

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

Maintained School Members:	Alison Lowe, Primary Headteacher Ray Williams, Primary Governor
Academy Members	Emma Leigh-Bennett, (Mainstream Academy) Bob Linnegar, (Mainstream Academy) Karen Pyman, (Mainstream Academy) Jackie Smith, (Special Academy) Clive Zimmerman, (Mainstream Academy)
Non-School Representatives	Jo Morris Golds, Early Years Peter Smith, Trade Unions
Officers:	Gareth Cheal, Education Place Planning and Admissions Manager Anne Mackay, Finance Manager Education Marie Horton, Strategic Commissioner for Education

Also present: Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Education and Skills.

Apologies for absence were received from Nick Capstick, (Special Academy), Rhian Cockwell (Primary Headteacher), Gary Evans, (Mainstream Academy), Fiona Godfrey (Mainstream Academy), Lindsay Hull, (Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher), Emma Lindsay, Diocese of Bristol), James Povoas (Mainstream Academy) and Steve Wain (16-19 Partnership).

8. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved -

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

(2) That the Finance Manager, Education be requested to liaise with the Cabinet Office and circulate information on actions to be taken by Cabinet to mitigate the pressures on the High Needs Budget.

9. Schools Forum Membership Update

Mr Gareth Cheal, the Education Place Planning and Admissions Manager updated the Forum on Membership matters. He advised that a review had been undertaken of the current membership in light of the evolving balance of schools in Swindon. He drew attention to point 3.6 of the report highlighting the pupil percentage difference between maintained and academy schools.

In response to a query regarding the appointment of a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) representative on the Schools Forum, Mr Cheal referred to the organisational changes within the Council delaying this appointment and agreed to investigate the matter and refer the matter to the Lead for Organisational Development.

The Chair confirmed that the Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers would be nominating a new member to represent the Academy mainstream members.

Resolved –

- (1) That School Forum agrees that:
 - (a) The number of Primary Maintained School members reduces to three, following the recent primary conversions.
 - (b) The Academy mainstream members increase to eight representatives
- (2) That the School Forum notes that:
 - (a) There was still a vacancy for a Black and Minority Ethnic (“BME”) representative.
 - (b) There was still a vacancy for a 16 – 19 Partnership representative.
- (3) That the Education Place Planning and Admissions Manager be requested to liaise with the Organisational Development Lead regarding co-opting a BME representative onto the Schools Forum.

10. 2019/20 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Position

The Finance Manager, Education, submitted a report advising the Forum on the latest projected 2019/20 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) retained budget position and on the projected year end position against the 2019/20 retained budgets based upon available information at the end of August 2019. 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 £1.573m above the overall budget. This deficit was the result of the increasing demand for High Needs Top ups and Post 16 and Post 19 placements.

Resolved –

- (1) That it be noted that:
 - (a) The latest projection on the 2019-20 retained budget is expected to be £1.573m above budget.
 - (b) Following the projected out-turn position and settlement of the DSG High Needs budget, the outstanding DSG deficit balance to be mitigated stands at £1.265m.

11. 2019/20 Dedicated Schools Grant October Update

The Forum considered a report by the Finance Manager, Education, providing an update on the latest position of the 2019/20 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlements and budget. She explained that the report included updates on (a) Pupil Growth Policy 2019; (b) Scheme of Delegation for Financing Swindon Schools; (c) DSG funding and consultation on 2020/21 Local Funding Formula for Schools and Academies, including Split School Site; (d) exclusion funding recoupment; (e) child at risk of exclusion (CARE) and (f) Early Years update regarding Bright Horizons.

Following her presentation of the report, the Finance Manager, Education, with the Education Place Planning and Admissions Manager and Strategic Commissioner for Education responded to the members’ questions and comments in respect of the following matters:

- The scheme for financing schools has been published by the Local Authority and was to be available to mainstream schools by mid-October 2019.
- The opening of two new schools in Swindon, the costs of opening them, how they were financed and the impact on the main DSG funding.
- Free school funding and how the number of pupils attending affects their finances.
- Demographic modelling and how the Local Authority (LA) uses the Office of National Statistics data to determine new school locations.
- External factors influencing the LA's demographic modelling.
- The need for clarity on what constituted split site costs.
- The opening of nurseries on school sites and how these may be run by private providers.
- Discussions to be undertaken with school opening nurseries on site regarding the age range of children attending.

Resolved –

(1) That the Pupil Growth Policy, be agreed.

(2) That the following be noted:

- a) The Education and Skills Funding Agency guidance on the treatment for new and growing schools.
- b) The Scheme of Delegation for Financing Swindon Schools has been updated.
- c) The expected timeline for release of funding information from the Department for Education.
- d) The Local Authority will arrange a consultation event to take place on 28th November for all schools and academies.
- e) The formula consultation will include a request for the 2020/21 formula to include a new funding factor for Split School Sites.
- f) An Extraordinary Schools Forum meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th December to agree the principles of the new formula for 2020/21.
- g) The indicative autumn census numbers will be requested from all schools and academies in early October 2019.
- h) All permanent exclusions from secondary schools will be charged at a flat rate of £5,000 per pupil at whatever point in the year the exclusion takes place.
- i) Further to (h) above, this change in policy was agreed by all Secondary Head Teachers in Swindon.
- j) The update with regard to Child at Risk of Exclusion (CARE).
- k) The Early Years update with regard to sufficiency of places in Wroughton.

(3) That further to the request from Holy Rood Catholic Primary School for a split site funding factor to be included in future funding allocation, the Finance Manager (Education) be requested to benchmark split site costs with other local authorities.

(4) That further to (3) above, the Finance Manager (Education) be requested to include information on her findings in her report to be submitted at the Schools Forum meeting on 10th December 2019

12. 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 2019/20 surplus balances during 2020/21 and the use of 2021/22 surplus balances

in 2021/22 and beyond. She referred to the estimated school revenue balances expected to be held on 31st March 2019 as forecast by schools in June 2019. She further 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 2019. She commented on the target balances to be held by schools on 31st March 2019, based on the per pupil values previously agreed by Schools Forum.

The Chair voiced her concerns regarding the amount of surplus balances for maintained schools as reflected in the report and advised that if this was mirrored across all the academies, the sum would be substantial. She stated that whilst she understood balancing budgets was challenging for schools as reflected in the implementation of the deficit recovery plan, the in-year funding was to be used for pupils rather than to be accumulated, unless it was to be used for capital works.

The Schools Forum welcomed the Finance Manager, Education's offer of working closely with schools. Following her presentation of the report, the Finance Manager, Education, responded to the members' questions and comments in respect of the following matters:

- The reasons behind the need to implement the clawback mechanism for maintained schools that consistently forecast inaccurate year end expenditure or continuously held high balances. Members noted that the clawback mechanism has to date never been implemented by the Local Authority in Swindon.
- Annual accounts for Academies are available on the schools' website and that whilst the Department for Education recommended academies provided this information in the interest of transparency, the Local Authority was unable to request this information.

Resolved -

(1) That it be noted that:

- (a) The schools' surplus balances brought forward at 1st April 2019 and the schools' committed use of these balances in 2019/20 and 2020/21 was as reflected in paragraph 3.6 of the report.
- (b) The analysis of schools' planned use of surplus balances brought forward in 2019/20 was as reflected in paragraph 3.9 of the report.
- (c) The indicative future balances to be held by schools at 31st March 2020, 31st March 2021 and 31st March 2022, taken from the three year budget plans submitted by schools in June 2019 was as reflected in paragraph 3.11 of the report.
- (d) The number of schools forecasting low balances on 31st March 2020, 31st March 2021 and 31st March 2022 was as reflected in paragraph 3.12 of the report.
- (e) The school balances claw back mechanism remains in place.
- (f) That further to (e) above, the circumstances that need to apply for it to be implemented by the Local Authority be as reflected in paragraphs 3.14 to 3.17 of the report.