

SCHOOLS FORUM

2 March 2016

Commenced: 1.30pm Terminated: 3.50pm

Present:	Janet Rathburn (Chair)	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Steve Marsland	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Lisa Gallaher	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Scott Lees	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Bev Alford	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Des Howlett	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Karen Burns	Primary Schools – Academies
	Elizabeth Jones	Governor, Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Anthony McDermott	Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Janet Burns	Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Brendan Hesketh	Secondary Schools – Academies
	Maureen Brettell	Pupil Referral Services
	Helen Mellor	Pupil Support Services
	Anne Slater	NUT
	Elaine Horridge	Diocesan representative
	Councillor J Fitzpatrick	First Deputy – Performance & Finance
	Councillor L Travis	Executive Member – Lifelong Learning
	Sandra Stewart	Executive Director, Governance & Resources
	Bob Berry	Interim Assistant Executive Director, Education
	Stephen Wilde	Head of Resource Management
	David Thompstone	Senior Resource Manager
	Catherine Moseley	Head of Access and Inclusion

Apologies for absence:

Susan Marsh	Governor, Primary Schools L/A Maintained
Robin Elms	Special Schools – L/A Maintained
Janet Nevin	14 – 19 Sector
Richard O'Regan	Secondary Schools L/A Maintained
Helen Heyes	Diocesan Representative
Peter Ryder	Governor – Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained
Jeffrey Mellor	Governor – Special Schools - Academies
Pam Hirst	Governor – Primary Schools – L/A Maintained

33. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 20 October 2015, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments that:

Steve Marsland – Primary Schools – L/A Maintained be added to the list of those present and that Anne Slater be noted as representing the NUT.

34. UPDATE ON CATERING CONTRACT

Consideration was given to a verbal report of the Executive Director, Governance and Resources, in which she stated that the catering contract with Carillion had been signed the previous day and it was intended to provide schools with a copy of the contract once received. Schools had been requested before Christmas to submit any details for adding to the contract and any questions that they required a response to but confirmed that no schools had responded so far except from a

number who wanted to make differing arrangements. It was explained that this was a Council service that had been transferred in order to reduce significant risks relating to costs.

Members were informed that the Council had provided a catering service which had been delivered by Carillion for the last two years. However there were considerable risks with the catering service which impacted on costs including managing health and safety and high levels of sickness absences.

The Executive Director, Governance and Resources stated that in future, the meals would cost £2.23 to Carillion with a further 12 pence per meal payable by schools, which covered the cost of collecting school monies and debt write off, equipment and machinery and other costs. If schools wished to move to another provider, they would be able to do so provided they gave six months' notice of leaving. However, she emphasised that schools would need to take on all the associated risks and would have to follow the proper procurement process ensuring that staffs terms and conditions were protected, should they decide move to another provider. The Council would not approve or agree to the risks being transferred back to the Council where a community school.

With regard to the contract, Carillion would notify the Council of any increase in prices by May so that all schools were informed of these by September 2016.

Members expressed a number of concerns including issues about nutritional values of foods served and the venue for the open days being held by Carillion and these were addressed by the Executive Director. She stated that in future, schools would need to address their concerns directly to Carillion and to facilitate this; the Council had requested that Carillion had a named person who schools could approach. Concerns were also expressed that schools had not been consulted before the contract had been signed and despite numerous requests for the responsible officer to present a report to the Forum at which any issues could have been discussed; these requests had not been acceded to.

The Executive Director, Governance and Resources explained that Carillion would undertake a survey to understand needs and tailor the service accordingly. In response to queries about transferring she emphasised that schools would need to give assurances to the Council that they would provide the same risk management as had been previously provided by the Council.

A discussion ensued and Members requested that a meeting be arranged with the Council Officers responsible for managing the Catering contract and a representative from Carillion to respond to any concerns from schools.

The Executive Director, Governance and Resources also stated that she would be reviewing the 12 pence paid on top of the price paid to Carillion to see if this could be reduced particularly taking into account schools concerns that they wanted cashless dinner money systems in place.

AGREED

That the Executive Director, Governance and Resources attend Chairs briefing in order to clarify the new arrangements for schools.

35. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Interim Assistant Executive Director, Education, which updated members on the use of the Schools Causing Concern funding in financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16 and proposals concerning its future use.

He reported that that the Tameside Schools Causing Concern Budget had provided important financial support to primary school for a number of years. Schools had paid into the fund on a per pupil basis and primary schools choose to pay into this fund each year. However, the proportion of schools choosing to contribute to the fund was falling. During 2015/16, 46 out of 74 schools had

contributed to the Schools Causing Concern Budget. The total contributed by schools in 2015/16 was £114,736, which was combined with the £89,372 carried forward from 2014/15 to give a total budget available in 2015/16 of £203, 972. The report detailed the schools who had contributed to the budget and also those schools who had accessed support from the budget or had had funding committed to support further work in 2016.

It was reported that the biggest threat to schools accessing financial support for school improvement activity was the growing number of schools who were choosing not to contribute to the budget or/and the growing number of Primary Academies who may choose not to contribute to this Local Authority fund. A decreasing budget would limit the scope and scale of any school improvement activity that could be centrally funded from the budget. The lack of transparency of how the budget was managed and spent had significantly contributed to a lack of contribution by schools. A briefing session for both Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors in the Spring Term of 2016 was planned to provide understanding of how the budget was spent to support schools causing concern.

The report detailed the proposals which would be put forward to Tameside Head Teachers.

A discussion ensued and members asked whether schools could choose to opt out of the scheme and were informed that whilst Resource Management could charge the same schools that had opted into the scheme in the first year, schools could not be enforced. Members stated that the mind set of schools had changed recently regarding the issue of transparency and schools were comfortable with the current level of transparency. Concerns were expressed that some schools were accessing the budget when they had not contributed to it. Members stated that it would be more appropriate for this discussion to be held at a wider meeting before bringing to the Forum and it was suggested that it be discussed at the Tameside Primary Consortium.

AGREED

That the contents of the report be noted and consideration be given to the proposals for future use of this funding.

36. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Executive Director, Finance (Section 151 Officer) which informed members of the arrangements concerning the Dedicated Schools Grant.

No indication had been given by the DfE of whether the 2017/18 Schools Block allocation would be based on MFL rates, but if it was fully implemented by the DfE without any protection there would be an estimated reduction of £5.264m to Tameside's total DSG, which equated to 3.52% of the current allocation.

The DfE had given no clear indication of what level of Minimum Funding Guarantee would be provided to Schools in 2017/18 or the timescales for implementation and phasing of the MFL based allocations.

The Gains Cap is the DfE/EFA method of funding the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for Schools. In summary the MFG is a mandatory protection applied by the DfE/EFA which protects School budgets from significant annual variations in their per pupil funding and results in £1.946m of funding being allocated to just under half the Schools in Tameside in 2016/17. The DfE/EFA does not allocate any DSG to fund the MFG and their solution to funding the cost of the MFG is to allow a cap on per pupil gains for Schools who would otherwise have gained from the changes to the funding that started in April 2013.

The Gains Cap has been set at 100% for 2016/17 in order to ensure that the School Funding scheme can be fully funded, which amounts to £1.538m in reduced funding affecting just under half

the Schools in Tameside. The level of Gains Cap will be reviewed for 2017/18 once more information about the DFE/EFA proposals described above is available.

Once the position regarding the cost of Post 16 High Needs placements in 2016/17 was clarified it was possible that some DSG would be uncommitted. It was proposed to the meeting that if this happened then that funding should be used to retrospectively reduce the Gains Cap in Tameside. This would result in Schools and Academies across Tameside that currently have a 100% Gains Cap on their 2016/17 allocations receiving some additional funding.

It was reported that De-delegation was the terminology employed by the DFE 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 sector vote separately in relation to each of the services. The De-delegation rates in 2016/17 were proposed to be the same for 2016/17 as in 2015/16 and members of the Primary and Secondary Maintained sectors respectively were asked to indicate for each sector whether they supported the de-delegation of the services listed in the report.

Reference was made to the dedicated schools grant summary 2015/16 and 2016/17 and these were summarised in tables contained within the report.

With reference to the High Needs Pre 16 and Post 16 Block it was reported that for this financial year and the next, the volume of young people accessing this provision was considerably greater than the number of students the DFE allocated the DSG based on.

The report made reference to the use of unspent DSG from previous financial years and detailed proposals for how this funding be used. The DFE/EFA expected newly opened Schools such as Inspire and Discovery Academies to be financially supported during the first few years of their operation, due to the diseconomies involved in funding a School which only had one or two year groups of children. The Council agreed a reasonable level of costs with the Academy chain for both Schools reflected a realistic expectation of costs and factored in the estimated funding they would ordinarily receive through the funding formula. This had resulted in Inspire Academy needing an estimated £193,859 and Discovery Academy needing an estimated £609,000. These estimated allocations would be reviewed throughout the first few years of operation to reflect actual funding amounts.

The Pupil Referral Service (PRS) had seen increasing numbers of permanent exclusions over the last few years. Alongside this was the establishment of a High Needs unit for children with Behavioral, Emotional and Social Difficulties which operated alongside the excluded pupil provision. When combined with a significant number of staff being on long term absences this had resulted in escalating costs through a combination of the use of agency staff and external provision for students. A new Principal was appointed in April 2015 who had carried out a substantial review of the way that the service operates and is part way through a restructure of the workforce. The effect of these factors on the service budget had been significant with an annual deficit of £374,075 in 2014/15 and an additional projected deficit of £324,893 in 2015/16. The process of staff reorganisation was still taking place and it was proposed that these costs were funded from the unspent DSG from prior years.

A discussion took place regarding Pre Forum briefings for members. The Tameside Primary Consortium had arranged Pre Forum briefings with the Senior Resource Manager in relation to financial reports and this had proved useful for the Primary Head Teacher members of the Forum. Secondary Head Teacher members asked about receiving the same briefings and it was agreed that the Tameside Association of Secondary Head Teachers would contact the Senior Resource Manager to agree similar meetings for their Forum members. Consideration needed to be given to how to provide similar briefings for Governor Members of the Forum.

The Senior Resource Manager agreed to contact the Chair Person of both the Tameside Primary Consortium and the Tameside Association of Secondary Head Teachers to advise them of which Forum membership vacancies needed to be filled.

AGREED

- (i) **That the content of the report be noted.**
- (ii) **That the decision to approve in principle by Members of the Primary and Secondary Maintained sectors for each sector the de-delegation of service costs in relation to the following services be deferred until a special meeting of the Forum on 21 March 2016:**
 - (a) **Behaviour for Learning Inclusion (BLIS)**
 - (b) **Equality, Multiculturalism and Access (EMAT)**
 - (c) **Staff Cover for Trade Union Support**
 - (d) **Schools Contingency**

37. COUNCIL MANAGED DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MONITORING UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Executive Director of Finance (section 151 Officer), which detailed the centrally managed Dedicated Schools Grant for 2015/16 and proposals to utilise the unspent 2 year old funding carried forward from previous financial years.

The report detailed the financial monitoring position for 2015/16 financial year for the Council Services as listed in Appendix A, the Centrally Retained High Needs services and the Early Years funding that was delegated to Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers.

AGREED

That the contents of the report be noted.

38. NEXT MEETINGS

It was agreed that there would be a Forum meeting held on the 21 March 2016 to specifically enable the De-delegation decision to be taken. Only the Maintained School sector members were able to vote at that meeting.

A full Forum meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 27 April 2016 commencing at 1.30pm to discuss the content of the Department for Education School funding consultation.