

Manchester Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2022

Present: Alan Braven, Andy Park, Helen Child, Hatim Kapacee, Joseph Brownridge, Michael Carson Tony Daly, Gavin Shortall, Mike Cooke, Andrew Burton, Jimmy Buckley, John Morgan, Councillor Reid, Cath Baggaley and Lee Ormsby

Also present: Councillor Bridges (Portfolio holder), Amanda Corcoran

Apologies: Gillian Houghton, Lolita Hall, Edward Vitalis and Phillip Geldard

SF/22/01 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 were submitted for consideration as a correct record.

The Directorate Finance Lead – Children and Schools advised that the discussion at the last meeting on the potential request for de-delegation in respect of the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant (SIMBG) had been deferred and would be submitted for consideration at a future meeting of the Forum

Amanda Corcoran asked that her apologies for that meeting be recorded. Antonio De Paola and Cath Baggaley indicated that their presence at the last meeting had not been recorded. Additionally, Andrew Burton's name had also been spelt incorrectly in those minutes.

Decision

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 as a correct record, subject to the amendments above.

SF/22/02 De-delegated Budgets 2022/23

In follow up to the previous meeting, the Forum considered a report of the Directorate Finance Lead – Children and Schools which sought permissions from maintained School Forum representatives on the deduction of Trade Union, Education Services Grant duties, and on-line Free School Meals software costs, with per-pupil amounts amended to reflect October 2021 census data. The Forum had noted from the previous item of business (SF/21/02) that the proposal for the de-delegation of the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant (SIMBG) would be deferred to a future meeting.

In accordance with Schools Forum powers, maintained schools' representatives were asked to approve de-delegation, outlined as follows:

- Trade Union Duties: £200k which at current pupil levels equates to £5.45 per school aged pupil
- Education Services Grant General Duties: £500k which at current pupil levels equates to £13.56 per school aged pupil

- On-line free school meal (FSM) checking software: £55.3k which at current pupil levels equates to £1.45 per school aged pupil

Maintained schools' representatives of the Forum voted unanimously in favour and approved the de-delegation as stated.

Decision

To approve the de-delegation of the following:

- Trade Union Duties: £200k which at current pupil levels equates to £5.45 per school aged pupil
- Education Services Grant General Duties: £500k which at current pupil levels equates to £13.56 per school aged pupil
- On-line free school meal (FSM) checking software: £55.3k which at current pupil levels equates to £1.45 per school aged pupil

SF/22/03 Dedicated Schools Grant 2022/23

The Forum considered a report of the Directorate Finance Lead – Children Services and Education which discussed the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation as announced by the Department for Education (DfE) on 16 December 2021. The report outlined the allocation of the Grant across individual school budgets (ISB) and the local authority (LA) retained schools budget (RSB). The report also discussed the confirmation of new supplementary grant funding, with further detail about its allocation being determined at a later date.

The report's key messages were as follows:

- All Manchester primary and secondary schools should receive a per pupil increase between 2% minimum and up to 3.2% on pupil-led funding.
- Central services school block funding has reduced on a per pupil basis by 2.5% despite there being no reduction in functions councils are required to provide.
- The high needs block has increased by £9.441m in 2022/23, this should enable the Council to manage existing and anticipated pressures next year, in addition to being able to cover most of the previous year shortfall. Although the planned recovery was not achieved last financial year the Council is confident at this stage that most of deficit can be recovered 2022/23 and the residual recovered by year three, 2023/24 as planned.
- Early year rates have increased by 21p and 17p per hour in the two-year-old and three and four-year old offer respectively. Final notifications of the adjustment to funding of the two-year old and the three and four-year-old offer will be received in July 2022 and July 2023.

The Forum was invited to note and comment on the report.

There was a discussion about falling numbers on roll in nursery settings and its impact on funding. The Principal Finance Lead – Children and Schools Finance

explained that during the pandemic figures had been calculated on a termly census return basis, however for 2022/23, funding would realign with January census data as this was felt by the DfE to reflect the highest take up.

In a discussion about how the Schools Black element of the grant would be allocated to the city's schools, a member asked whether the 2 - 3.2% per pupil increase had been modelled on school budgets. The Directorate Finance Lead – Children Services and Education confirmed that those calculations were based on October census data, as provided by the DfE and the additional deprivation factor of free school eligibility. Confirmation for schools at individual level would follow in late February 2022.

There was a discussion about the increased funding for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND). A member welcomed the increases but commented that the adjustment to the banding system appeared to be weighted towards pupils with the lowest needs. The Directorate Finance Lead – Children Services and Education acknowledged the pressures special schools faced and confirmed that the High Needs Block continued to represent a significant pressure for the city. She gave emphasis to the 2% increases to the per pupil amount and place funding in addition to further allocations arising from supplementary grant funding for high needs (£4m) to deliver the most fair and equitable means of allocating additional monies. The Director of Education added that the current challenge was centred on secondary school place provision and that as such the Authority was exploring options to deliver an additional specialist secondary school in the city to reduce those pressures on specialist provision. With regard to greater detail on how supplementary grant funding for high needs would be allocated, the Directorate Finance Lead – Children Services and Education explained that this was likely to be in March 2022. In addition, a further report on proposals to address ongoing High Needs block pressures would be submitted to the Forum in due course.

Decisions

To note the report.