

## **Schools Forum Funding Group Meeting**

22 April 2016, The Outen Room, Green Park, Aston Clinton

Meeting opened: 9.30am

Meeting closed: 11.30am

### **Present**

#### *Members*

Pete Rowe, Tessa Haddon, Alan Rosen, Michael Moore, Steven Sneesby, Wendy Terry, Sue Stamp.

#### *Substitutes*

Jenny Clarkin (Early Years)

#### *Officers*

John Huskinson, Nick Wilson, Emma Wilding, Adam Johnson, Jane Nicholls

### **1. Apologies for Absence/ Changes in Membership**

Apologies were received from Wendy Terry.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

None

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11 January 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

### **4. Matters Arising**

None

### **5. Early Years 30 Hour Consultation**

Members were referred to the report circulated at the meeting which gave a summary of the key information/changes to Capital Bids, Cutting Red Tape and 30 hour free Childcare entitlement.

The report advises that following the Childcare Act 2016 receiving Royal Assent, the Government announced on the 4 April 2016:

- A consultation on the proposed Code of Practice for 30 hours extended entitlement
- An opportunity for local authorities to bid for capital to support expansion for 30 hours by 29 April 2016. This would initially be the submission of an expression of interest for a share of the £50m capital for expansion.
- A review of cutting red tape for the sector (comments submitted can be viewed online - <https://cutting-red-tape.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/childcare/>)

During discussions, the following was noted:

- Some providers were refusing to take children who were eligible for Pupil Premium. This issue had been taken up with Government.
- A survey took place with 125 providers of which one third said they would not be engaging in the 30 hour scheme.
- The DfE had not increased the Early Years settlement for EY Block for 7 years.

- The announcement that the national average rates for three and four-year-olds would increase by 30p per hour (the rate for Buckinghamshire was currently £4.10). Even if the local authority received this increase, the funding would still not be enough to cover what it was supposed to.
- 400k DSG central retained Early Years income would be used to provide grants to providers for place development/quality improvement and sustainability. A further £250k would be used to support qualifications and recruitment.

In response to questions raised the following was noted:

- The expectation was that within the proposed funding there would be restrictions around central spend and that the consultation would also cover free school meals.
- The local authority was given trajectory revenue money when the Early Years market was developed 2 years ago but there was no indication similar funding would be made available for expansion to 30 hours.
- The focus of the Early Years 30 hour expansion is on getting families back into work rather than taking up childcare.
- At the BCC One Council Board (OCB) a colleague raised the question about the change in benefits and the consultation being an economic model.
- Government is reviewing the funding formula for the allocation of Early Years funding to local authorities.

Following discussion about the expansion of nursery provision at One Council Board (OCB) on 20 April 2016 the following agreement had been reached:

The local authority would submit an expression of interest for capital  
Priorities would be:

- All eligible children to receive 15 hours free education
- Eligible 2 year olds
- 30 hours

The above three priorities received unanimous support from Schools Forum Funding Group.

#### **6. Smaller Schools (shared services packages for bursars and headteachers)**

At a previous meeting of Schools Forum, the question was asked why small schools were charged less for some services as there was some feeling that small schools are adequately taken care of through the schools funding formula and therefore should not be subject to special treatment.

**Members of Schools Forum Funding Group said that all Bucks Services should be made aware that they would need a robust agreement to justify any differences in charges between sectors, phases or size of school.**

#### **7. Financial Scheme of Delegation**

Members were advised that the document explained the financial relationship between the local authority and maintained schools in terms of financial controls, treatment of surplus and deficit balances, insurance and repairs and maintenance etc.

Updating the document was a lengthy process which involved different service areas of the County Council. The revised document would include information from the DfE document as well as take into the old document into account.

**The current and revised versions of the document and an overview of the major changes would be circulated to Members of Schools Forum.**

**ACTION: Emma Wilding**

## **8. Contingency Group update**

There was no update as the Contingency Group had not met since the March meeting of Schools Forum. The next meeting was in June.

Discussions with other local authorities to clarify the process they had in place for Contingency showed a mixed picture; some did not have a process in place at all, in some local authorities senior officers made decisions about Contingency, other local authorities had the same process in place as Buckinghamshire.

**Further legal advice was being sought on the clarification of the terminology used in the Terms of Reference. ACTION: Service Director Education**

## **9. Historic Commitments**

Members were advised that Central Government wanted to create a new central schools block which would bring together two existing funding streams through which local authorities receive funding for their responsibilities:

- centrally retained Dedicated Schools Grant
- retained duties Education Services Grant

The proposal was to distribute funding using a simple per pupil formula. Local authorities had been asked to submit a return detailing their historic commitments by 27 May 2016.

Funding for Practical Learning Opportunities and 14-19 Commissioning dated back to April 2010 when the following two statutory duties transferred from the Learning and Skills Council to Local Authorities:

- To secure enough suitable education and training to meet the reasonable needs of young people who are over compulsory school age but under 19, and those aged 19-25 and are subject to learning difficulty assessment (LLDD).
- To encourage, enable or assist young people's participation in education or training.

There were also the historic commitments of the School Engagement Programme, Increasing Flexibility Programme, Parents and Carers Events to promote post-16 options and the Raising of the Participation Age and Work Related Learning.

With the exception of the Work Related Learning, all of the above commitments were committed prior to 2013. It was felt that these budgets needed to be retained as without this funding many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds would be disadvantaged even further.

In discussion, the following points were raised.

- A Service Level Agreement was in place until the end of 2017/18 which would help to provide evidence of historic commitment and that the money was well spent.
- In terms of the evidence of the impact of the programmes, data could be provided about which programme an individual pupil had been on and their outcome.
- A 5 year contract was in place with Bucks Learning Trust.
- Some historic costs such as Schools PRC were an ongoing national issue
- School transport was not included in historic costs as this was driven by activity in schools.
- The capital bid to expand Berton School was committed to in 2012 but had been put on hold due to land issues.
- **The f40 group would be contacted to clarify their response to the next stage of the Fair Funding consultation. ACTION: Emma Wilding**

**Members of Schools Forum Funding Group were in AGREEMENT of retaining the budget for Historical Commitments. Ratification would be requested at the May meeting of Schools Forum.**

#### **10. Protocols for non-member involvement**

A discussion took place on the guidelines for when a non-member of Schools Forum could speak at a Schools Forum meeting, proxy votes and the circulation of correspondence from members of the public.

Members of the Funding Group were referred to the following sections of the Constitution:

#### **6.6**

'All Members have the right to speak at meetings the Forum and the following persons may also speak, even though they are not members;

- (a) The Director of Children's Services for BCC, or a designated representative;
- (b) The Chief Finance officer for BCC or a designated representative;
- (c) Any elected member of BCC with primary responsibility for children's services or education;
- (d) Any elected member of BCC with primary responsibility for BCC's resources;
- (e) Any person who is invited by the Forum to attend in order to provide financial or technical advice to the forum;
- (f) An observer appointed by the Secretary of State; and
- (g) Any person presenting a paper or other item to the Forum that is on the meeting's agenda, but that person's right to speak shall be limited to matters related to the item that the person is presenting.
- (h) Any other person with the permission of the Chair, at the Chair's discretion, (or the Vice Chair in the Chair's absence.)

#### **7 Alternates / Substitutes**

7.1 Any Member of the Forum may nominate an alternate member ('the Alternate Member') to attend meetings of the Forum in his or her absence.

7.2 Where a Member has nominated an Alternate Member, the Alternative Member may attend and vote in place of the Member. A Member may only

nominate an Alternate Member who would himself or herself be eligible to be appointed or elected to the Forum under the same category as the Member.

- 7.3 The name of the Alternate Member must be notified to the Secretary of the Forum at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting in question where possible.

## **11 Voting**

**11.2** *'Any formal recommendations made to BCC shall be determined by a majority of the votes of Members present at a meeting of the Forum and not by sub-groups'.*

During discussions it was also noted that Members have the responsibility to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests which relate to an agenda item being discussed during a meeting.

## **11. Timelines for consultations and recommendations to the County Councils for Schools Funding**

**A timeline for consultations and recommendations would be compiled.**

**ACTION: John Huskinson**

## **12. Any Other Business**

### *SEND Review*

Members were advised that work was currently underway to narrow the scope of the SEND review. An update would be given to Members of Schools Forum at a future meeting.

### *Pupil Premium*

Members were advised that there was a separate ringfenced pot of money for schools that convert to an academy status with a pupil premium deficit and that the guidance from the DfE was that pupil premium could be carried forward.

Members were also advised it was a statutory requirement for schools to post a detailed analysis of pupil premium spend on their website.

**Members of Schools Forum Funding Group AGREED with the introduction of a local rule (or obtaining EFA approval) to say that the assumption is that all pupil premium is spent in the year received (or within 1 term) unless agreed otherwise with Schools Forum to prevent deficit manipulation due to claimed pupil premium unspent balances.**

## **13. Date of the Next Meeting**

27 May 2016, 9.30am, Green Park, Aston Clinton