



Report to Schools Forum

Date: 27th June 2023

Title: Schools Forum Funding Group – Review of Terms of Reference

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Recommendations:

- a) To agree the purpose and meeting frequency of the Schools Forum Funding Group**
- b) To agree that the SFFG is required to meet twice a year, prior to the June and January Schools Forum meetings, with additional meetings if required, for example in response to DfE consultations on the National Funding Formula**

1. Background

- 1.1. At the January meeting of Schools Forum it was agreed that the Terms of Reference for the Schools Forum Funding Group should be reviewed to establish if the group needed to continue in its current form.

2. Schools Forum Funding Group – Current Position

- 2.1. The Schools Forum Funding Group (SFFG) is a formal Sub-Group of Schools Forum. On investigation the original terms of reference for the group could not be located.
- 2.2. The group currently meets prior to each Schools Forum meeting and reviews papers for the Schools Forum agenda. This process enables more detailed discussion on some of the key issues being raised in the papers and ensures that initial questions can be responded to and papers for Schools Forum amended accordingly.
- 2.3. The original purpose of the group is likely to have been focused around considering options for the Buckinghamshire Local Funding Formula to support in considering options for formula factors and making recommendations to Schools Forum. In more recent years Buckinghamshire has agreed to mirror the National Funding Formula (NFF) and therefore local discretion on formula changes has been reduced.
- 2.4. Much of the focus of the Schools Forum agenda currently is the pressure against the High Needs Block and the impact on the DSG deficit. A DSG Expenditure Review

Group has been established to focus specifically on the High Needs Block and the management of the DSG deficit.

3. Proposals for the Schools Forum Funding Group

3.1. Going forwards, the changes to the local formula to mirror the NFF, and the implementation of the DSG Expenditure Review Group to focus on the high needs block, mean that the SFFG does not have a full agenda prior to each Schools Forum meeting. There are however key meetings during the year when it is helpful for the SFFG to meet to support in reviewing the detail of papers, for example papers on the local funding formula, and on financial outturn.

3.2. The following table shows the key papers considered by Schools Forum on an annual cycle and suggests which sub-group should input into those papers.

Agenda Item	SF Meeting	Proposed SF Sub-Group
Revenue Budget Monitoring	Standing Item for all meetings	High Needs element to go to DSG Expenditure Review Group Remaining blocks direct to Schools Forum
Revenue Outturn	June Meeting	SFFG
Schools Revenue Balances	June Meeting	SFFG
Schools Budget Proposals and NFF	Initial paper on NFF Guidance in October Budget Proposals to December and January meetings	SFFG to meet prior to the October meeting <u>if</u> there are specific changes proposed to NFF and consulted on by the DfE SFFG to meet prior to January Schools Forum
De-delegation Proposals	December	Maintained Schools Committee
Schools Specific Contingency Proposals	March	Schools Specific Contingency Panel
High Needs Block Update	Standing Item for all meetings	DSG Expenditure Review Group
Delivering Better Value in SEND	Standing Item for all meetings	DSG Expenditure Review Group

3.3. A review of the standing agenda items for Schools Forum suggests that the SFFG should meet prior to the June Schools Forum and the January Schools Forum meetings. A further meeting may be required in the Autumn term to consider any NFF changes proposed by the Department for Education (DfE), particularly if any consultation is required.

3.4. For completeness, the meeting frequency for other sub-groups should remain as follows:

- **DSG Expenditure Review Group** – 5 meetings per year, to align with the Schools Forum meetings
- **Early Years Forum** – as required, ensuring a meeting takes place in January prior to budget setting decisions
- **Maintained Schools Committee** – annual meeting in the autumn term
- **Schools Specific Contingency Panel** – annual meeting, currently held in February/March

