

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2020

Maintained School Members:

Rhian Cockwell	Primary Headteacher
Kate Higham	Special Headteacher
Lindsey Hull,	Pupil Referral Unit
Alison Lowe	Primary Headteacher
Ray Williams	Primary Governor

Academy Members

Bob Buckley	Mainstream Academy
Nick Capstick	Special Academy
Gary Evans	Mainstream Academy
Fiona Godfrey	Mainstream Academy
Bob Linnegar	Mainstream Academy
James Povoas	Mainstream Academy
Karen Pyman	Mainstream Academy
Jackie Smith	Special Academy
Clive Zimmerman	Mainstream Academy

Non-School Representatives

Andrew Henstridge	Clifton Diocese
Margaret Clark	Diocese of Bristol
Jo Morris Golds	Early Years
Peter Smith	Trade Unions

Officers:

Annette Perrington	Director: Inclusion and Achievement
Gareth Cheal	Interim SEND Lead, Education
Dawn Sexstone	Head of Finance, Children Services
Phil Wirth	Principal Solicitor (Litigation)

Also in attendance: Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education and Skills.

An apology for absence was received from Sherryl Bareham.

17. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

18. Public Question Time

In accordance with Standing Order 28, Mr Alastair Dixon-Patterson of Lydiard Park Academy, Swindon, submitted a written question regarding the undertaking of an Equalities Impact Assessment to support its proposed actions for the deficit recovery plan.

The Chair thank Mr Dixon-Patterson for his question and said that a written response had been provided and circulated to all members. Mr Dixon-Patterson confirmed that he had no supplementary questions.

19. 2021-22 Dedicated Schools Grant - Funding Principles and related items

The Forum considered a report by the Head of Finance, Children Services, on the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement which is expected in January 2021. She opened her presentation (attached) by reminding members of their agreement to meet in January 2021 to agree the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant Settlement and Budget. She drew attention to the report that provided members with the opportunity to review and agree the funding principles that will be used to prepare mainstream budgets for 2021/22. The report addressed the following: a) Local Mainstream Funding Formula Consultation Responses; b) Transfer of Schools funding block to High Needs Funding block- to include current High Needs Budget and draft 2021/22 budget; c) statutory services carried out on behalf of all schools and academies and d) statutory Services carried out on behalf of all maintained schools (the 2021/22 Education Function Charge).

The Head of Finance, Children Services gave a presentation and drew the following key issues to member's attention:

- The current DSG deficit in Swindon.
- The expected additional funding of £3.335m for the HNF block in the next financial year.
- An estimated shortfall of £0.629m was expected next year.
- How other Local Authorities had similar pressures and how the Swindon deficit compared with theirs.
- The proposed process for the DSG recovery plan.
- The level of attendance at the three consultation sessions.
- The level of responses through the survey and an analysis of the outcomes.
- The low response rate to the survey and an analysis of the outcomes.
- A breakdown and information on the impact of each option was presented for members to vote on.
- How, at the request of Primary headteachers, Options 1 and 3 were split, providing other options for members to consider.
- An analysis of the variance on a per pupil basis for all schools.
- The impact by the change of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)
- Varying outcomes of applying differential percentages to National Funding Formula (NFF) and MFG, which included a transfer to High needs blocks and how this would impact the DSG deficit.
- A breakdown of how the six options being considered would impact on the deficit levels over the next five years.

Following her presentation, the Head of Finance, Children Services responded to members' comments and questions in respect of the following matters:

- The benefit of reducing the number of options to be considered.
- How in 2019/20, the LA retained a £17.00 per pupil Education Function charge fee to help meet the cost of providing its statutory duties for all maintained pupils and this was referred to in Appendix 5 of the report.

- An explanation of how the proposed 50p increase was arrived at as this percentage increase was higher than the staff salary percentage increase.
- The increase cost impact to maintained schools for the provision of statutory services by the LA as a result of local schools converting to academy status.
- An education funding charge of £0.603m to be retained by the local authority for services provided to academy and maintained schools.

Following an explanation from the Head of Finance, Children Services highlighting that the breakdown of services to be provided were explained in Appendix 5, members from the Maintained Schools representatives continued to voice their concerns regarding the financial impact resulting from the proposed 50p increase per pupil fee to help meet the cost of providing its statutory duties for the maintained pupils. A maintained school representative enquired if voting was mandatory. The Director, Inclusion and Achievement confirmed that de-delegation was an option that is voted on annually by the Forum. This enabled some services to maintained schools to be provided centrally and funding to do so retained by the LA. If de-delegation stops, then the local authority would have to review services to be provided and this would have an impact on the budget going forward. In response to a query regarding the benefits of remaining a maintained school, she agreed with a member of the Forum that this was not the right environment to discuss the matter and confirmed that the LA had no influence on any school's decision to remain maintained or convert to academy. The Chair summed up member's concern and advised that she understood:

- a) The mathematical logic of how the fee was to be calculated.
- b) That as the number of maintained schools decreases, the contribution to the central fund would need to be increased.
- c) The concerns by the maintained schools representatives who felt that as the number of maintained schools have decreased, there should be a corresponding decrease in work required from the LA and as such, the fee per pupil should decrease.
- d) That a sub-group would need to be set up before the next meeting of Schools Forum in January 2021 to enable the LA and the maintained school representatives to further discuss de-delegation proposals.

Resolved: (1) The Schools Forum agrees the following principle to be implemented when setting the local Mainstream Funding Formula:

Option 3A - Apply the Core NFF formula excluding Mobility factor:

- Remove the Mobility factor
- All pupil lead factor values would be 101% of NFF
- Minimum Per Pupil Level (MPPL) - (Primary £4,180; Secondary £5,415)
- Lump Sum
- MFG +2%
- This is an increase of £0.504m to schools over NFF

(2) That Schools Forum agrees the principle that the LA retains the funding that is expected to be announced in January 2021 as part of the Central Schools Services Block to contribute to the costs of the LA meeting its statutory duties for all pupils.

(3) That further to (2) above, it be noted that the actual value of the retained Central Schools Services Block will be confirmed to Schools Forum at its meeting on the 19th January 2021.

(4) That Schools Forum agrees to defer the decision for the LA to retain a £17.50 per pupil fee to help meet the cost of providing its statutory duties for all maintained pupils, to its meeting on the 19th January 2021.

(5) That further to (4) above, the Head of Finance, Children Services be requested to meet with the maintained school representative to produce a number of options regarding de-delegation of funding to the central fund for discussion at the next meeting of Schools Forum on the 19th January 2021.

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