

Manchester Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2023

Present: Andy Park, Anne Summerfield, Amanda Corcoran, Gavin Shortall, Paul Greenwood, Mike Cooke, Edward Vitalis, Angela Stansfield, Matthew Hoeksma, Colin Ribgy, Karl Harrison, Alan Braven, Amy Davenport, Antonio de Paola, Saeeda Ishaq, Tony Daly, Hatim Kapacee, Lee Ormsby, Joseph Brownridge, Joshua Rowe

Apologies: Cathryn Baggaley, John Morgan, Helen Child, Cllr Reid

SF/23/04 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 were submitted for consideration as a correct record.

Decision

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 as a correct record.

SF/23/05 March Report Feedback – Budget 2023/24 Update

The Forum considered a report of the Directorate Finance Lead – Education and Schools which had been previously circulated to Forum on Monday 13 March 2023. The report had asked members to provide a view and comment on:

- The outcome of the early years' consultation on the new quality supplement to the 3-and 4-year-old funding formula for 2023/24
- A review on the early years' quality supplement, including what/if criteria should be used to determine quality from April 2024.
- Schools block funding allocation relating to impact of inflation on the two PFI schools.

The following comments were then received via email:

- I am happy to support the increase for the PFI schools
- Thank you for the report and the summary in the main body of the email. All looks fine.
- I wish to highlight comments made on the consultation that the contribution made by early years settings is still being overlooked and unless some decent funding is provided, they will not be able to remain sustainable. This will have a negative impact on school such as less children ready for school in nursery & reception, children/families not accessing early intervention (SEND children, children on the WellComm and Children in Needs) and children coming to school without relevant assessment such as EHCP or EHA.

The outcome of the report was that 71% of respondents agreed for a review on the early years' quality supplement, including what/if criteria should be used to determine quality from April 2024, so a working group was set up to carry out this review. Mike Cooke, Angela Stansfield, Saeeda Ishaq and Amy Davenport all volunteered to be part of the working group. Anne Summerfield was asked to contact PVI representatives for their support on the working group.

Clarity was sought by members on whether any modelling had been completed to ensure that schools are covered should inflation continue to rise. Members were informed that the impact on the growth fund was an issue for the Local Authority and would have no impact on the Dedicated Schools Grant, schools block.

Decision

To note the report.

SF/23/06 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and School Balances 22/23 Outturn

The Forum considered a report of the Directorate Finance Lead – Children and Schools which explained the provisional position of the 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in respect of schools and the Council. The final position was to be confirmed once the Council's audited accounts had been completed. The provisional outturn for Manchester maintained schools was an overall surplus of £16.180m, which was a decrease of £3.324m (of which c.£320k relates to two schools that have since academised) in the total Schools Balances (Revenue & Capital) held compared to 2021/22. The final position on the centrally retained element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was a £1.417m deficit. The 2022/23 DSG allocation after recoupment for academies and high needs was £343.93m, of which £323.81m (94%) was delegated to schools, and £18.77m (6%) was retained centrally by the Council and £1.350m earmarked towards DSG recovery.

Members were asked to note and comment on:

- Maintained school balances, £16.180m as at 2022/23.
- The cumulative centrally retained DSG deficit balance £1.417m carried forward into 2023/24.
- Update on the high needs block (NHB) recovery plan, and a detailed report to be presented to School Forum July 2023.

Clarity was sought on what was causing the 12 Primary Schools listed in the report having low balances. It was noted that the next step was a review into this, but that it could have been an indication of low nursery numbers and falling primary numbers. The local authority offers an SRMA service, which is a free service that provides a report for schools to take an independent look at their balances.

A member noted that the struggle to recruit staff into special schools had contributed to an increased surplus in that area. The Analysis of Reserves form provided was noted as difficult to complete as there was no section to discuss staffing problems. It was accepted that this form needed reviewing, and a discussion about that could be had outside Forum.

A member queried the impact on revenue balances year on year. A separate analysis would need to be completed for that.

A member also questioned if schools in significant deficit were receiving support from the local authority. It was confirmed that they were.

Decision

To note the report.

SF/23/07 Outcome of the National Funding Formula (NFF) Consultation

The Forum considered a report of the Directorate Finance Lead – Schools and Education that provided an update on the Outcome of the National Funding Formula consultation. The Department for Education launched the second stage of the NFF consultation – Implementing the direct NFF, in June 2022 as reported to Schools Forum in July 2022. The direct NFF was developing a single national funding formula system to direct funds to schools, moving away from local funding formulas. The consultation investigated some of the more technical aspects of how the direct NFF could be implemented.

Consultation closed on 9 September 2022 and the government's response (Implementing the Direct NFF) was published in April 2023. The report to Forum looked at the outcome and the next steps towards the direct NFF. There was changes to be implemented from 2024/25 regarding the growth fund and split site, and longer term changes were to be phased in leading to the full implementation of the direct NFF.

Members were asked to note and comment on:

- The Government's response, Implementing the Direct NFF, and the next steps towards the direct NFF.

In the short-term, local impact will be:

- Changes to the way the growth fund is allocated to schools that are growing.
- Consideration to be given to whether there is a need to develop a local falling rolls fund.
- Changes to split site criteria was not expected to adversely impact the four Manchester split site schools.

In the longer-term, the reforms planned were:

- Transfer of funding to the High Needs Block would need Secretary of State approval.
- Indicative SEND budget would be set national.
- Exceptional circumstances criteria to be limited to certain categories.
- Minimum Funding Guarantee to be simplified to a pure pupil-led per pupil.
- Providing funding information to schools, by developing a calculator tool.

A member raised a concern relating to the transfer of funding to the High Needs Block from school budgets. It was noted this would not happen without a full consultation. The minimum funding guarantee would be national and not local. The local authority was working on mitigating the impact to ensure that transfers to the high needs block were not required.

Decision

To note the report.

SF/23/08 Forward Plan – Academic Year 2023/24

The Forum considered a report of the Directorate Finance Lead – Children's and Schools that outlined the forward plan of Schools Forum business for the following academic year, 2023/24. The only change for the plan was the removal of the May 2024 meeting.

A query was raised on whether the Forum continued to meet its Terms of Reference. It was confirmed that it was.

Decision

To note the report.