

## **Manchester Schools Forum**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2015**

#### **Present:**

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

**Secondary Sector Head Teachers:** Gillian Houghton

**Secondary Sector Governors:** None

**Primary Sector Head Teachers:** Patricia Adams, Mike Cooke

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

**Special School Head teacher:** None

**Special School Governors:** Peter Tite

**Academy Representative:** Andy Park, Ian Fenn,

**Pupil Referral Unit Representative:** None

**Nursery School Representative:** None

**Non-School Members:** Amanda Corcoran, Councillor Bernard Stone, Harry Spooner, Steve Scott, Mary Hunter, Joshua Rowe, John Morgan, Steve Scott, Cath Baggaley, John Morgan

Bernice Kostick (attending for Alan Braven, Special School Headteacher)  
Elizabeth Fritchley

#### **Executive Members:**

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

Councillor Rosa Battle (Executive Member for Culture and Leisure)

#### **Council Officers:**

Rachel Rosewell, Head of Finance, Children and Families

Reena Kohli, Directorate Financial Lead, Children and Families

Adel White, Senior Finance Manager, Children and Families

Mark Baskerville, Auditor

Gavin Sugden, Auditor

**Apologies:** Sarah Navin, Fergus Kilroy, Mary Metcalfe, Collette Plant, Saeeda Ishaq

#### **FF/15/10 Bernice Kostick**

The Forum thanked Bernice Kostick who was stepping down as a Forum member, for all her hard work on the Forum over the years.

#### **FF/15/11 Urgent Business**

The Chair advised the Forum that he had agreed for an oral report from Mr Park, Academy Representative on the budget setting process for academy schools following the recent financial situation between Chorlton High School and Newall Green High School.

#### **FF/15/12 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 23 February were submitted for approval. A member

noted that they attended the February meeting but their presence was not recorded.

### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting on 23 February subject to the above amendment.

### **FF/15/13 Dedicated Schools Grant Update 2015/16**

The Forum considered a report of the Head of Finance for Children's Services which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Dedicated Schools Grant is the source of funding for the majority of school related operational expenditure. It comprises schools, early years and high needs funding blocks. This report follows on from the DSG settlement figure reported to Schools Forum in January 2015.

The Directorate Lead Children and Families Finance explained the adjustments to the grant that were highlighted in section 2.2 of the report. This included budget figures following recuperation of funding from academy schools and the final unallocated, 2014/15 early years recalculation which was due to the increase in provision for 3 and 4 year olds.

The Forum noted the report.

### **Decision**

To note:

- Movements in DSG budget allocations since January 2015
- Final confirmed non-recoupment academy cash transfer impact and the allocation of this funding to new local authority responsibilities for non-recoupment academy central costs
- The adjustment to early years 2014/15 funding and the allocation of this funding to fund the anticipated increase in 2015/16 early years pupil numbers
- Level of academy recoupment

### **FF/15/14 Proposed Revision to Growth Fund Criteria**

The Department for Education require local authorities to fund the cost of new schools both before and after they open from the growth fund. This applies to schools that are needed due to local demand for school places. The DSG growth fund is ring-fenced so that it is only used for the purposes of supporting growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need, to support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation and to meet the costs of necessary new schools. New schools opening costs include the pre start-up costs and post start-up costs. The growth fund covers all maintained and academy schools, and free schools after the first year of opening.

The Forum was asked to approve the amendment to the criteria so that it included post-opening costs at a new school. In February, the Forum approved changes to the Growth Fund criteria to fund pre-opening and start up costs for a new academy.

There is currently no provision in the Growth Fund for cost pressures in the initial years after an academy opens, Without the means of funding post opening costs, there was a risk that new academy schools would not be able to plan suitable education provision.

The Forum discussed the pressure on school places and the likelihood that new schools would be needed as the increase in the number of pupils at primary schools moved through to secondary schools. The Directorate Lead Children and Families Finance confirmed that the fund could accommodate the predicted growth in school pupils over the next few years, but this could be reviewed. Overall, it is estimated that there will be at least two new secondary schools in Manchester over the next two to three years. The Forum voted unanimously to agree to the amended criteria.

### **Decision**

To approve the amendment to the growth fund criteria to include post-opening costs at a new school.

### **FF/15/15 Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) – Internal Audit Report**

The Forum considered a report of the Head of Finance – Children’s Services that presented the findings from a recent internal audit report. The report aimed to provide assurance to management over the effectiveness of income maximisation, tracking and reporting arrangements of the pupil premium grant. The findings of the report would be communicated to schools through the governors’ networks. The representative from internal audit introduced the report and summarised the main findings.

The Forum discussed the recommendation that encouraged individual schools to review how to maximise applications for PPG and the fact that there had been a reduction in the number of applications for free school meals. Members recognised the need for schools to do their own analysis of projected applications for free school meals and the long term impact on funding. Overall, they did not feel that the number of free school meals was a robust indicator for measuring the need for providing funding for disadvantaged children.

Forum members questioned impact that the introduction of free school meals would have on PPG claims but this was not known but officers were working on the analysis for this. In response to a question, the auditors confirmed that the report was based solely on primary schools as they were not able to gain access to any secondary schools in the timescale allowed.

### **Decision**

To thank the auditors for attending the meeting and to note the contents of the report.

### **FF/15/16 Update on Special Educational Needs and Special School Place Planning in Manchester**

The Forum considered a report of the Head of Education Strategy, Access and

Inclusion which provided information on the numbers of children in the city with SEN compared to national data, the amounts spent on SEN provision and the plans to increase special school and PRU places.

The Head of Education Strategy, Access and Inclusion introduced the report and explained that the Council was required to transfer over the 2823 children with special educational needs to the new Education Health and care assessments by September. The number of children with special needs had increased by 6% in 2014, which was an overall percentage increase as well as the overall increase in pupil numbers. Consequently, this had placed substantial pressure on the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The report asked for the Forum to approve the transfer of additional funding from the growth budget to fund additional secondary PRU places to meet the demand.

The Forum discussed the pressure on SEN provision and noted that a case would need to be made to the Department for Education to fund these places in the long term. They referred specifically to former grants for gifted and talented pupils that were now rolled in to the DSG budget.

#### **Decision.**

To approve the transfer of £600,000 of the growth fund budget to fund additional secondary PRU places.

#### **FF/15/17 Greater Manchester Devolution**

The Head of Children's Finance provided an oral update on the Greater Manchester Devolution Agreement. The 10 local authorities in greater Manchester had agreed to work together with devolved budgets to deliver a number of priorities including health and social care, supporting people to get back into work and closing the productivity gap (the amount of money contributed to the government through taxes compared to the amount claimed in benefits for a local area. This would have a knock on effect for school funding.

In the Manchester context, there is a various economy in school funding. There was an opportunity for Greater Manchester to make a case for certain elements of school funding to be devolved to greater Manchester under the devolution agreement. The Head of Children's Finance highlighted six key areas which could form part of the case to the government. The deadline for making this case was very tight but a more detailed report would be brought to the July meeting of the Forum.

The Forum recognised the opportunities that this presented including reviewing ways in which local authorities could share the cost of back office functions such as school admissions. The Executive Member for Children's Services confirmed that there was substantial potential for combined working under the devolution agreement, and the opportunity to make a case for a fairer funding formula.

#### **Decision**

To note the report

### **FF/15/18     Dates of Future meetings**

The Forum agreed the dates of future meetings:

- 13th July 2015
- 28th September 2015
- 16th November 2015
- 14th December 2015
- 18th January 2016
- 22nd February 2016
- 16th May 2016
- 13th June 2016
- 11th July 2016

### **FF/15/19     Financial Arrangements between Newall Green High School and Chorlton High School**

The Head Teacher of Chorlton High School informed members of the current situation. Chorlton High School was an academy school with a surplus budget. They had been asked by the Department for Education and the local authority to join with Newall Green High School to convert to an academy. This had gone well and a number of cost reductions were achieved. However, funding from the Education Funding Agency was not in line with previous anticipated funding and this had created a deficit in the budget for Newall Green. Chorlton High School had been forced to accommodate this deficit within Chorlton's surplus budget. He explained that other schools supporting academy conversions should be aware of this situation.