

Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 18 November 2019

Present: Gillian Houghton, Patricia Adams, Mike Cooke, Nichola Davidge, Tony Daly, Elizabeth Fritchley, Emma Merva, Ian Fenn, Joshua Rowe, Michael Carson, Edward Vitalis, Phil Hoyland, Joanne Fenton, Isobel Booler, Councillor Stone, Cath Baggaley, John Morgan, Antonio De Paola

Apologies: Michael Flanagan, Alan Braven, Hatim Kapacee, Elizabeth Cummings, Walid Omara , Andy Parks and Amanda Corcoran

SF/20/30. Minutes

Tony Daly said that he had been incorrectly recorded as absent from the last meeting.

Decision

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2019 subject to the amendment above.

SF/20/31. Illustrative National Funding Formula Comparison to Local Funding Formula

The Forum considered a report of the Directorate Finance Lead – Children and Schools which discussed the purpose and use of the Local Authority's local formula to distribute funding to mainstream schools and academies for the financial year 2020/21. In light of the Department for Education's (DFE) commitment to moving to the National Funding Formula (NFF), the Forum was asked to consider what steps, if any, should be taken to align Local Funding Formula (LFF) factors to those under the NFF to ensure that Manchester continues to adopt the most financially viable options for local schools whilst also affording schools financial stability in preparation for the transition to the NFF. Three separate funding models were put forward with an analysis of the anticipated financial outcome for provided for each Manchester school as an appendix.

The Forum discussed the merits of each of the proposed models and noted that a slightly greater number of schools would see gains under the adoption of Model 2 but would also leave schools vulnerable to fluctuations in overall funding due to fluctuating levels of financial protection. The report, however, recommended the adoption of the funding Model 1 due to its slightly greater levels of funding across all schools and would therefore provide greater protection in the transition to a hard NFF. In light of the small differences between the Models, the Forum agreed to adopt Model 1 noting that it would proffer the highest level of net funding across all schools and would therefore provide greater protection in the transition to the hard NFF.

Decisions

1. To approve maintaining the Local Funding Formula for 2020/21
2. To recommend that Model 1 of the proposed Local Funding Formula is utilised.

SF/20/32. Provisional Dedicated Schools Grant 2020/21 Update

The Forum considered a report of the Director of Education and Directorate Finance Lead - Children's and Schools which discussed the recently published provisional Dedicated School Grant (DSG) allocations for 2020/21. The Forum was informed that final notice of the DSG allocations were expected in week commencing 16 December 2019. An overview of the provisional allocations for each of the DSG blocks was provided and discussed.

The Forum was asked to note the provisional funding announcement and to also note that the Local Authority was not seeking to request a block transfer of funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs block.

Following a reduction of approximately 20% in the Central Services Schools Block budget allocation with a particular focus on historic allocations, maintained school representatives of the Forum were invited to vote on whether to de-delegate funds from the Schools Block in respect of Trade Union Facility's budget arrangements, Education Services general duties (for maintained schools) and Free School Meal checking software in line with Schools Finance Regulations. The Forum noted the update and Maintained School representatives agreed the de-delegation.

Decision

1. To note the update.
2. In accordance with the relevant powers, maintained school representatives only agreed to de-delegation for the following service areas:
 - Trade Union Duties: £186,000
 - Educations Services Grant General Duties: £500,000
 - Free School Meal checking software: £42,000

[Ian Fenn declared a personal interest as a Trade Union representative but as an Academy representative took no part in the vote on de-delegations.]

SF/20/33. Excessive School Balance Clawback - Update

The Forum considered a report of the Directorate Finance Lead – Children and Schools which provided an update on the recently implemented Excessive School Balance Clawback mechanism.

The report discussed in outline the number of Manchester schools that were eligible for clawback, the purpose and terms of reference of the Appeals Panel, the number of appeals received and the outcomes for each in terms of being upheld or dismissed. It also indicated (at the time of the writing) that two appeals were incomplete and yet to be determined. The information was set out by sector only.

The report also outlined the Local Authority's intention to review both the implementation and impact of the mechanism before March 2020.

There was a discussion around the need for support for schools with regard to e budget planning and the development of multi-year budgets, particularly in light of the introduction of the National Funding Formula. The Forum noted that a further report on the Mechanism would be submitted for consideration in due course.

Decision

1. To note the outcome of the automatic excess balance control mechanism appeals panel.
2. To note the intention to review the implementation and impact of the new clawback mechanism before March 2020
3. To note that a further report on the reviewed Excessive Balance Clawback Mechanism would be submitted for consideration in due course.