

## SCHOOLS FORUM

11 July 2017

Commenced: 1.30pm Terminated: 3.00pm

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Janet Rathburn (Chair)</b>	<b>Primary Schools – Academies</b>
	<b>Steve Marsland</b>	<b>Primary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
	<b>Lisa Gallagher</b>	<b>Primary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
	<b>Scott Lees</b>	<b>Primary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
	<b>Pam Hirst</b>	<b>Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
	<b>Susan Marsh</b>	<b>Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
	<b>Janet Burns</b>	<b>Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
	<b>Betty Jones</b>	<b>Governor, Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
	<b>Robin Elms</b>	<b>Special Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
	<b>Maureen Brettell</b>	<b>Pupil Referral Services</b>
	<b>Elaine Horridge</b>	<b>Diocesan Representative</b>
	<b>Councillor J Fitzpatrick</b>	<b>First Deputy (Performance and Finance)</b>
	<b>Councillor L Travis</b>	<b>Executive Member – Lifelong Learning</b>
	<b>Stephen Wilde</b>	<b>Head of Resource Management</b>
	<b>Louisa Siddall</b>	<b>Senior Accountant</b>

### Apologies for absence:

<b>Bev Alford</b>	<b>Primary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
<b>Karen Burns</b>	<b>Primary Schools - Academies</b>
<b>Richard O'Regan</b>	<b>Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained</b>
<b>Anthony McDermott</b>	<b>Governor, Primary Schools, L/A Maintained</b>
<b>Jeffrey Mellor</b>	<b>Governor – Academy Special Schools</b>
<b>Anne Slater</b>	<b>NUT</b>

### 66. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 14 February 2017, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

### 67. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Louisa Siddall, Senior Accountant, who would be supporting schools and the Forum going forward.

### 68. 2016/17 PROVISIONAL SCHOOL BALANCES

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Executive Director, Finance, giving details of the provisional school balances at 31 March 2017.

With regard to provisional Primary School balances, it was reported that there were 61 primary schools (81% of all Tameside schools) with surplus balances at 31 March 2017, with a total value of £6.473m. There was one primary school (1% of all Tameside schools) with a deficit balance amounting to £0.009m. A total of 22 primary schools increased their level of balances by £0.675m, whilst 39 primary schools had a combined reduction of £1.277m.

In respect of provisional Secondary School balances, it was reported that there were 2 secondary schools (3% of all Tameside schools) with surplus balances at 31 March 2017, amounting to £0.431m. There were 6 secondary schools (8% of all Tameside Schools) with deficit balances, at a combined value of £2.681m.

With regard to provisional Special School balances (including Tameside Pupil Referral Service), there were 4 special schools (6% of all Tameside Schools) with surplus balances at 31 March 2017, worth a total of £0.285m. There was one special school (1% of all Tameside Schools) with a deficit balance of £0.088m. There were 2 special schools that increased their balances, by a total of £0.076m. The other 3 schools experienced a reduction in balances of £0.240m.

It was explained that, along with other Local Authorities, Tameside introduced a new funding model in April 2013. Whilst the new model had meant changes for many schools in the levels of their funding, the Minimum Funding Guarantee had protected those schools which would have seen a large decrease in funding. The nature of the Minimum Funding Guarantee meant that this protection reduced in future years and therefore it was now having an impact on school balances.

As detailed above, there were 8 schools with deficit balances at 31 March 2017. The provisional total of these deficits was £2.778m, an increase of £1,433m since 31 March 2016. It was explained that reductions on this scale were clearly now sustainable and budget plans for 2017/18 would be closely scrutinised.

The report gave details, by sector, of the overall expected balances as reported in October 2016 compared to the provisional balances as at 31 March 2017; as follows:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>Expected balance at 31 March 17 (Reported October 16) £m</b>	<b>Actual Provisional Balance 31 March 17 £m</b>	<b>Variation £m</b>
<b>Primary</b>	61	4.067	6.473	2.406
<b>Secondary</b>	8	(3.366)	(2.250)	1.115
<b>Special</b>	5	(0.513)	0.196	0.710
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>0.188</b>	<b>4.419</b>	<b>4.231</b>

There were significant variations in each sector and therefore all schools needed to ensure their budget plans were as accurate as possible.

Forum members were informed that any school projecting a deficit budget position, either during or by the end of the existing three year budgeting period, was required to submit a deficit budget recovery plan to ensure a balanced budget was delivered. Deficit recovery plans were due to be submitted to the Council on 16 June 2017. At the time of compiling the report, there were a number of budget plans and deficit recovery plans still outstanding. The School's Finance Support Team was contacting any school which had not yet submitted their budget plan (and Deficit Recovery Plan where necessary), as plans needed to be submitted and considered for approval as a matter of urgency.

Members were further informed that, as per the Tameside Scheme of Financing for Schools, the Financial Management team would also be introducing compulsory quarterly budget monitoring during this financial year. This would allow up to date projections of school balances to be included within the corporate monitoring report. The Schools' Finance Support Team would work with schools to improve budget monitoring within schools to ensure projections were as accurate as possible.

Members raised concerns with regard to excess balances and the need to address this issue.

The Head of Resource Management agreed to submit a report to the next meeting of the Forum setting out proposals for addressing surplus balances going forward.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the content of the report be noted; and**
- (ii) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum setting out proposals for addressing schools' surplus balances going forward.**

### **69. COUNCIL MANAGED DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MONITORING UPDATE 2016/17**

The Assistant Executive Director, Finance, submitted a report providing details of the centrally managed Dedicated Schools Grant for 2016/17.

The report outlined the decisions made by the Primary and Secondary sectors on the de-delegation of services and provided details of the financial monitoring position for the 2016/17 financial year for these services at the end of March 2017.

In respect of Contingency and Trade Union Support Services, it was reported that there was a collective unspent budget total of £137,725 at year end. Schools Forum must determine how the unspent budget against each of these de-delegated budget areas was used in the next financial year. The vote on the contingency unspent budget would need to be taken only by the Primary sector as they de-delegated those service costs. A shortfall in income in relation to the Behaviour for Learning and Inclusion Service (BLIS) and the Equality, Multiculturalism and Access Team was also reported. It was explained that these services were in the process of being reviewed and the shortfall in income would be addressed in 2017/18.

In respect of Previously Centrally Retained Services, an unspent budget at year end of £77,848 was reported, which related to the School Improvement fund (formerly schools causing concern). It was explained that this funding would be carried forward to 2017/18 as colleagues in the School Performance and Standards Unit had identified commitments for this funding.

With regard to Centrally Retained Services, unspent funding of £4,860 was reported which related to the Schools Forum budget. It was recommended that this funding was used to support the equivalent budget in 2017/18.

In respect of Centrally Retained High Needs Services, it was reported that this group of services with the greater level of variation in costs, had resulted in a net reduction of costs of £267,839 (excluding the Pupil Referral Service outturn position). The unspent funding would be carried forward to 2017/18 whilst a final review of the 2016/17 academic year costs for Post 16 Provision was completed. It was also explained the Pupil Service was required to produce a deficit recovery plan for the reported deficit of £88,332.

With regard to Early Years funding for Private, Voluntary and Independent Nurseries, it was explained that the budget for 2 year old places reflected the DfE funding provided to the Council, however the Council expected to spend £91,899 more than this budget based on local projections of cost. This shortfall in current DSG would be retrospectively funded by the DfE once the actual take up of places was confirmed. The projected reduction in costs of £228,572 compared to the latest DfE allocation of funding for 3 and 4 year old places was also expected to be retrospectively adjusted by the DfE once the actual take up of places was confirmed.

Discussion ensued with regard to the above and members raised concerns in respect of the Schools Forum budget, particularly in respect of volunteer/Governor members expenses.

The Head of Resource Management agreed to consider options for the payment of member expenses such as car parking etc.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the content of the report be noted;
- (ii) That the unspent Contingency budget for 2016/17 totalling £124,852 be allocated pro rata the original contribution made by each School;
- (iii) That the unspent 2016/17 funding totalling £12,873, be allocated pro rata the original contribution made by each School for the Trade Union Support service; and
- (iv) That the proposal to use the unspent 2016/17 funding from centrally retained Services of £3,860 to support the equivalent budget in 2017/18, be supported.

## **70. COUNCIL MANAGED DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MONITORING UPDATE 2017/18**

A report of the Assistant Executive Director, Finance, submitted a report giving details of the centrally managed Dedicated Schools Grant for 2017/18.

It was explained that, for 2016/17 the Secondary sector chose to only de-delegate funding for the Trade Union Support service, whereas the Primary Sector voted to continue de-delegation for both the Trade Union Support and Contingency services. The same scenario was adopted by the Secondary and Primary sectors for 2017/18. The report provided details of the financial monitoring position for the 2017/18 financial year for these services at the end of June 2017.

In respect of de-delegated services, it was reported that those services were projected to spend at budgeted level.

With regard to Previously Centrally Retained services. It was reported that there were no current projected variations for those services.

It was further reported that Centrally Retained Services were all projected to spend at the budgeted level.

In respect of Centrally Retained High Needs Services, it was reported that all the services in this group were projected to spend at the budgeted level. The SEN team was in the process of updating the bandings for children starting at school from September 2017.

With regard to Early Years Funding, it was explained that from September 2017, the free entitlement funding for 3 and 4 year olds would be processed by the Free Entitlement Funding Team within the Education Service of the Council. The budget for 2 year old places was based on the initial DfE allocation of funding for this area, but the Council expected to spend £72,298 more than this budget based on local projections of cost. This shortfall in current DSG was expected to be retrospectively funded by the DfE once the actual take up of places was confirmed. The budget for 3 & 4 year old places was based on the initial DfE allocation of funding for this area, but the Council expected to spend £529,165 less than this budget based on the local projections of cost. This surplus was expected to be retrospectively recovered by the DfE once the actual take up of places was confirmed. It was noted that the Council was currently in the process of updating the estimated costs for 2 year old and 3 & 4 year olds.

Members sought further information in respect of the Disability Access Fund.

Ms Siddall, Senior Accountant, explained that this did not come into effect until September 2017, she added that it was aimed at supporting providers to offer places to children with disabilities and SEN, so it was limited and quite specific

## **RESOLVED**

**That the content of the report be noted.**

**71. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

**To note the date of the next meeting of the Schools Forum as Tuesday 17 October 2017.**

**72. RETIREMENT OF THE CHAIR, JANET RATHBURN**

Susan Marsh, Deputy Chair, announced that this was, the Chair, Janet Rathburn's, last meeting of the Forum, as she was retiring at the end of the summer term.

On behalf of Forum members, she wished Janet well for her future retirement and thanked her for all her hard work over the years as Chair of the Forum.

Janet thanked everyone for their good wishes and extended best wishes also to Scott Lees, Forum member, who was retiring at the end of the summer term.