

Manchester Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2015

Present:

Members of the Forum

Secondary Sector Head Teachers: None

Secondary Sector Governors: Fiaz Riasat

Primary Sector Head Teachers: Patricia Adams, Mike Cooke

Primary Sector Governors: Brendon Jones, John Janulewski

Special School Head teacher: Alan Braven

Special School Governors: None

Academy Representative: Andy Park, Elizabeth Fritchley

Pupil Referral Unit Representative: None

Nursery School Representative: Liz Hardy

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

Executive Members:

None

Council Officers:

Reena Kohli, Directorate Financial Lead, Children and Families

Richard Shirley, Senior Finance Manager, Children and Families

Apologies: Ian Fenn, Gillian Houghton, Helen McAndrew, Joshua Rowe, Mary Hunter, Peter Tite, Sarah Navin, Saeeda Ishaq, Colette Plant

FF/15/28 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 13 July 2015 were submitted for approval.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting on 13 July 2015.

FF/15/29 Dedicated Schools Grant update 2016/17

The Forum considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance – Directorate for Children and Families which provided details of the final position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for schools and the Council.

Manchester will receive £450m. The amount of the settlement will increase as pupil numbers grow. The non-recoupment academy payments will change with regard to the method of payment, as this will now be per pupil rather than as a lump sum.

The Forum heard that information about the Early Years block is not yet available, and as soon as this was presented, the Forum would be updated.

The Forum noted that the main areas of increased pressure were the post-16 costs in the high needs block.

Decision

To note the report.

FF/15/30 Funding Formula 2015/16 – benchmarking

The Forum considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance – Directorate for Children and Families which provided details of the way that the Schools Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant allocation (which funds schools in each local authority) is calculated.

The report showed a comparison of other statistical neighbour and GM authorities, and how Manchester's funding compares. The basic entitlement is comparable to other authorities. Manchester has very high levels of deprivation, and this is reflected in the FSM budget which is spread much more thinly.

The report confirmed that at this time the Authority is not planning to change the Manchester schools funding formula.

Decision

To note the report.

FF/15/31 Changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance – Directorate for Children and Families which provided details of the required changes from February 2014 to the Scheme for Financing Schools as directed by the Department for Education in 2015. The report also informed the Forum that the Local Authority is seeking to make minor amendments that seek to provide additional clarity.

The Scheme for Financing Schools was last updated in April 2014. Since the previous changes, the Department for Education have issued directed revisions to local schemes and there are also some minor amendments to the wording intended to provide additional clarity. Local authorities are required to consult all maintained schools and then receive the approval of the members of their Schools Forum that represent maintained schools.

The Forum were notified that there had already been dialogue with the school, and that the consultation document was contained within the report. Members of the Forum were asked to return this document to Children's Services Finance by 4 December 2015.

Decision

To note the report.

FF/15/32 Dedicated Schools Grant Update 2015/16

The Forum considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance – Directorate for Children and Families which provided details of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is the source of funding for the majority of school related operational expenditure. It comprises schools, early years and high needs funding blocks. The report followed on from the May 2015 DSG report taken to Schools Forum in June 2015.

Early years block – at P6 the early years block is expected to underspend by £0.5m. The block is adjusted by the DfE to reflect January census pupil numbers in-year. As Manchester's pupil numbers are increasing but centrally retained budgets remain constant, this adjustment generates early years block 'headroom'. This £0.4m headroom is currently unallocated, but will be used to support overspends in other areas.

Schools block – the schools block is expected to overspend by £0.3m. Increased rateable values of school buildings have led to an overspend on mainstream school budgets, offset by staffing vacancies in the Admissions Service budget. Manchester's increasing pupil numbers generates pressure on the growth fund, and as a result this budget is expected to overspend in 2015/16.

High needs block – the high needs block is expected to overspend by £0.3m. Pressures in the post-16 and out of city top up budgets are in part offset by the 2014/15 DSG underspend contribution, but the anticipated high costs of these settings result in an overspend projection of £1.5m in these budgets. The Statutory Assessment team are working with these education providers to in an attempt to reduce fees charged when placing SEN pupils in these settings.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. To note the pressures in the emerging high needs block and growth fund.

FF/15/33 Water Charges update

Following meetings with United Utilities and authorities in the north-west, the Senior Finance Manager (School Budgets) informed Schools Forum of the progress made to date with regards to water bills across the north-west and nationally. It was confirmed to the Forum that DEFRA are going to undertake a review of the rates charged, which is considered to be good progress in the circumstances.

Decision

To note the update.

FF/15/27 Dates of the Next Meetings

Decision

To approve the dates of the meetings for the forthcoming year:

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