

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2014

PRESENT: -

School Members:

Ray Williams, Chair, Primary Governor
Sharon Kirwan, Secondary Academy Headteacher
Wendy Conaghan, Academy Headteacher
Sue Banks, Secondary Headteacher
Alison Lowe, Primary Headteacher
Janet Urban, Primary Headteacher
Jane Wheatley, Primary Headteacher
Andrew Henstridge, Primary Headteacher
Lauren Connor, Academy Headteacher
Jackie Smith, Special Headteacher
David Bell, Secondary Governor
Charles Law, Special Governor
Ben Slater, EOTAS

Non-School Members:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services).

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Colledge (Chair - Academy Headteacher), Rhian Cockwell (Primary Headteacher), Andrew Miller (16-19 Partnership) and Graham Taylor (16-19 Partnership).

11. Appointment of Chair

In the absence of the Chair nominations to chair this meeting of the Schools Forum were sought.

Resolved: That, in the absence of the Chair, Ray Williams, Governor Representative, be appointed to chair this meeting of the Schools Forum.

12. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

13. Forum Membership Update

Mr Paddy Bradley, Head of Economy and Skills submitted a report updating members on changes to the Forum's membership and terms of condition. Mr Paddy Bradley introduced the report and referred to the terms of reference for headteachers and governors and explained that due to the new structure,

nominations for Chair and Vice Chair were being sought. Due to apologies submitted by the incumbent Chair, members agreed to postpone the election of the Chair to the next meeting and requested that nominations for Vice-Chair be sought from those members present. Members agreed that voting for Vice-Chair was to be conducted during the meeting and Janet Urban, Headteacher, Westrop School, was elected as Vice-Chair.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That Janet Urban, Headteacher, Westrop School, be elected as Vice-Chair.

(3) That the Head of Economy and Skills be requested to seek nominations for Chair from School Forum Members.

14. 2014-15 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Position

The Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, submitted a report on the latest position of the 2014/15 retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget.

Mr Steve Haley advised that based on information to the end of August 2014, there was a minor projected overspend of approximately £0.066m against the retained DSG budget for the current year and Appendix A to the report provided details on the budget areas which were causing the overspend. He referred to the proposed re-allocation of funds for the existing disadvantaged 2 year old pupil funding and explained this would be used to increase capacity for 2 year olds places including a new nursery at the Tadpole Farm School.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum:

(1) Notes that based on information to the end of August 2014, an in-year overspend of £0.066m was projected against the 2013-14 retained Dedicated Schools Grant budget.

(2) Supports that £0.200m of existing disadvantaged 2 year old funding be allocated to increase capacity of which £0.150m will partly be used to create a 48 place nursery for 2 year olds at Tadpole Farm School.

(3) Supports that £0.006m of existing disadvantaged 2 year old pupil funding be allocated to fund the appointment of a temporary Early Years Project support officer up to 31st March 2015.

15. 2014-15 Dedicated Schools Grant General Updates

The Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, submitted a report updating members on the 2014/15 financial position, particularly regarding (a) the inclusion of all Swindon Academy pupils in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) calculations; (b) an update on the overall DSG position; (c) additional funding available from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and from National Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) (NNDR) refunds and proposals regarding equal pay.

Mr Steve Haley confirmed that following the Department for Education's changes to the High Needs block funding and the resolution of the Swindon Academy matter, DSG would be increased with a final estimated 2014/15 DSG settlement of £153.574m plus the LA would also be reimbursed by the EFA for £0.5m of place funding paid to Uplands Sixth form. He described the funding and spending of DSG blocks spanning from early years to age 19 in schools, including SEN Sixth Form and for vulnerable young people to age 25 and explained that in the longer term the £0.5m should be passed on to mainstream settings. As this

was not possible in the current year the funding could however be used to repay central equal pay liabilities. Mr Haley also updated Forum members on the positive position regarding NNDR (Business Rate) refunds arising from academy conversions and revaluations including a proposal to use £0.8m of NNDR refunds to repay equal pay liabilities.

Mr Haley went on to describe the overall position regarding equal pay reminding Forum members that at the July meeting they had approved in principle the repayment of £0.7m central liabilities using part of the unallocated DSG balance. Based on the EFA (£0.5m) and NNDR (£0.8m) funding identified a total of £2m could be repaid which would significantly reduce the central budget for loan repayments over the next 17 years. In response to a query regarding the possibility of investing £2m or using it for other purposes Mr Haley advised that there were no mechanisms in place to invest DSG funding and that it could only really be used for one off costs such as pupil growth set up costs.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum:

(1) Notes the latest position regarding Swindon Academy pupil costs and that additional funding was to be provided by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) meaning that Swindon will not be detrimentally affected by the end of partial recoupment arrangements.

(2) Notes that the latest estimate of Swindon's overall 2014/15 DSG settlement was £153.574m.

(3) Notes that Swindon will receive £0.5m of EFA funding to effectively reimburse the DSG for place costs at Uplands Sixth Forum.

(4) Agrees that this will be used to repay £0.5m of equal pay liabilities in 2014/15.

(5) Agrees that this will be used to enhance mainstream BPPE rates by £0.5m from 2015/16 onwards.

(6) Notes the position regarding school National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) charges.

(7) Agrees that the current NNDR balance was to be used to repay £0.8m of equal pay liabilities in 2014/15 which will leave a more reasonable sum of £0.2m.

(8) Notes that the equal pay liability as at 1st April 2015 payable from the centrally retained budget was currently estimated at £2.5m which will require annual budgetary provision to be made from 2015/16 onwards of £0.161m.

(9) Agrees to the repayment of £2m of liabilities from the sources identified in the current year, reducing the liability as at 1st April 2015 to £0.5m, which will require a reduced annual budgetary provision to be made from 2015/16 onwards of £0.034m.

16. Post 16 High Needs Funding Update

The Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, presented a report updating the Forum on the final outturn position for the 2013/14 academic year and the proposed funding allocations for 2014/15 for post 16 high need students that included students attending further education colleges, independent specialist college and other training providers.

Mr Haley made reference to Table 1 in the report, reflecting the student numbers and spending position. He referred to the £0.611 underspend against the enhanced budget and explained that this had remained unchanged since the projections reported in the July meeting (Minute 3 refers). This was the difference

between the initial position in July 2013 as compared with the final position in July 2014.

Mr Haley also commented on the funding available for 2014/15, particularly on the expected funding arrangements for Uplands Educational Trust (UET) following its accreditation as an Independent School Provider by the Education Funding Agency.

Mr Haley drew member's attention to paragraph 5.5 of the report regarding placements at Independent Specialists Provider Colleges (ISP) that included the UET and gave a breakdown of estimated costs for 2014/15.

Mr Paddy Bradley, Head of Economy and Skills referred to the collaborative work with Special Schools Headteachers undertaken over the past three years to determine banding process for pupil led funding.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum:

(1) Notes that the final 2013/14 academic year budget position arising from the Local Authority's new funding responsibilities for post 16 High Need students was that actual spend of £2.902m was £0.611m lower than the enhanced budget agreed by Schools Forum in July 2013.

(2) Notes that the academic year costs relating to the period April 2014 to August 2014 of £0.595 will need to be met from the 2014/15 financial year budget.

(3) Notes that the LA's latest estimate was that a total of 267.8 full time equivalent (FTE) post 16 (excluding school sixth form) high needs students will need to be supported financially during the 2014/15 academic year.

(4) Notes that the estimated annual net costs of 46.8 FTE placements at ISPs was £0.791m of which £0.528m (2/3) will be charged to the 2014/15 budget.

(5) Notes that 24 unplanned places will require element 2 funding of £0.144m will be paid to providers of which £0.096m (2/3) will be charged to the 2014/15 budget.

(6) Agrees increased band values as shown in Table 3 which will be used to allocate 2014/15 funding for FE Colleges and training providers which will result in revised 2014/15 annual allocations to FE colleges and training providers totalling £1.205m of which £0.803m (2/3) will be charged to the 2014/15 budget.

(7) Notes the overall 2014/15 financial year and 2014/15 academic year budget position as shown at Table 4 of the report.

17. 2015-16 DSG Update and Budget Proposals

The Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, submitted a report providing the Forum members with (a) updates regarding Schools Block and Early Years Block Dedicated School Grant (DSG) proposals for 2015/16, (b) the indicative impact of increases to early years and mainstream school funding, (c) budget proposals relating to some centrally funded services, (d) information on options to enhance pupil growth funding for expanding school and (e) an update on delegations. Mr Haley advised that pages 69 to 93 included detailed calculations and had not been intended for publication.

Mr Haley referred to the introduction of the Minimum Funding Level (MFL) proposed by the Department for Education resulting in a higher than expected increase for Swindon by 3.6% on current schools block DSG per pupil. He explained that the additional funding would be delegated to mainstream schools and

referred to the expenditure options agreed by members at the July 2014 Forum meeting (Minute 10 refers). Mr Haley also explained that due to improved DSG settlement and the reduction in the historic post 16 high needs subsidy, the Basic Per Pupil Entitlement (BPPE) for Key Stages 1 to 4 would be enhanced by a proposed 4.15% year on year increase. Appendix 1 had been provided to show a breakdown of the indicative impact on individual schools.

Mr Haley proceeded to explain options available to increase pupil growth trigger funding for 2015/16. He advised that whilst there was no policy changes proposed to pre-opening, start-up costs and set-up funding, expanding schools would automatically attract 4.15% increase to their funding arising from the BPPE increase. He suggested that in light of the improved DSG schools block settlement that the Forum may wish to support the payment of sector average pupil funding rather than just BPPE funding as described in Table 2 of the report.

The Forum noted that Swindon Association of Primary Heads had agreed, at their meeting on 24th September 2014, to support continued central funding of the Nylands Campus Outreach Team via de-delegation as required by DfE to comply with the school finance regulations. Mr Haley referred to the financial implications for primary schools and explained that academies would be able to use this facility through an optional Traded Services agreement.

Primary Sector Schools' Forum representatives debated on whether the LA should continue to commission the primary behaviour support service provided by the Nylands Campus Outreach Team beyond the financial year 2015/16 to alleviate uncertainties for the staff employed by the service. They further discussed the financial impact of school expansions and out of borough placements for pupils attending Special Schools and benefiting from Special Resource Provision (SRP). Mr Paddy Bradley, Head of Economy and Skills referred to Swindon's approach and specialist high needs provision and commented on the importance of reviewing strategies for this provision due to the increase in the demand for these services. He explained that a review of the long term impact of pupils using these services as they move into adulthood would be conducted and reported back to Cabinet in 2015.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum:

(1) Notes that Swindon expects to receive a total of £123.691m in Schools Block DSG in 2015/16.

(2) Notes that the 2015/16 settlement was expected to include an additional £4.3m of Schools Block funding in 2015/16 which, together with £0.5m available from elsewhere that could be passed on to mainstream schools

(3) Agrees to a 4.15% uplift to the Basic Per Pupil Entitlement factor in the local formula.

(4) Notes the indicative impact across Swindon Schools as shown at Annex A subject to final figures being produced for the January 2015 Schools Forum.

(5) Agrees that from 2015/16, trigger funding was provided at a value per pupil which reflects sector average funding for that year and that the 21 pupil break even calculation for reception age pupils was retained but kept under review.

(6) That, with regards to commissioning the primary behaviour support service provided by Nylands Campus Outreach, the Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, be requested to e-mail academies with:

- The proposal of agreeing a three year contract.
- Provide an indication of what the implications were.

- Report the findings back to the Forum meeting in January 2015.
- (7) Notes that Swindon expects to receive;
- Approximately £2.788m in Early Years Disadvantaged 2 year old DSG in 2015/16.
- Approximately £8.466m in Early Years 3 & 4 year old DSG in 2015/16.
- (8) Approve a 2.7% inflationary increase bringing the 3 and 4 year old hourly rate up from £3.75 to £3.85 with effect from 1st April 2015.

(9) Notes the information relating to the new Early Years Pupil Premium for disadvantaged 3 and 4 year olds which will be allocated to LAs in 2015/16.

(10) Notes that The LA is currently expecting that 2015/16 High Needs Block DSG will be broadly sufficient to cover current overall levels of expenditure and that updates will be provided to the Forum as and when further information becomes available.

(11) Notes that a range of High Need band and supplements have been identified for review and the LA will undertake modelling on various options via the task group with a view to presenting proposed 2015/16 changes to the January 2015 Schools Forum.