

Schools Forum

Monday 14 December 2020 at 2.30pm
Virtual online meeting via MS Teams

Present:

N. Toplass (Vice Chair) in the Chair
D. Irish, M Arnull, J Bailey, S Baker, J Barry, L Bray, D Barton, W
Lawrence, G Linford, K Morgan, P Shone, J Smallman, L Howard, J
Topham.

Officers: C Ward, R Kerr, A Timmins, S Lilley, M Tallant and J Gill.

51/20 Apologies:

Apologies were received from J Topham who would join the meeting later due to school commitments.

As the Chair was unable to join the meeting initially due to technical issues the Vice Chair took the Chair.

52/20 Declarations of Interest

Neil Toplass declared an interest in agenda item 6 – Special Educational Needs High Needs Block 2020/21 October 2020 monitoring report.

53/20 Minutes

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2020 were a correct record subject to the following omissions being added:

Minute No 44/20 – L Howard had sent apologies which had not been recorded.

Minute No. 49/20 – J Smallman requested, if it were possible for an option 4 be added to the consultation document sent out to school in respect of the National Funding Formula question, however this motion was not backed or taken forward by member.

Minute No. 49/20 – J Smallman had queried figures presented in respect of question 1 options on primary secondary ratio's.



54/20 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 28 September 2020

P Shone enquired about the SMRA report which had been completed and submitted to the DfE. The Local Authority had replied to the DfE with comments and this would be shared with the schools shortly.

The Chair advised School Forum members had received extra information in respect of the High Needs block which would be useful in Item 6 of the agenda.

55/20 Schools Forum Membership

Schools Forum received a report in respect of Schools Forum Membership and sought approval to extend the current membership of the Forum until 30 June 2021.

Members were advised that the exceptional nature of this year had given rise to a procedural oversight and a small number of members had been in post more than the four-year term in office.

Allowing for appropriate consultation and recruitment process it was anticipated that new members would be recruited before end June 2021.

The Schools Forum was advised of the process for named substitute members. The Secretary to the Forum must be notified in writing of the name of a substitute and written confirmation of acceptance issued by the Secretary before a substitute can act.

Agreed that Schools Forum extend the current membership of the Forum until 30 June 2021.

56/20 Schools Revenue Funding 2021/22 Consultation Response

Schools Forum was advised that the Schools Budget Consultation had been issued to schools on 11 November 2020 following approval at Schools Forum on 9 November 2020, with a deadline of noon 2 December 2020 to respond.

Consultation had also been held with the following stakeholders:

- Joint Executive Group – 12 November 2020
- Joint Union Panel – 16 November 2020
- Association Sandwell Governing Bodies – 18 November 2020
- Primary/Secondary Partnership – 19 November 2020

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A total of 70 responses were received (compared with 69 last year), with 60 from primary schools/academies, 10 from secondary schools/academies. The authority had not received a response either collectively or individually from unions.

The consultation on the formula funding for schools for 2021/22 included proposals on the following:

- The funding formula to use for allocating schools budgets;
 - Option 1 – Stepped change in the ratio - LA Formula (change in AWPU/MFG) with a ratio of 1:1.27 (year 2); and 1:1.29 in year 3.
 - Option 2 – Secondary Schools receive 1% more above the overall increase in funding.
 - Option 3 – National Funding Formula Factor Values
- Pupil Number Growth Contingency Fund.
- Central Schools Services Block
- Education Functions.
- De-delegation proposals.
- Minimum funding guarantee and capping of gains

The Funding Formula to use for allocating Schools Budgets:

The respondents voted with a slim margin for Option 1.

- Option 1 – 32 Agreed, 29 against
- Option 2 - 5 Agreed, 28 against
- Option 3 – 4 Agreed, 28 against

28 primary schools voted against all three options with some stating that there should have been a standstill option, others mentioned “the inaccuracies of the figures brought to Schools Forum”. Further comments stated “the current climate had placed additional burden on school budgets and now was not the right time to remove more funding from the primary sector.

Pupil Number Growth

The majority of respondents agreed with a Pupil Number growth fund set at £1,091,100. (65 agreed; 5 against).

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De-delegation Budget Proposals 2021/22

Ref	Service	Total Budget	Primary Phase Cost	Secondary Phase Cost
		£	£	£
1	Health & Safety Licenses	28,000	22,800	5,200
2	Evolve Annual Licence	6,200	5,100	1,100
3	Union Facilities Time	242,000	202,000	40,000
4	School Improvement Service	100,000	81,400	18,600
5	School in financial difficulty	250,000	203,500	46,500
	Total De-delegation proposals	626,200	514,800	111,400

School responses

Ref	Service	Primary Responses		Secondary Response	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Health & Safety Licenses	49	3	4	0
2	Evolve Annual Licence	52	0	4	0
3	Union Facilities Time	34	18	1	3
4	School Improvement Service	48	4	4	0
5	School in financial difficulty	37	15	2	2

Education Functions Budget Proposals 2021/22

Service	Total Budget	Amount per pupil
	£	£
Education Benefits Team	175,000	5.34
Children's Clothing Support Allowance	33,000	1.01
Safeguarding & Attendance	264,000	8.06
Total Education Functions	472,000	14.41

School responses

Ref	Service	Maintained Schools Response	
		Yes	No
1	Education Benefits Team	55	2
2	Children's Clothing Support Allowance	48	10
3	Safeguarding & Attendance	53	6

Minimum Funding Guarantee:

The majority of respondents agreed an MFG of between 0.5% and 2.00% if modelling proved this was achievable within the funding given (69 agreed, 0 against).

The majority of respondents agreed with the scaling and capping of the MFG if it proves necessary to ensure the MFG is within the funding envelope. (62 agreed, 6 against).

Central School Service Block

- The Central Schools Service Block continued to provide funding for local authorities to carry out central functions on behalf of maintained schools, and academies, comprising two distinct elements:
- Ongoing responsibilities; such as admissions and Schools Forum costs.
- historic commitments; in this case pensions administration.

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- For 2021/22 the DfE had reduced Historic commitment funding by 20%; this had resulted in a cut for Sandwell from £0.228m to £0.182m.
- Schools Forum approval was required each year to confirm the amounts on each line for central school services the detail of which was included in the table below. In the event that Schools forum does not agree with the authority Central School Services Block proposal as detailed below the authority can ask the DfE to adjudicate

Service	Total Budget
	£
Statutory & Regulatory, Education Welfare and Asset Management	1,441,400
Schools Forum	3,000
Admission Service	452,600
Pensions Administration	182,400
Total Central School Services	2,079,400

Service	All Schools Response	
	Yes	No
Statutory & Regulatory, Education Welfare and Asset Management	62	0
Schools Forum	60	2
Admission Service	58	4
Pensions Administration	52	10

The majority of respondents agreed with each service element detailed in the table. Schools Forum members are asked to make a decision on these budgets taking into consideration the responses from schools.

There had been a couple of issues that the Local Authority wanted to address in respect of concerns about inaccuracy of information received at Schools Forum. Rose Kerr highlighted the process with a presentation which covered the following points:-

- Local Authorities must do their best, to engage in an open and transparent consultation with all maintained schools and academies in their area, as well as with their Schools Forum, about any proposed changes in the local funding formula, including the principles adopted and any movement of funds between funding blocks.

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- The DfE did not intend that changes to incorporate 2019 IDACI data or to roll in TPG and TPECG funding, which mirror technical changes in the National Funding Formula, should require consultation with schools and the department plans to reflect this in the school funding regulations.
- Any consultation should include a demonstration of the effect of modelling such changes on individual maintained schools and academies.
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency issued an APT model to assist the Local Authority. This contains a number of pre-populated data sheets taken from the October census.
- The model for 2021/22 reflects the rolling of the TPG and TPECG in all the relevant factors and incorporates a validation worksheet that the Local Authority verify that all checks are passed before submission to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Even though the model passes those checks it did not necessarily mean that it would be approved as the Education and Skills Funding Agency had not been able to build in all the checks to cover all possible scenarios.
- The 3-options model included in the consultation documents were completed with this guidance. The provisional funding allocations for 2021/22 included the rolling in of TPG and TPECG but excluded growth funding. This model passed the validation checks included with the APT model.
- A request was made for additional information, asking for TPG and TPECG rates to be excluded from the modelling.
- The local authority worked with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to adapt the model, this option was not available for the final model issued in December.
- The following factors had to be adjusted: AWPU/MFG/2020/21 MFG value, MPPL, and it meant that the provisional allocation was not fully distributed, therefore it would not meet the APT model validation checks.
- The additional information was issued as a comparison exercise and did not form part of the consultation process and was issued with a statement that it should not be used as a basis to plan budgets for 2021/22.

Comments and questions from members of Schools Forum and responses made to the issues highlighted:-

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- It was asked if the responses in respect of de-delegated budgets was from maintained schools only, this was confirmed as correct by officers.
- School Forum members considered that further discussion was needed in respect of the Funding Formula to address the responses that had been received from schools.
- It was asked if an Option 4, being a standstill option be added today. It was confirmed that this option had not been consulted on so could not be voted on today.
- Primary schools had indicated what would be best of options available but would have preferred a standstill option.
- A Statement would be added to the report about the issues that Schools had raised in respect of the options.
- Schools Forum was advised that Cabinet had decided that a stepped ratio change would be implemented towards the NFF values from April 2020.
- Four primary reps were new at the last meeting and did not realise that there was possibility of a standstill option that could be added to the consultation.
- Members from secondary schools had met with Cabinet a few years ago in respect of the ratio and it had been agreed that the ratio must move to better align to the National Funding Formula.
- Last year a transitional vote was taken, and a small stepped change was made in ratio.
- Cabinet need to be made aware of how difficult this decision is for schools to make and the nature of the responses to the options
- A Member pointed out that due to a very difficult year for all sectors with financial pressures there should be some acknowledgement that we are in special times.
- Members considered that the Cabinet had changed over the years and no steer has been given by the new Cabinet. Chris Ward had checked with Cabinet members and the steer had not changed. The final decision would be made at Cabinet in January where the full information would be provided to Cabinet.
- Primary School members outlined that this was the worst year for receiving children at school who were not school ready and asked that all the evidence received from schools was included in the report information.
- Secondary School members commented it had to get to NFF so the longer it was delayed the bigger the step will be to reach NFF. The Local Authority had made changes to de- delegated funding which goes into the main budget and what other changes they can make in the future to help.
- A request was made that officers consider if the Educational Function budget for Safeguarding and Attendance could be split.
- Comments were raised in respect of union facility time and lack of responses from Unions. D Barton would take these comments back to Unions.

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Voting was undertaken and the results were as follows:-

The Funding Formula to use for allocating Schools Budget:

Option 1 – Stepped change in the ration – LA Formula (Change in AWPU/MFG) with a ratio of 1;1.27 (year 2); and 1:1.29 in year 3.

Votes For - 5 Votes Against - 3 Abstained - 5

Option 2 – Secondary Schools receive 1% more above the overall increase in funding.

Votes For - 0 Votes Against - 12 Abstained – 1

Option 3 – National Funding Formula Factor Values.

Votes For - 1 Votes Against - 10 Abstained – 2

Minimum Funding Guarantee = +0.5% - +2%

Votes For - 12 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

Pupil Number Growth

Votes For - 13 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

De-delegated Budget Proposals:

1) Health & Safety Licences:

Primary

Votes For - 5 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

Secondary

Votes For - 1 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

2) Evolve Annual Licence:

Primary

Votes For - 5 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

Secondary

Votes For - 1 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

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3) Union Facilities Time:

Primary

Votes For - 4 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 1

Secondary

Votes For - 0 Votes Against - 1 Abstained – 0

4) School Improvement Service:

Primary

Votes For - 5 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

Secondary

Votes For - 1 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

5) School in financial difficulty:

Primary

Votes For - 5 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

Secondary

Votes For - 1 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

Education Functions Budget Proposals 2021/22

1) Education Benefits Teams:

Votes For - 6 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

2) Children's Clothing Support Allowance:

Votes For - 6 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

3) Safeguarding and Attendance:

Votes For - 6 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

Central Schools Service Block:

1) Statutory and Regulatory, Education Welfare and Asset Management:

Votes For - 13 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

2) Schools Forum:

Votes For - 13 Votes Against - 0 Abstained – 0

3) Admission Service:

Votes For - 13

Votes Against - 0

Abstained – 0

4) Pensions Administration:

Votes For - 13

Votes Against - 0

Abstained – 0

Agreed that:

- (1) option 1 – Stepped change in the ration – LA Formula (Change in AWPU/MFG) with a ratio of 1;1.27 (year 2); and 1:1.29 in year 3 be recommended to Cabinet in January. However, primary school members of the Forum were clear that their commentary around continuing the stepped ratio change process be shared with cabinet.
- (2) the implementation of an MFG of between =0.5% and +2.00%.
- (3) That the recommendations in the report in respect of MFG, De- delegated budgets, Education Function budgets and Central School Services Block budgets be approved.

57/20

SEN and High Needs Block – Period 7 Monitoring report.

Schools Forum received a report on the High Needs Block monitoring position as at 31 October 2020 projected to 31 March 2021 and special provision occupancy as at 1 December 2020.

The main variances were as follows:

- Out of Borough Placements – This heading incorporated pupils placed in other local authority maintained and academy, mainstream and special school and independent special schools. There was a small overspend on OLA schools of £60K and £1,084K overspend on independent special schools. The original budget for independent schools was for 75 pupils. There were currently 111 pupils placed out of borough which was an increase of 33 pupils. An allowance was made for an in-year increase of 10 places. This was due to an increase in the number of EHCP assessments and a lack of specialist in borough provision.
- Pupil Place and Top up - £659k overspend due to an increase in assessments for EHCP. A net increase of around 150 pupils who had been assessed and received EHCPs since January 2020.
- Hospital PRU – 100K as agreed by Schools Forum places at Albright would increase to 40. Originally budgeted for under SEN developments.
- SEN support services - £141k underspend due to staff vacancies.

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- Support for inclusion - £585k underspend was due to staff vacancies and the Preventing Secondary Exclusion team still under discussion.
- Alternative provision - £624k underspend was due to a reduction in number of pupils placed in AP setting following introduction of AP panel in September 2019.
- SEN Developments £585k underspend – this budget head currently covers independent appeals and reports and any funding agreed that does not clearly fit into any other budget.
- Exclusions and Reintegration - £75k underspend is all related to staffing.

Agreed that Schools Forum note the contents of the report.

The Next Meeting of Schools Forum 18 January 2021 @ 2.30pm

Meeting ended at 16.23

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