

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2016 FROM 9.30 AM TO 11.40 AM**

Schools Representatives

John Bayes	Governor - Foundry College - Chairman
Helen Ball	Primary Head - Polehampton Infant
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Louisa Gurney	Primary Head - Emmbrook Junior
Elaine Stewart	Primary Head - Aldryngton Primary
Mandy Turner	Primary Head - Shinfield Infant
Sylvia Allen	School Business Manager - Hawkedon Primary
Julia Mead	School Business Manager, St Sebastian's CE Primary
Carol Simpson	School Business Manager, Colleton Primary
Liz Meek	Special School Head - Addington School
Ginny Rhodes	Secondary Head - St Crispins
Derren Gray	Academy Headteacher - The Piggott School
Janet Perry	Academy Business Manager - The Holt School
Paul Miller	Governor - St Crispins
Ian Head	Governor - Aldryngton

Non School Representatives

Anne Andrews	Oxford Diocese
Ian Pittock	Wokingham Borough Council

Also Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic Services Officer
Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director Learning and Achievement
Rob Stubbs, Head of Finance

52 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Phil Armstrong, Dominic Geraghty, Brian Prebble, Mary Rome, James Taylor and Charlotte Wilkinson.

53 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 December 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. It was recognised that the minutes were a fair reflection of the discussions, but that there was a level of ambiguity in the description of the requests of officers that had been made and in the decisions that had been recommended.

Members requested that going forward the draft minutes be circulated to all Members via email as soon as possible so that inaccuracies can be corrected prior to the next meeting.

54 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

55 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Paul Miller, Governor of St Crispins School was elected Vice-chairman for the remainder of the 2015/ 2016 academic year.

56 ALLOCATION OF PUPIL PREMIUM GRANT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director Learning and Achievement presented the report giving a brief explanation of the proposed changes to the allocation of Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) for Looked After Children (LAC).

The following comments were made during the discussion of the item:

- Some Members expressed concern that under the proposed new system schools would no longer receive direct funding;
- Alan explained that the funding allocation would be based on each LAC's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and this would continue to be drawn up in conjunction with the school. The process would be monitored by the Virtual School Headteacher;
- Alan stated that the new system would enable a prediction of resources and reassured that a flat rate would be retained for at least part of the allocation;
- Some Members expressed concern as to how the PPG would sit with the Special Educational Needs (SEN) funding. Members reported that in their experience at moderation meetings this money was asked to be included with the SEN funding. However, it was noted that this grant was supposed to be used reactively for activities such as school trips with the aim to narrow the gap between the LAC's educational level and that of their peers;
- In response to a question, Alan clarified that schools would continue to receive the deprivation fund;
- Alan agreed to keep Schools Forum informed on the PPG funding allocation and the 'pool' balances.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

57 REVENUE MONITORING

The Forum received the Schools Budget Financial Monitoring Report – January 2016 which was set out in agenda page 11. Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager explained the current outturn position on schools budget funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (including Education Funding Agency EFA), Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) and Universal Infant Free School Meal Grant.

Donna stated that there had been an improvement of £47k since the last meeting of the Forum. However, it was highlighted in the report that there was an in year deficit as spend was higher than the income received. This year's budget was set at £649k more than the allocation from DfE and the current position was now forecasted to spend £174k more than allocated.

Donna estimated that Early Years fund would see a potential underspend of £57k at the end of the financial year and the final payment was due in the spring term.

Donna reported that the National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) revaluations that took place during October had now been received. The impact to the contingency account had increased by a further £45k. There were still two outstanding queries to be resolved by the year end, but Donna did not expect this would have a significant impact to the account. Donna clarified that academies were subject to the same risks as maintained schools.

The report informed of £35k less being required from this year's Growth Fund as a result of the pre start up project cost negotiations having concluded with both new providers for the two new schools opening in September 2016.

RESOLVED That: The report be noted.

58 DRAFT 2016/17 BUDGET

The Forum considered the draft budget reports which had been sent via email earlier in the week. Donna stated that the indicative budget had been based on an estimate. However, since the last meeting of the Forum the DSG settlement had been received and was slightly better than anticipated. There was an additional £823,000 Schools Block funding that could be allocated via the formula. This was based on pupil numbers and therefore it was expected that the funding would continue at the same level in the future.

Donna explained that there had been a cash adjustment based on lagged free schools' pupil numbers. The first free school allocation had been received in 2015/16. The DfE had adjusted the 2016/17 funding to reflect the actual pupil numbers as well as based the funding on the actual October census. It was noted that there had not been an actual increase in pupil numbers.

It was anticipated that there would be an increase in funding for licenses but the cost was also expected to rise.

Donna pointed out the Proforma in appendix A which considered the additional £823,000 as a starting point. This Proforma had each AWPU rate increased by £18.60 which had the overall impact of reducing MFG from £2.2m in 2015/16 to £1.4m whilst maintaining the 1:1.27 ratio. This would reduce the number of schools receiving MFG from 48 down to 36. The maximum surplus achievable in this scenario would be £1.2m.

The Forum considered the report, the risks and the scenarios presented. During the discussion the following comments were made:

- Members asked if it was possible to run up a deficit. Donna stated that it was, but it would not be possible to allocate this money out to schools through the formula without running the risk of increasing MFG in the following financial year;
- It was noted that the deprivation factor had been updated by the DfE resulting in a reduction on the number of pupils categorised as living in a deprived area by approximately 500. This equated to £218,000 in monetary terms;
- It was pointed out that the MFG could be reduced or removed by the DfE as it was a transitional protection and schools would be in a vulnerable position should this happen. Appendix B provided a surplus of £800,000 maintaining MFG at a level of £1m, in this case if MFG was removed or reduced the surplus could then be used to offset the MFG impact;
- The budget was based on the assumption that there would be £800,000 carried forward at the end of this financial year. There were still three months of transactions to be processed before this could be verified;
- It was expected that the increase in the national minimum working wage would have a negative impact in the school's finances and this should be taken into account;
- The planned housing and schools expansions across the Borough would have an impact in the budget. As well as bringing additional schools revenue it could bring along pupils with special educational needs. Such pupils were not funded for their personal needs; the pre-existing High Needs Block would have to cater for them, it

was suggested that the Forum may wish to consider setting up a High Needs Block Contingency line within the budget proposal;

- Robs Stubbs, Head of Finance stated that Wokingham Borough Council planned to continue with the housing expansion programme and it was expected that there would be a 25% increase in housing in the next 10 years;
- It was agreed by Members that it would be beneficial to reduce the number of schools on MFG;
- Councillor Ian Pittock stated that schools in Wokingham would not see a reduction in pupil numbers as a result of the new school in Arborfield. He also said that he was confident that the new school would exceed the 90 pupils initial admission number;
- Members were of the opinion that children attending school now should not be disadvantaged by reduced funding in their schools in order to subsidise the new schools;
- It was noted that all options involved a certain level of risk and it was important to find a balanced budget;
- Donna stated that the £218,000 deprivation factor had been included in the calculations of the proposed budget options;
- Louisa Gurney stated that at the Primary Headteachers' meeting it had been agreed to take the £218,000 and add it to the AWPU.

Regarding the deprivation factor, the Forum agreed to keep rates constant in line with Scenario 2 of the report.

Donna recommended that Forum adopted the Proforma found in Appendix B with a reserve of £800,000. Rob asked Members to be mindful that Wokingham Borough Council had received the worst financial settlement from central government in years, and it was not expected to increase in the near future. Rob pointed out that the £800,000 reserve should be treated carefully as it was highly unlikely that schools would receive additional funding in the future.

After much debate Donna reminded the Forum that a decision had to be made in order to submit the Proforma to the EFA on the 21 January 2016. Having considered and debated all the options, the Forum asked Donna to produce a budget which was based on final reserve of circa £500,000, somewhere between the balanced 'yellow' budget and the deficit 'red' budget.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The deprivation factor of £218,000 be taken with AWPU;
- 2) Donna would produce a Proforma budget submission based on a reserve of circa £500,000.

59 FINAL PROFORMA FOR SUBMISSION TO EFA

The consideration of the final Proforma for submission to EFA took place with the discussions of item 58.

60 PRIMARY STRATEGY

Councillor Ian Pittock stated that the Primary Strategy report had been published to the Wokingham Borough Council's website on Monday 18 January 2016. The report was attached to the Executive agenda and was going to be discussed at the Executive meeting on 28 January 2016.

Members of the Forum expressed frustration with the length of time it had taken for the report to become available and the number of times it had been deferred from Schools Forum agenda.

It was agreed that Members would be sent the link to the web page containing the report and that the item would be brought for information to the Schools Forum at the 24 February 2016 meeting.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Members would be sent a web link to the Primary Strategy report;
- 2) the Primary Strategy would be considered at the meeting on 24 February 2016.

61 FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda page15.

The following items were included in the Forward Programme:

- 24 February 2016 - Primary Strategy;
- 18 May 2016 - A report containing an analysis of the budget line 'Fees for Independent Special Schools'

Members asked that in the future all SEN Alert updates be provided in the format of a written report with the main agenda document.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be at Wokingham Borough Council on 24 February 2016 at 9.30.

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