

SCHOOLS FORUM

13 February 2018

Commenced:	10.00am	Terminated:	11.50am
Present:	Karen Burns (Chair)	Primary Schools – Academies	
	Steve Marsland	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Bev Allford	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Susan Marsh	Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Anthony McDermott	Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Richard O'Regan	Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Elizabeth Jones	Governor, Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Brendan Hesketh	Secondary Schools - Academies	
	Simon Wright	Primary Schools - Academies	
	Robin Elms	Special Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Elaine Horridge	Diocesan Representative	
	Scott Lees (for Alison Hampson)	NAHT	
	Councillor J Fitzpatrick	Executive Member – Children's Services	
	Bob Berry	Assistant Director, Learning	
	Christine Mullins	Finance Business Partner	
	Louisa Siddall	Senior Accountant	
Apologies for absence:			
	Lisa Gallagher	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Alison Hampson	TCC	
	Pam Hirst	Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Anton McGrath	14-19 Sector	
	Jeffrey Mellor	Governor, Special Schools – L/A Maintained	
	Councillor L Travis	Executive Member – Life Long Learning	

9. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Simon Wright, to his first meeting of the Forum.

The Assistant Director, Learning, informed Forum Members that Pam Hirst, L/A Maintained Primary School Governor representative, was currently very poorly and residing in a nursing home. The Chair, Members and Officers extended their very best wishes to Pam.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 28 November 2017, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

In respect of Minute 7, Dedicated Schools Grant National Funding Formula, it was stated that finalised figures would be sent to schools before the Christmas break, and Forum members highlighted that this had not taken place.

11. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FUNDING FORMULA 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Finance, providing an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant funding formula proposals for 2018/19.

It was explained that the Department for Education (DfE) carried out consultation in 2016/17 in relation to proposals surrounding National Funding Formula to allocate the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Further to this consultation, the DSG now comprised of four blocks:

- A Schools block;
- A High Needs block'
- A new Central School Services Block (CSSB); and
- An Early Years block.

Each of the four blocks was determined by a separate national funding formula. National funding formula would determine the schools, high needs and central services block for the first time in 2018/19. Funding for early years had already been allocated through national funding formula since 2017/18.

A summary was provided of the DSG allocations from the DfE/ESFA and how they had been used in Tameside in 2017/18 and the estimated use in 2018/19.

The report further provided details of the proposed funding formula for Mainstream Schools in Tameside in 2018/19.

Details were also given of de-delegation in relation to Schools Forum representatives of Council Maintained Schools voting on whether to support mandatory charging to all other Council Maintained Schools of certain Council services. The primary and secondary sectors vote separately in relation to each of the services. The de-delegation rates in 2018/19 were detailed in the report for:

- Behaviour for Learning and Inclusion Service (BLIS);
- Equality, Multiculturalism and Access Team (EMAT);
- Staff Cover for Trade Union Support; and
- Schools contingency

It was further reported that, in previous financial years, Schools agreed to repay an element of their overall DSG funding to the Council to enable it to continue to contribute approximately £90,000 of DSG towards the cost of the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board). Schools would be asked to continue this arrangement in 2018/19.

Details were also given of proposed funding formula for Pre and Post 16 High Needs.

Information was also provided in respect of the Central School Services Block (CSSB). It was explained that the block was being introduced in 2018/19 to fund local authorities for the statutory duties they held for both maintained schools and academies. The CSSB brought together:

- Funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG);
- Funding for ongoing central function such as admission which were previously top sliced from the schools block; and
- Residual funding for historic commitment of which there were none for Tameside MBC.

The DSG operational guidance for 2018/19 required the Council to formally request Schools Forum approval for the central retention of the following:

- £229,030 of DSG to support the School Admissions service (this had been uplifted to reflect the actual cost of the Admissions Service; the uplift would be funded through a reduction in the central funding to support the former retained duties element of ESG);
- £5,000 of DSG to support the costs of the Schools Forum; and

- £499,160 of DSG to support the costs of the Schools' Forum.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the proposed Dedicated Schools Grant 2018/19 proposed funding formula for mainstream schools, be approved
- (iii) That the Primary Maintained School Members agree to de-delegate the costs of the following services in financial year 2018/19:
 - Staff cover for Trade Union Support.
- (iv) That the Secondary Maintained School Members agree to de-delegate the costs of the following services in financial year 2018/19:
 - Staff cover for Trade Union Support.
- (v) That the following be approved in principle:
 - (a) The retention of £229,030 of DSG in 2018/19 to support the School Admissions Service (this has been uplifted to reflect the actual cost of the Admissions Service; the uplift would be funded through a reduction in the central funding to support the former retained duties element of ESG);
 - (b) The retention of £5,000 of DSG in 2018/19 to support the cost of the Schools' Forum; and
 - (c) The retention of £499,160 of DSG in 2018/19 to support elements of the Councils Centrally retained duties (formally the retained duties element of the DSG).

12. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT EARLY YEARS FUNDING UPDATE 2018/19

The Director of Finance submitted a report giving updated information on the Early Years funding allocations proposals for 2018/19.

It was explained that the funding for placements for 2, 3 and 4 year olds attending both School and Private/Voluntary/Independent Nursery provision was provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). A national funding formula for Early Years was implemented in 2017/18 and the elements of funding made available through the Early Years block of the DSG were detailed.

Further details of each element of Early Years funding through the DSG were detailed in the report and a summary of the DFE estimate of the funding changes between 2017/18 and 2018/19 was given.

Forum members were informed that a copy of the report was issued as a consultation document to Schools with Nursery Units and Private, voluntary and Independent Nursery providers, with a deadline of return by 12 February 2018. Members were further advised that there had been no responses to the consultation, and on that basis, it was assumed that people were happy with this.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the report be noted; and
- (ii) That the centrally retained funding allocations, as detailed in the report, be approved.

13. SCHOOLS FORUM EXPENSES PROCEDURE

The Director of Finance submitted a report, giving details of the procedure for representatives attending Schools' Forum in a voluntary capacity to be able to claim out of pocket expenses.

It was explained that a small annual budget was made available from the Central Support block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The budget for 2017/18 was £1,000 which was subject to annual review and specific agreement of Schools Forum. This was approved alongside the annual schools funding report.

It was further explained that the procedure outlined the type of expenses that could be claimed and that travel rates payable would be paid in line with Tameside Council rates for car mileage and would be updated in line with changes to them.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the report be noted; and**
- (ii) That any requests for accessing the procedure be made to clerk in advance.**

14. SCHOOLS MEALS SERVICE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS – PROPOSED CONSULTATION

The Director of Finance submitted a report, which explained that the current financial arrangements for the schools meals service had not been reviewed for some time and had become disjointed and haphazard. Improvements that could be made to the arrangements had been identified and it was planned to consult schools about these.

The proposed changes to be consulted upon were outlined in the report, including the collection of income.

It was explained that, if Members agreed to consult schools then this would start in January 2018 and would run for four weeks. Feedback from the consultation would be reported back to Tameside Board members and would be taken into account as part of the final decision report.

It was concluded that the transfer of the responsibility of school meals income to schools would support effective use of resources for both the Council and the schools in the collection of income.

The procurement and roll out of a cashless system in primary schools would provide parents with an easier method of payment of the meals and manage payments to schools more succinctly.

A further report would be presented to Members about any recommended changes in the light of feedback to the consultation.

Discussion ensued with regard to the commissioning of school meals in general and the confusion around this, particularly with regard to the Carillion contract.

Christine Mullins, Finance Business Partner, agreed to seek further information in respect of the Carillion contract and circulate to Forum Members.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the report be noted; and**
- (ii) It be recommended that, subject to the outcome of the consultation, Forum Members support the implementation of cashless payment systems in schools.**

15. SCHOOLS USE OF BALANCES

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Finance, providing an update on school use of excess balances at 31 March 2017.

It was reported that the final level of school balances as at 31 March 2017 was £4.624 million. Those schools with excess balances held balances totalling £3.333 million of which £1.740 million represented balances in excess of the permitted levels; 8% for Primary Schools and Special Schools and 5% for Secondary Schools. The £4.624 million was net of deficit balances in some schools, therefore, balances were providing funding for in deficit schools without which, the Local Authority would not have had funding to do this.

There were 32 primary schools with combined excess surplus balances of £1.615 million, 1 secondary school with an excess balance of £0.114 million and a special school of £0.011 million.

Members were informed that officers had carried out research in respect of the approach to clawback across Local Authorities in the North West of England and the results of those Local Authorities who provided a response, were detailed in the report.

The future approach with relation to schools excess balances, was detailed as follows:

- The Schools Finance team use the recently introduced budget monitoring reporting as an additional tool, to support schools in year to plan spend and manage excess balances to more appropriate levels;
- Look to establish specific reasons or criteria that balances could be held for. A return to be submitted to Schools Finance Team that had been approved by Governors, which outlined the planned spend with timescales for the plan;
- It was suggested to cap the time period for which all balances could be held for at 3 years, unless there were exceptional reasons for doing so;
- Schools Forum move away from clawback of budgets in the maintained sector, on the proviso that schools work with the Schools Finance Team to ensure robust approved spending plans were in place to utilise said balances, which will continue to be reported to Forum;
- However, Schools Forum retain the right to clawback budgets in exceptional circumstances, which were suggested to be instances where excess balances did not have robust agreed spending plans and the school did not engage effectively with the Schools Finance Team, or hold the balances for more than 3 years; and
- An annual report would continue to come to Forum for decision, but earlier reports would be brought to Forum of any instances where clawback may need to be considered to keep Forum fully informed.

Details of the planned expenditure identified by schools for the October 2017 Forum report, and an update of how those plans were progressing, was appended to the report.

A comprehensive overview of the delays and issues that Fairfield Primary School faced with regard to the building works the balances had been identified for, was also appended to the report.

Forum members were informed that there were currently 8 schools that had not provided an update to spending plans. The Schools team would continue to work with these schools to understand the spending position.

From December 2017, there was a requirement for schools to provide the Authority with regular budget monitoring updates. The exercise had provided useful and schools in general were engaged with the process.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the report be noted;**
- (ii) That Schools Forum look to retain the clawback criteria applied to mainstream schools but relax the application of it, on the following provisions; and**
 - **Schools provide governor approved plans to the Local Authority, on agreed criteria;**
 - **Balances were not held in excess of 3 years.**
- (iii) That the update of spend on balances identified by schools at the October 2017 position, be noted.**

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

To note the date of the next meeting of the Schools Forum as Tuesday 26 June 2018 at 10.00am, Discovery Academy, Porlock Avenue, Hyde.