

Manchester Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2015

Present:

Members of the Forum

Secondary Sector Head Teachers: Gillian Houghton

Secondary Sector Governors: None

Primary Sector Head Teachers: Patricia Adams, Mike Cooke, Sarah Navin, Saeeda Ishaq

Primary Sector Governors: None

Special School Head teacher: Alan Braven

Special School Governors: None

Academy Representative: Andy Park, Elizabeth Fritchley Ian Fenn, Collette Plant

Pupil Referral Unit Representative: None

Nursery School Representative: Liz Hardy

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

Executive Member: None

Council Officers:

John Edwards, Director of Education and Skills

Reena Kohli, Directorate Financial Lead, Children and Families

Richard Shirley, Senior Finance Manager, Children and Families

Adel White – Senior Finance Manager

Apologies: Fiaz Rasat, Brendon Jones, Councillor Rosa Battle, Joshua Rowe

FF/15/35 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 16 November 2015 were submitted for consideration as a correct record. A member highlighted that the following people were present at the Forum's last meeting: Councillor Rosa Battle (Executive Member), John Edwards (Director of Education & Skills), Adel White (Council Officer)

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting on 16 November 2015, subject to the amendment above.

FF/15/36 Election of the Chair, Vice Chair and oral update on Forum membership

Nominations for Ian Fenn as Chair and Andy Park as Vice Chair were proposed and seconded. The Forum agreed to this.

The Directorate Financial Lead, Children and Families informed members that John Janulewski had resigned from his position on the Forum as Primary Sector Governor

representative. There is a secondary governor vacancy and a primary governor vacancy.

Decision

1. The Forum agreed to elect Ian Fenn as Chair, and Andy Park as Vice Chair of Forum for the year.
2. To note the resignation of Mr Janulewski as Primary Sector Governor representative on the Forum.

FF/15/37 Dedicated Schools Grant 2016/17

The Forum considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance – Directorate for Children and Families which summarised the Spending Review education funding announcements that impact on Schools Forum. Due to its statutory role in the management of the schools block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the Forum was asked to approve the amounts for specific budget headings which would in turn form part of the overall budget planning process for 2016/17.

The Forum noted that the formula for the schools block element was compliant with the DSG's current requirements and, in view of the Government's commitment to introduce funding formulae from 2017/18 onwards, no changes to the formula for 2016/17 had been proposed. The Directorate Financial Lead, Children and Families informed the Forum that Manchester Schools were unlikely to gain as a result of reform.

Discussions turned to the further reduction of the Education Services Grant to Local Authorities and Academies and the forthcoming consultation to be launched in the New Year. The Forum discussed ways in which to gather information in order to prepare and establish its formal response. It also discussed ways in which to illustrate the interrelated factors that impact on pupils/families who experience multiple levels of deprivation or present with complex needs, and how as a consequence this is reflected across Manchester schools. Officers were therefore asked to explore the most appropriate ways in which to illustrate the predicted significant effects on outcomes for Manchester's school children in the approach to the opening of the consultation. A suggestion was made that an interim meeting of the Forum could be convened in order to finalise its response. The Forum also stressed the importance of encouraging as many people as possible to engage in the consultation as it was acknowledged that response rates have been historically low.

Decision

1. To note the annual redistribution of early years block funding formerly used to fund the targeted full time early years funding (£9.2m) back to primary schools in the schools block funding formula.
2. To approve de-delegation for Trade Union Duties at £279k, based on current pupil estimates this would equate to £6.29 per pupil in maintained schools.

3. To agree to retain the following budgets
 - Admissions Team at a level of £1,582,000
 - Schools Forum (including associated operating cost) at a level of £5, 000 -
 - Revenue Capital Expenditure at a level of £737, 000
 - Special Educational Needs transport at a level of £500, 000
 - Growth Fund budget at a level of £6.7m
4. To request that officers explore the most appropriate ways in which to illustrate the predicted significant effects on outcomes for Manchester's school children as part of the Forum's formal response to the consultation.

FF/15/38 Early Years Funding Update

The Forum considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance – Children, Adults and Public Health which discussed the findings of a benchmarking exercise to compare early years hourly funding rates across the North West Authorities. The Forum had been asked to compare rates of pay for registered childminders with neighbouring authorities by the Young People and Children's Scrutiny Committee.

The Senior Finance Manager (School Budgets) explained to members the difficulties that are associated with comparing rates of pay in a clear and transparent way. This was largely due to variations in the ways in which authorities fund early years settings, as no standardised funding criteria had yet been introduced for this particular block. As result the information had been expressed at group provider level into categories of private, voluntary and independents (PVI) school nurseries and nursery schools with estimated average hourly rates.

There was a discussion about the methodology of the exercise – a member felt that the figures demonstrated that Manchester's rates of pay could be viewed as being average when compared with other North West Authorities. Another member felt that when compared with statistical neighbours Manchester paid the lowest rates. He indicated that there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction amongst the PVI sector with regard to the current rates of pay. The Forum noted however that the Government's recent spending review had announced additional investment to increase average hourly rates for childcare providers on which the Forum would be informed. In addition, a national Early Years Funding Formula would be introduced in 2017/18 and the Authority was planning to undertake a review of the formula in the interim.

Decision

To note the update.

FF/15/39 Consultation outcome for the change to the scheme for financing schools

The Forum considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance Children, Adults and Public Health which summarised the consultation outcome on changes to the Scheme for financing schools some of which were either directed or proposed. The revised changes would affect the register of business interests of the Governing Body, borrowing by schools, provision of financial information, purchase cards and loan schemes, with effect from January 2016. The Forum noted that the majority of schools that had responded to the consultation were in agreement to both the directed and proposed changes to the Scheme and members who were representatives of maintained schools approved the revisions.

Decision

To approve the directed and proposed changes.

FF/15/40 Date of next meetings

Decision

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

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