

**SCHOOLS FORUM
13 MARCH 2014
4.30 - 5.45 PM**



Present:

Schools Members

Sue Barber, Primary School Governor
Karen Davis, Primary Head Representative
Ed Essery, Primary School Governor
Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
Keith Grainger, Secondary Head Teachers Representative
John McNab, Secondary School Governor
Joanna Quinn, Primary School Representative
Tony Reading, Primary School Governor
Anne Shillcock, Special Education Representative
John Throssell, Primary School Governor (Vice-Chairman)

Non-Schools Members:

Robin Sharples, Oxford Diocese (Church of England)

Apologies for absence were received from:

George Clement, Union Representative (Chairman)
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative
Kate Sillett, PVI Provider Representative
David Stacey, Primary School Governor Representative
Kathy Winrow, Academy School Representative

JOHN THROSSELL, VICE-CHAIRMAN IN THE CHAIR

24. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

25. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters Arising

At the meeting of the Forum on 16 January 2014, Forum Members had expressed concern in relation to the Local Authority Budget Proposals for 2014/15. The Forum were concerned regarding all of the proposed budget cuts in services in relation to Children, Young People and Learning and the potential impact on education and children and young people in Bracknell Forest, but were particularly concerned with budget cuts affecting the most vulnerable children, including the Early Years Service, and looked after children.

The Forum were advised that their concerns had been brought to the attention of the Executive, and the Labour Group had proposed some amendments in line with the Forum's comments, but that when put to the vote the budget proposals had been accepted as originally proposed.

26. **2013-14 Allocations from the School Specific Contingencies and other Budgets centrally managed by the Local Authority**

The Forum received a report with information on the in-year allocation of funds to schools through School Specific Contingencies and other centrally managed budgets that were funded from the Schools Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and initially managed by the council.

One correction was made to Annex 2 at page 15 of the agenda papers, where the number of forms of entry at September 2013 for Woodenhill Primary should have read 1.67 and not 2.

There were five different circumstances under which schools could receive in-year funding allocations and the Schools Forum had previously agreed allocation criteria for four of them with the report setting out resultant amounts by school. For the fifth circumstance, funding for exceptional and unforeseen circumstances, the report set out a proposal that officers consider claims in the first instance for a formal decision to be taken by the Forum. There was one such claim contained in the report.

In considering whether funding criteria remained valid and appropriate, Forum members suggested that in respect of in-year allocations to schools experiencing significant in-year increases in pupil numbers, that further options be considered, particularly in relation to supporting single form entry schools.

Any scenario would need to be approved by the Department for Education (DfE) and would need to have a tight definition. Forum members should forward suggestions to Paul Clark for discussion at the next meeting of the Forum on 24 April 2014.

RESOLVED that the Forum:

- i. **NOTED** the funding allocations made to schools during 2013-14 in respect of;
 - significant in-year increases in pupil numbers (paragraph 5.12);
 - schools required to meet the Key Stage 1 Class Size regulations (paragraph 5.15);
 - new and expanding schools (paragraph 5.16);
 - support to schools in financial difficulties (paragraphs 5.22 to 5.28).
- ii. **AGREED**:
 - that in the first instance, claims from schools for additional funding to cover exceptional items continued to be considered by the Heads of Service covering Finance, Human Resources and Property, for subsequent decision by the Forum (paragraph 5.5);
 - the funding allocation proposed to cover exceptional and unforeseen costs in a school (paragraph 5.8).
- iii. **CONSIDERED** whether any changes needed to be made to the existing criteria used to distribute centrally managed funds to schools (paragraph 5.29); to be reviewed at the next meeting of the Forum.

27. **Proposals for the 2014-15 Early Years and High Needs Block elements of the Schools Budget**

The views of the Schools Forum were sought on proposals from the Council for the 2014-15 Early Years and High Needs Block elements of the Schools Budget. There were also a small number of decisions for the Forum to consider in line with the statutory funding framework.

For the Early Years Block, a revised calculation of forecast DSG income was now available, together with updated cost estimates for payments to providers for the free entitlement for early years education and childcare and the roll out of provision to the most deprived 2 year olds. Creating sufficient places to meet forecast demand for 2 year olds was identified as a high priority, and proposals had been made here also, to use unallocated 2014-15 funding as well as re-investing the forecast under spending from 2013-14 into this area. In line with the funding settlement from the DfE, rates paid to providers of the free entitlement would remain unchanged from those paid in 2013-14.

In respect of the High Needs Block, which was recognised as the most complex and volatile area of the budget build, the DfE had still to confirm final funding allocations to Local Authorities, and therefore the Council was not in a position to present budget recommendations which would now need to be presented later, following receipt of reliable data. The report therefore presented an update on current forecasts.

A recalculation of potential income from the DfE had been undertaken, and this indicated a small reduction in funding from 2013-14 of £0.011m. Looking at forecast costs, these were now expected to increase by £0.250m which was a further £0.050m increase on the amount expected in January.

Should the actual income from the DfE indicate a potential over spend in 2014-15, proposals would be presented to the Forum on how this could be managed, which could include making in-year savings, drawing down from the estimated £0.5m surplus balance on the Schools Budget, or a combination of both.

The Forum also considered a proposal from the Local Authority to update criteria to be used to allocate the SEN Contingency to schools to reflect characteristics of pupils currently in schools. Members of the Forum requested that further options for allocation be considered and presented to the next meeting of the Forum, including introducing thresholds based on actual numbers of pupils as well as percentage of pupils on roll at a school.

RESOLVED that the Forum **AGREED**:

That the Executive Member make the following decisions:

For the 2014-15 Early Years Block funded budgets:

- i. that funding rates for the free entitlement to early years education and childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds remain unchanged from those paid in the 2013-14 financial year;
- ii. that a new hourly funding rate supplement of £9.00 be paid to providers taking 2 year olds with severe or complex needs;
- iii. providers of the free entitlement to early years education and childcare for 2 year olds continue to be funded on the basis of agreed number of places, rather than on actual participation;

- iv. the total initial budget was set at £5.383m, it incorporated the changes set out in paragraph 5.12, and relevant budgets were therefore updated to those set out in Annex 2.

For the 2013-14 forecast under spending on Early Years Block funded budgets:

- v. That subject to there being a sufficient under spending on the overall Schools Budget, that any net under spending in 2013-14 on the following budgets were carried forward into 2014-15 as follows:
 - a. trajectory funding: to support the development of provisions for 2 year olds, currently estimated at £0.118m;
 - b. payments to providers for the free entitlement to education and childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds: to support the development of a sufficient number of places for eligible 2 year olds, currently estimated at £0.141m.

For the 2014-15 High Needs Block funded budgets:

That no budget decisions were made until the level of government funding was more certain.

- vi. In its role of statutory decision maker, that there were appropriate arrangements in place for:
 - c. early years provision,
 - d. the education of pupils with SEN, and
 - e. the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school.
- vii. Revised eligibility criteria for allocating funds to schools from the SEN Contingency (paragraph 5.39), would be considered again at the next meeting of the Forum.

28. Provision of Broadband and Related Internet Services to Schools

The Forum received a report in relation to support for a two year extension to the current centrally managed contract for the supply of broadband and related internet services to schools.

The existing service was considered to be of a high quality and reliability, with 91% of schools that responded to the Local Authority consultation supporting the proposed contract extension which would deliver small cost savings over the next 2 years.

Schools would be offered a 2 year contract for broadband and internet services, with break options, although any schools withdrawing would need to fund the cost of any penalty payments due to the provider.

A new procurement process, using existing EU procurement compliant framework agreements, would commence in 2015 for a new contract to start during 2016.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum **AGREED**:

- i. that the option to extend by 2 years the current contract with RM for the provision of Broadband and Internet related services be supported and referred to the EXECUTIVE for approval.

29. **Confidential Annex**

30. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Forum noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 24 April 2014 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber at Easthampstead House. If there was no business to discuss meetings would be cancelled.

CHAIRMAN