

Minutes of the Schools Forum

**12th November 2018 at 2.30pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Members Present: P Jones (Chair), P Shone (Vice Chair),
K Bickley, A Burns, L Howard, J Smallman,
R Fisher, N Toplass,**

Officers Present: R Kerr, A Timmins, J Gill, C Ward.

Apologies: R Kentish, B Patel, A Sahota.

13/18 Agenda Item 1 – Apologies

As above

14/18 Agenda Item 2 – Declaration of Interest

None

15/18 Agenda Item 3 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved that the minutes for the forum held on the 18th June 2018 be confirmed as agreed subject to e mail from J Smallman being attached as an appendix for clarity (Minute No. 12/18).

Minute No. 7/18 – Review of early closedown for schools 2017/18- it was proposed that R Kerr would circulate proposal to Schools Forum.
Minute No. 10/18 - Feedback – Annual Consultation on arrangements for SEN Pupils, Early Years and Financial issues – it was proposed that a breakdown of Focus Provision data would be brought back to the next meeting along with the model for LAC pupil premium allocation.

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16/18 Agenda Item 4 – De-delegated and Historic Commitments outturn 2017/18

The Schools Forum received a report regarding the use of de delegated and centrally retained budgets.

The report outlined where budges had been fully utilised and where underspends had occurred as follows:

- Pupil Number Growth Contingency – underspend £140,578;
- Health and Safety underspend £13,864;
- Union Facilities £8,215
- School Forum £2,208

The total underspend funding available was £164,865 and it was recommended that this balance be utilised to reduce any overspend in De-delegated or Education functions in 2018/19.

Members requested that they be consulted on the use of the funding before any funds were allocated

17/18 School Revenue Funding 2019/20 Consultation

Schools Forum would need to consider the impact of the National Funding Formula from its proposed implementation in 2021/22 and steps to prepare for future changes were outlined.

In July 2018, further guidance had been announced in respect of schools funding arrangements for 2019/20.

Local authorities continued to have responsibility to set a local formula to distribute funding allocated to them to schools until 2020/21

The Dedicated Schools Grant consists of four blocks; schools, high needs, early years and the new central schools service block and each of the blocks had been determined by separate national funding formula.

The authority had resubmitted an updated business case to the DfE regarding BSF schools requesting equal treatment with schools with the PFI premises factor.

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There was discussion regarding BSF FM indexation for special school and that R Kerr felt there was no basis that we could speak to the DfE and ask them to reflect this in the authority's High Needs Block funding.

The DfE had responded stating that they would not change the funding rates for Sandwell for 2019/20, however they offered to meet with Council Officer to discuss concerns. A date for this meeting had not been arranged as yet.

Members were concerned that BSF meetings had been postponed and these would need to recommence.

The consultation on the formula funding for schools for 2019/20 included proposals on the following:

- Three funding formula options;
- Pupil number growth contingency fund;
- Central schools services block;
- Education Functions;
- De-delegation proposals;
- Minimum funding guarantee and capping of gains.

Three funding formula options 2019/20 were presented to the Schools Forum, however after discussion it was considered that another option model be developed with a Primary- Secondary ratio 1:1.25 and a minimum funding guarantee of -1.5%.

The deadline for stakeholders to respond to the consultation was 5th December 2018.

18/18

High Need Block Monitoring – Period 6

The High Needs Block Monitoring report was tabled to the Schools Forum providing the monitoring position as at 30th September 2018 projected to 31st March 2019.

The High Needs Block Grant for 2018/19 was £37.609m. There was an anticipated in year surplus of £125k.

The main variances were as follows:

- Place Funding £394K – an additional 24 places were required in special schools, 12 of which were at The Meadows School

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following the agreed expansion. Changes in the Focus Provision funding by the DfE had required additional places to be funded for pupils who were admitted after the October census date. This equated to £154K.

- Alternative Provision £417 – the anticipated overspend was for pupils missing education, International new arrivals and hard to place pupils. This had been raised as an issue in the outturn report presented to Forum in June 18 and work was being undertaken to look at the sudden increase in the pupils accessing this provision. A separate report would follow in due course. There was an expectation that this expenditure may increase and any variations would be included in the report.
- SEN Developments currently funds staff salaries nearing the end of their contracts agreed by JEG in 2014/15 equating to £21K, costs for independent appeals and reports of £20K, additional HNB funding from the DfE of £77K and the transfer in of £265K agreed by the Behaviour and Attendance Management Group.

Table 1 within the report illustrated the High Needs Budget 2018/19 Budget Allocations which demonstrated an anticipated surplus of £125k at the end of the year.

C Ward stated that a decision in respect about the next 2% step reduction to Special School bands would need to be considered.

Further report in respect of alternative provision and focused provision would be circulated to the Schools Forum once completed rather than waiting for the next meeting.

(Meeting ended at 3.55pm)

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| Contact Officer: Shane Parkes Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3190 |
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