirmed that the school's administration had been made aware that financial assistance by the Schools Forum was not an option.

Resolved – That it be noted that:

(a) the school's surplus balances brought forward at 1st April 2017 was £4.6m and that the schools were committed to use these balances in 2017/18.

(b) the school's estimated surplus balances to 31st March 2018 was £3.7m and that the schools were committed to use these balances in 2018/19.

(c) based on the balance returns received, 25 schools brought forward 2016/17 uncommitted balances which exceed the target per pupil values agreed by the Forum and 21 schools plan to hold uncommitted balances on 31st March 2018 which exceed the target per pupil values previously agreed by the Forum.

(d) target balances to be held by schools were based on the per pupil values previously agreed by Schools Forum and were compared to the actual (e) analyses show that schools' planned to use the surplus balances as of March 2017 in 2017/18.

(f) the indicative future balances to be held by schools at 31st March 2019 and 31st March 2020, taken from the three year budget plans submitted by schools in June 2017, was detailed in paragraphs 3.12 to 3.14, Table 3 and Appendix D.

(g) the number of schools forecasting balances on 31st March 2018, 31st March 2019 and 31st March 2020 was detailed in paragraphs 3.15, 3.16 and Table 4.

(h) the school balances claw back mechanism remained in place and the circumstances for schools to apply for this was to be implemented by the Local Authority.

(i) the information on Robert Le Kyng Primary Schools' balance and Robert Le Kyng Primary Special Resource Provisions' balance was referred to in paragraphs 3.21 to 3.24 of the report.

(2) That the Finance Manager, Education, be requested to circulate information regarding the make-up of "other specific projects" as highlighted in Table 2, 3.11 of the report.

.