

## **Manchester Schools Forum**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2015**

#### **Present:**

##### **Members of the Forum**

**Secondary Sector Head Teachers:** Gillian Houghton

**Secondary Sector Governors:** Fergus Kilroy

**Primary Sector Head Teachers:** Patricia Adams, Sarah Navin

**Primary Sector Governors:** Brendon Jones, Gabrielle Higham, John Janulewski

**Special School Head teacher:** Bernice Kostick

**Non-School Members:** Amanda Corcoran, Steve Scott, Cath Baggaley, John Morgan, Harry Spooner

#### **Executive Members:**

Councillor Sheila Newman (Executive Member for Children's Services),

#### **Council Officers:**

John Edwards, Director, Education and Skills

Rachel Rosewell, Head of Finance, Children and Families

Reena Kohli, Directorate Financial Lead, Children and Families

Adel White, Senior Finance Manager, Children and Families

Richard Shirley, Senior Finance Manager, Children and Families

**Apologies:** Fiaz Riasat, Peter Tite, Helen McAndrew, Joshua Rowe, Councillor Stone, Councillor Akbar, Mary Metcalf, Mary Hunter, Collette Plant and Andy Park

#### **FF/15/4      Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 21 January 2015 were submitted for consideration as a correct record.

#### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting on 21 January 2015 as a correct record.

#### **FF/15/5      2015/16 Two Year old Offer (Early Years Funding)**

The Forum considered a report of the Director of Education and Skills and the Head of Finance (Children and Families Directorate).

The report discussed the entitlement to 570 hours of free early education or childcare for targeted two year olds (the 'two year old offer'), which is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The report highlighted a change to the way the budget will be calculated in the new financial year. Previously the budget had been calculated based on estimated pupil numbers but this would change to actual take up of the offer in the 2015/16 financial year. It was anticipated that this would lead to a reduced income from the DSG for that year.

The Forum discussed the way in which the fund had been calculated, the estimated income that would be generated through the fund for the 2015/16 financial year and how this would be used to cover administrative costs and support a discretionary fund.

The Forum was asked to take a vote on the recommendation to agree that the rate paid to providers of the two year old offer remains at the current level of £4.85 per hour. Some members abstained due to the lack of time to consult with providers to establish their views.

### **Decision**

To agree that the rate per child paid to providers of free early education or childcare to targeted two year olds remains at the current level of £4.85 per hour.

(The Forum voted 7 members for, 0 against and 3 abstentions)

### **FF/15/6 High Needs Funding consultation**

The Forum considered a report of the Head of Finance (Children and Families) which discussed the Department for Education (DfE)'s review of the distribution of funding for pupils with high cost Special Educational Needs (the 'High Needs block') to facilitate the move to the distribution of funds at local level. The DfE had commissioned research through the ISOS partnership to ask interested parties about how funding for Special Educational Needs could be distributed more fairly. This consultation would end on 27 February 2015.

The report set out the way in which the high needs block is currently allocated and discussed the scope of the current consultation across 13 councils to focus on finding new and improved formulae to distribute funds from national to local level and subsequently from local level to institutions. Key factors under consideration were how the DfE allocates the high needs block, how this would then be managed and distributed by local authorities and the role of special schools and specialist provision.

The Head of Education Strategy, Access and Inclusion summarised the emerging themes of a recent engagement programme which involved representatives from schools, including some of the Forum's own members and local authority officers as a formal part of the consultation process.

The Forum was invited to consider whether it wished to submit a stand alone response to the consultation. Despite the short time available in which to feed into the consultation, the Forum agreed to submit its own formal response to consultation and nominated 3 members to contribute to this.

### **Decision**

To agree that the following Schools Forum members will approve the Forum's formal response to the consultation.

- Elizabeth Fritchley
- Gillian Houghton
- Bernice Kostik

#### **FF/15/7      2014/15 Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring**

The Forum considered a report of the Head of Finance (Children and Families) which set out the monitoring position of the centrally held Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The report highlighted an estimated underspend of £3.3M which the Council was seeking to carry forward to the next financial year in order to earmark the reserve for anticipated pressures in the 'high needs block.' The Forum was invited to comment on the proposed earmarking of the reserves.

There was a discussion about the importance of targeted mental health services for children and young people and early access to assessment services, eg assessments. Whilst the Forum noted that the statutory target of 20 weeks waiting time for assessments was being met and that overall timescales were linked with a limited supply of Education Psychologists both locally and nationally, members stressed the role of Health partners in the provision of early, appropriate and specialist support for young people.

#### **Decision**

To note the projected Dedicated Schools Grant balance for 2014/15.

#### **FF/15/8      Proposed Revision to Growth Fund Criteria**

The Forum considered a report of the Head of Finance (Children and Commissioning) which discussed proposed changes to the Growth Fund criteria (the ring fenced fund that is solely used to support growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need; additional classes to meet the infant class size regulation and the costs of necessary new schools). The Forum was invited to comment on the implications of changing the criteria to incorporate the costs of new school pre-opening costs and to take a vote on whether to approve the proposed criteria. The Directorate Lead (Children and Families Finance) gave an explanation of the type of costs that would be payable under the Fund and that these would vary depending on the size and nature of the school. The Forum noted that the proposals were in line with other authorities.

#### **Decision**

To approve the proposed revised Growth Fund criteria.

(The Forum voted 10 for, 0 against and 4 abstentions)

(Elizabeth Fritchley declared a personal interest as a member of a free school)

**FF/15/9      Date of Next meetings**

The Chair informed the Forum that the following dates were approved for meetings over the next academic year:

- 18th May 2015
- 15th June 2015
- 13th July 2015