

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2014

PRESENT: -

School Members:

Steve Colledge, Chair - Academy Headteacher
Paul Boyles, Vice-Chair - Academy Governor
Janet Urban, Primary Headteacher
Rhian Cockwell, Primary Headteacher
Alison Lowe, Primary Headteacher
David Easter, Primary Governor
Ray Williams, Primary Governor
Rachael Matthey, Secondary Headteacher
Jackie Smith, Special Headteacher
Joanne Brown, Special Governor
Richard Marshall, PRU
Nick Capstick, Academy Headteacher
Lauren Connor, Academy Headteacher
Wendy Conaghan, Academy Headteacher
Lynne Fletcher, Academy Finance
Andy Hazelton, Academy Governor

Non-School Members:

Andrew Wild, Diocese - Bristol
Ruth Lee, Diocese of Clifton
Peter Smith, Trade Unions
Debbie Waldron, Early Years Representative
Cathy Parker, Early Years Representative (Deputy)
Andrew Miller, 16-19 Partnership
Graham Taylor, 16-19 Partnership
Ram Thiagarajah, BME

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Henstridge (Primary Headteacher).

In view of the size of the agenda the Chair advised the Forum that, as reports 4,5,6 and 8 were essentially for information, he had asked officers to be brief in their presentation of these items so that due time could be devoted to items 3,7,9, 10 and 11 which contained key decisions.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

2. Schools Forum Membership

The Head of Economy and Skills submitted a report setting out the mechanisms to be undertaken to elect members to the Schools Forum with effect from September 2014. During discussions on this matter Mr Bradley confirmed that Schools Forum representatives could be re-elected.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum agrees:

- (1) The election mechanism as set out in the report for future Schools Forum representation.
- (2) A timescale to implement the mechanism referred to in (1) above by October 2014.
- (3) The revised Terms of Reference for the Schools Forum.

3. Final Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2013-14

Steve Haley, Head of Finance (Education and Innovation) submitted a report concerning the final 2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn position following closure of the Local Authorities 2013/14 final accounts.

The report provided information on the final spend against the 2013/14 centrally retained budget including commentaries on those areas of the budget where forecast figures proved to be inaccurate.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum notes that:

- (1) The final outturn on the 2013/14 centrally retained DSG budget was an underspend of £1.031m.
- (2) After taking account of the brought forward balance, in-year underspend and allocations of funding previously agreed by the Schools Forum the total DSG balance available for redistribution as at 31st March 2014 was £2.470m.
- (3) After taking account of agreed commitments the uncommitted balance is currently £1.413m.

4. Actual 2013-14 Year End School Balances

Steve Haley, Head of Finance (Education and Innovation) submitted a report advising the Forum on final 31st March 2014 school balances compared with the estimated position as forecast by schools in December 2013.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum notes that:

- (1) Just over half, 22 of 43 (51%) of schools final year end reported balances were close to the estimates provided in December as measured by the thresholds agreed by Schools Forum.
- (2) 11 of 43 (26%) of schools were reasonably accurate in forecasting their year end balances.
- (3) Only 10 of 43 (23%) schools have reported significant variances between their final and December estimates of their projected year end balances
- (4) Final school balances (adjusted to exclude in-year Academy conversions) were £5.5m which is 42% higher, than the December estimates of £3.9million.
- (5) Whilst 4 schools started the year in minor deficit positions no maintained schools were in deficit at the 31st March 2014.

The Local Authority will present further information on the planned use of school balances to the October 2014 meeting of this Forum.

5. Schools Financial Value Standard return 2013-14

The Head of Finance (Education and Innovation) submitted a brief report advising the Forum of the position following the submission of the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) self-assessments as required by the DfE for 2013/14.

Resolved – That this Forum notes that:

- (1) The Local Authority (LA)'s Chief Finance Officer has submitted the assurance statement to the DfE confirming that all relevant Swindon schools completed an SFVS review in accordance with the statutory deadline.
- (2) The LA is pleased to confirm that initial assessments are that the majority of schools have completed the returns to the levels required.
- (3) The LA will be reviewing each SFVS response over the next few weeks in detail and may contact individual schools to verify evidence to support their assessments. Key findings will be reported to the Schools Forum in October.

6. 2014-15 Dedicated Schools Grant General Updates

The Head of Finance (Education and Innovation) submitted a report providing the Forum with updates relating to 2014/15 including the inclusion of all Swindon Academy pupils in our DSG, the outcomes of the 2014/15 High Needs places return, the latest 2014/15 DSG settlement, proposals regarding the Redoaks Learning Difficulties SRP, the latest position regarding equal pay and a proposed change to the pupil growth policy.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum:

- (1) Notes the latest position regarding the implications of Swindon Academy pupils being included in our schools block DSG and funded from the local formula.
- (2) Notes the latest position regarding the Councils 2014/15 High Needs Block DSG funding which is that £24.283m is available. and that of this sum £2.022m is being earmarked to cover the costs of the Councils new post 16 funding responsibilities.
- (3) Notes that the latest estimate of Swindon's overall 2014/15 DSG settlement is £149.083m.
- (4) Confirms support for the Redoaks LDD SRP to increase from 6 to 10 places in September 2014 and agree that set up costs of £29,300 are met from the DSG balance.
- (5) Notes the recent equal pay settlements of which approximately £476,400 will need to be met from the 2014/15 centrally retained budget.
- (6) Supports the principle of using some of the DSG balance to pay off the centrally retained liability subject to further detailed proposals.
- (7) Supports a change to the pupil growth policy to provide up to £120,000 of pre-opening start-up funding where a new primary school is opening with a nursery and note that Tadpole Farm School will require considerable pupil growth funding from 2015/16 onwards.

7. Universal Infant Free School Meals

The Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment submitted a report updating the Forum on the allocation of capital funds to increase capacity for schools to meet the new requirement to offer every reception, year 1 and year 2 child a free hot lunch.

Resolved – That this Forum notes:

(1) that following the receipt of bids from schools the LA has fully allocated all the DfE capital grant allocated and that schools have been asked to contribute 5% towards their costs.

(2) the estimates of additional funding arising from the UIFSM initiative and arrangements on how revenue funding will operate.

(3) the steps proposed to mitigate against schools losing Pupil Premium and other funding arising from the introduction of universal free meals for infant pupils.

(4) that based on a DfE readiness questionnaire Swindon schools are on track to successfully implement the UIFSM entitlement.

8. 2014-15 Two Year Old Early Education Places

The Head of Economy and Skills submitted a report updating the Forum on the plans to meet the DfE 2014/15 target of achieving participation in nursery education by the 40% most disadvantaged 2 year olds across the Borough by March 2015.

Resolved – (1) That this Forum agrees the use of £9k to increase marketing in 2014-15, as defined in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.11 of the report in order to further promote additional places and raise participation towards the DfE 2014/15 target.

(2) Agrees to spend up to £470k on capital projects as defined in Table 1 of the report by March 2015 in order to meet the DfE targets for provision for 2 year olds in 2014/15.

9. Post 16 post schools high needs funding proposals 2014-15

The Head of Finance (Education and Innovation) submitted a report updating the Forum on the projected outturn position for the 2013/14 academic year relating to the LA's funding of education provision for post 16 (excluding school sixth forms) High Needs students. The report also included information on the level of funding available and proposed indicative funding allocations to providers for the 2014/15 academic year. The report highlighted the uncertainty relating to this funding.

Resolved – That this Forum:

(1) Notes that the latest projected 2013/14 academic year costs arising from the LA's new funding responsibilities for post 16 High Need students are estimated at £2.902m which is £0.612m lower than the enhanced budget agreed by Schools Forum in July 2013.

(2) Notes the latest position regarding the 2014/15 academic year with regard to funding available and that:

(a) The LA's latest estimate is that a total of 260.4 FTE post 16 (excluding school sixth form) high needs students will need to be supported financially.

(b) The estimated costs of 47.4 FTE placements at ISPs is £1.088m

(c) 21 unplanned places will require element 2 funding of £0.126m to be paid to providers.

(d) The LA is proposing to introduce banding based funding for FE colleges and training providers and agree the proposed band and supplement values – subject to uplift should the EFA agree any additional funding.

(e) The LA proposals regarding indicative allocations to FE colleges and training providers total £0.809m for an estimated 213 students of which 36 have yet to enrol.

10. 2015-16 DSG Prospects and School Funding Changes

The Head of Finance (Education and Innovation) submitted a report providing the Forum with an update on DSG prospects for 2015/16 and potential changes to school funding which will need to be consulted on over the next few months in preparation for next year's budget setting process.

Resolved – That this Forum:

(1) Notes the key issues arising from recent school funding reform announcements and that Swindon is expected to benefit from an increase to its Schools' Block DSG allocation in 2015/16 of approximately £2.9m (2.5%)

(2) Agrees that the additional Schools Block DSG receivable in 2015/16 is allocated across factors in the local formula for mainstream schools.

(3) Notes the options identified by the LA on how funding could be allocated and agree that this should be entirely via an increase to BPPE funding. (The Forum did not support any review of the primary or secondary lump sum values).

(5) Asks Primary Sector Schools' Forum representatives to give their views of the likelihood that maintained primary schools and primary academies would wish to support continued LA commissioning of the primary behaviour support service provided by the Nylands Campus Outreach Team at the October Schools Forum.

(6) Asks All Schools' Forum representatives to give their views at the October Forum meeting on the likelihood that relevant schools and academies would wish to support continued LA commissioning of the:

- Uplands Assistive Technology Service
- Millbrook Specific Learning Difficulties Support Service

(7) Agrees the proposed 2014 work plan for the High Needs Task Group in order that any required changes can be consulted on and agreed prior to 2015/16 budget setting for specialist settings.

(8) Notes that the DfE has announced a new Early Years Pupil Premium for disadvantaged 3 and 4 year olds valued at £50m nationally which will be allocated to LAs in 2015/16.