Minutes

SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday 25 September 2013
Lees Suite, Civic Centre, Oldham
at 5.30pm

Voting Members Present:

Mr David Mycock (Chair)  Primary Sector Governor
Mrs Sue Crowson  Primary School Headteacher
Mr Kevin Fennelly  Special Schools Governor
Mrs Bev Harper  The Blue Coat School Academy – representing
                 Mrs Julie Hollis
Mrs Helen Halliwell  Primary Aided Sector Headteacher
Mr Gordon Leach  Primary School Headteacher
Mr John Meagher  Secondary Maintained School Headteacher
Mr Matthew Milburn  Secondary Maintained School Headteacher
Mr Graham Quinn  Special School Headteacher
Mrs Mary Sainsbury  Salford Diocesan Representative
Mr Iain Windeatt  Trades Union Representative

Non-Voting Members Present:

Ms Rachel Cannon  Schools Finance Team, Commercial
                  Services Directorate
Mr Paul Cassidy  Director of Children's Services
Ms Liz Caygill  Schools Finance Manager,
                Commercial Services Directorate
Mr Paul Clarke  Finance Manager, Commercial Services
                Directorate
Mr Jonathan Davies  Children's Finance Manager, Commercial
                   Services Directorate
Ms Vicky Gibbons  Schools Finance Team, Commercial
                  Services Directorate
Ms Wendy Lees  Schools Finance Team, Commercial
                Services Directorate
Mrs Chris Hill  Associate Assistant Director, Learning
Also Present:

Mrs Janet Evans  Clerk to the Forum

Mrs Kathryn Yates MacIntyre was present for part of the meeting.

1A  ELECTION OF CHAIR

1A.1  The Clerk undertook the process for the election of Chair of Schools Forum from amongst its own members.

1A.2  The regulations required that the election of the Chair should be approved by a simple majority of votes cast by individual members, as indicated by a secret ballot.

1A.3  The Chair would be elected for a two year period and may serve as Chair for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

1A.4  Two nominations had been received:

Mr Mike Aston
Mr David Mycock (currently Vice-Chair)

and a brief resume of the nominees’ relevant experience/background had previously been circulated for members’ information.

1A.5  It was noted that although Mr Mike Aston had given apologies for this meeting, he was willing for his name to go forward in his absence.

1A.6  Mr Mycock withdrew from the meeting in order for the election process to take place.

1A.7  The outcome of the secret ballot of members resulted in a majority vote for Mr David Mycock.

1A.8  Mr Mycock returned to the meeting and was duly elected as Chair of Schools Forum with immediate effect.

1A.9  Miss Liz Caygill agreed to inform Mr Aston of the result of the ballot.

ACTION:  Miss Caygill

1B  ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

1B.1  As a result of Mr Mycock’s election as Chair, the position of Vice-Chair was now vacant, and members agreed that this item should be deferred for consideration to the next meeting of Schools Forum.

ACTION:  Clerk – agenda item
2 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

2.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.2 Apologies for absence were received from Mr Mike Aston, Councillor A Chadderton, Mr A Collinge, Mr T Mitchell, and Mr G Oates.

2.3 Declarations of Interest – members were invited to declare any business for personal interest in the ‘Register of Declaration of Interest’ provided for this purpose.

No declarations were received.

2.4 It was noted that Mrs Bev Harper was present as substitute for Mrs Julie Hollis.

3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

3.2 There were no matters arising which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4 FEEDBACK LAST SCHOOLS FORUM

4.1 Miss Caygill presented her report on the feedback received from the Education Funding Representative, Bev Thompson, who had attended the last Schools Forum on 25 June 2013.

4.2 The comments were extremely positive, and Mrs Thompson stated that she had been completely satisfied with the conduct of the meeting.

4.3 Main points included:

- Swift yet thorough manner in which business was conducted.
- Short agenda.
- Complete compliance with the regulations.
- Agenda papers visible on the Oldham Council website and published well in advance of the meeting.
- Usefulness of accompanying documents such as budget statement, financial management guidance, meeting dates, list of current members etc., also available on the website.
- Meeting was well conducted by the Chair.
- Members’ displayed a good depth of debate/participation in discussions.
- Members given plenty of opportunity to freely comment/raise issues of interest.
- Recommendations/decisions reported clearly in the minutes.

4.4 In addition, the slides from the Schools Forum seminar at the recent National Fair Funding Conference were attached to the report for members’ information.
RESOLVED: Schools Forum noted the report and observations from the Funding Agency.

5

SCHOOLS FORUM CONSTITUTION

5.1 Mrs Chris Hill presented the report to provide members with an update on the Schools Forum Constitution.

5.2 The constitution would be reviewed annually in order to ensure it continued to adequately reflect and represent all the children in the Borough.

5.3 The changes in the constitution comprised four thrusts:
   1) Greater decision-making powers;
   2) Greater representation than in the past;
   3) Demonstrable democratic processes in determining the people serving on the Forum;
   4) Reflecting the changing status of schools.

5.3 The required changes in representation were detailed and reflected the changing estate of schools.

5.4 Elections for appropriate representatives on the Schools Forum were required to comply with the changing Forum regulations.

5.5 There were currently 24 members of Schools Forum.

5.6 Mrs Hill drew members’ attention to the following issues:

   All headteachers must be elected by their constituent groups.
   There should be an equal proportion of governors and headteachers.
   Academies are grouped together and there is no differentiation between the different types of academy or between the primary sector.
   Sponsors of Academies would vote for their representatives on the Forum.
   Balance of 2/3rds school representation and 1/3rd non-school representation.
   Diocesan and trades union representatives have a place in their own right and are in the non-school block.
   Diocese chooses its own representative.
   14-19 sector is now 16-19 sector.
   Officers who run teams delivering services to school can have a place on the Forum.
   Vulnerable groups to be appropriately represented.
   Non-executive Elected Member representative.

5.7 Mrs Hill requested members to consider the method they wished to use to elect their representatives in the different categories and whether they wished to be supported in this process by the LA.

5.8 In response to members’ questions/comments the following points were clarified:
The allotted timescale of April 2014 could be brought forward if required, however, the Chair considered December to be too short a timescale. The degree of formality in the process rested on sensible and appropriate provision being aimed for. There were 6 Academies and one Free School.

5.9 The Chair asked for volunteers to form a task and finish group to meet and set out proposals for consideration at the next meeting of Schools Forum.

5.10 Mrs Hill suggested writing to members setting out what was required in the process.

**ACTION:** Mrs Chris Hill

5.11 The Chair indicated his willingness to act as a “conduit” and report back to the next meeting of the Schools Forum.

**ACTION:** Chair

5.12 Miss Caygill agreed to e-mail members the current representation for information.

**ACTION:** Miss Liz Caygill

6 **DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) SETTLEMENT 2013-14**

6.1 Mr Jonathan Davies presented the report to update members on the 2013-14 funding settlement based on final Early Years pupil numbers.

6.2 A table showing a comparison of the proposed DSG settlement totalling £212,572 and Oldham’s final DSG total settlement of circa £213K identified the main changes as being:

- An additional amount in the Early Years block; and
- Increases in the High Needs Block, Post 16 Business Case and Non-Maintained Special School Funding.

6.3 Budget Requirement - a table showing the amounts which had gone out to schools and the amounts to be retained centrally was detailed.

6.4 Details of the total DSG allocation of £4,547,000 which had been retained centrally to meet the costs of the identified central schools services were reported.

6.5 Details of the total DSG allocation of £5,416,000 had been retained centrally to meet the cost of the Early Years provision were reported.

6.6 Details of the total DSG allocation of £1,505,000 which had been retained centrally to meet the costs of the Early Years provision in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers were reported.

6.7 Details of the de-delegated funding for central management totalling £1,559K were reported.
6.8 The allocation of Pupil Premium for 2014-15 amounting to £1,300 per pupil in the primary sector. Secondary premium not yet announced.

6.9 Discussion ensued, and in response to members' challenge: the following points were clarified:

- 25-year PFI contract within the heading ‘PFI Schools Unitary Charge’, it was agreed to re-title the heading BSF/Academies Team.

  ACTION: Mr Jonathan Davies

- Explanation of the de-delegated contingencies budget of £18K increase to the PFI contract unitary charges.

  ACTION: Mr Davies to ascertain the model.

- How Pupil Premium was applied “outcome-wise” as a measure of effectiveness. Schools' websites required to show the amount of Pupil Premium received and the outcomes of those pupils who received benefit from the funding. There was no guidance available for schools. To date, only 25 primary schools had not yet published the figures.

- Elements of the DSG regarding PFI contracts should be scrutinized by Schools Forum and suggestion that members should receive further information on breakdown of costs to aid an “unpicking of the detail”.

  ACTION: Mr Davies

RESOLVED: that Schools Forum note the final settlement of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2013/14.

7 SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

7.1 Ms Rachel Cannon presented the report to update members on the consultation process re the requirement to update the Oldham Scheme for Financing Schools, effective from July 2013 and seek approval of the revised scheme.

7.2 The scheme had been revised using the DfE guidance, and the draft scheme sent to all schools for consultation to meet the 5 September 2013 deadline. A further revised scheme had subsequently been sent out to schools on 1 August 2013.

7.3 The scheme did not cover Academies.

7.4 No comments had been received by the deadline date.

7.5 A table listing the changes to the scheme was reported.

7.6 The scheme to be included on the Council website following formal approval by Schools Forum.
7.7 In response to **members' comments** Miss Liz Caygill agreed to address the issues raised and bring the relevant information to the next meeting of the Schools Forum for further discussion and comment.

- Scheme implemented from April 2013.
- Executive summary on the website would be helpful.
- Doubt over usefulness in e-mailing schools for comment at the beginning of the Summer holidays.
- Relevance of context – suggestion to have “old” paragraph as well as “new” paragraph and the implications of the change.

**ACTION:** Miss Liz Caygill

7.8 Members agreed that the draft scheme should continue to be used, and that this item be deferred for further discussion and consideration at the next meeting of Schools Forum.

**ACTION:** Clerk – agenda item

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**8 SCHOOL FUNDING UPDATE**

8.1 Ms Vicky Gibbons presented her report to update members on the 2014-15 funding arrangements and to gain Schools Forum approval for the provisional 2014-15 funding formula.

8.2 The Fair Funding Group had agreed to recommend to Schools Forum that there would be no changes to the formula factors used to allocate funding to schools in 2014-15.

8.3 The current mandatory changes on the indicators to be used in 2014-15 and possible funding formula changes for 2014-15 were reported.

8.4 Local Decisions – the formula changes recommended by Fair Funding Group to date covering pupil mobility options were reported.

8.5 Possible formula changes for 2014-15 - Fair Funding Group had identified two factors to review for 2014-15 –

   i) Lump Sum in the Secondary Sector – Secondary School sector had asked the LA to do some re-modelling in this respect; and
   ii) EAL factor in the Secondary Sector – group requested some further modelling to reduce the amount per pupil to the national average.

   Fair Funding Group to meet again on 8 October 2013 to agree recommendations to be brought to Schools Forum in December 2013.

8.6 Discussion ensued, and **members comments included:**

   - No Oldham schools qualified in the ‘sparsity category’ which applied only to rural areas.
   - SEN resourced schools – future need to maintain an appropriate well resourced provision.
   - Potential impact that moving from pupils to places will have.
RESOLVED: (i) to note the contents of the report;

(ii) approve the recommendations of the Fair Funding Group as follows:

Maintain funding at the same cash value as in 2013-14 for Pupil Mobility and the surplus budget to be reallocated through the basic per pupil entitlement factor;

Not to introduce a sparsity factor in the formula in 2014-15 as no school currently falls into the identified criteria; and

Schools to retain the equivalent of 85% of two lump sums;

(iii) agree the possible growth fund criteria should be discussed at a future meeting; and

(iv) note that members would be kept informed of any further local changes to the 2014-15 funding formula in line with the identified timetable.

9 COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW

9.1 Miss Liz Caygill presented thereport to provide members with an update on the Comprehensive Spending Review and to inform members of the review of efficiency in the schools system published in June 2013.

9.2 Main points affected schools were reported:

9.2.1 There had been “real term” protection for schools budgets.

9.2.2 There had been “real term” protection for Pupil Premium.

9.2.3 There will be support for the next stage of schools reform to free up the system and increase choice.

9.2.4 Savings will be made through reductions in the DfE centrally held programme and administration budgets.

9.3 2015-16 continued to be the expected date for implementation of the new funding formula.

9.4 The programme would continue to be rolled out to Academies and Free Schools.

9.5 The DfE had issued a useful document on a review of efficiency in the school system to support schools to learn from each other. The website address being https://www.gov.uk/government/upload/system/uploads/attachment_d ata/file/209114/Review_of_efficiency_in_the_schools_system.pdf

9.6 The DfE review tried to understand how schools spend their money and found that the most efficient schools maximised their investment in teaching
staff, learning resources and robust management systems. The vision was for all schools to be funded fairly with each school having the freedom to make decisions to suit its own circumstances.

9.7 The 7 characteristics which the DfE had identified as defining an efficient school were listed.

9.8 During discussion, members comments were noted as follows:

The Audit Commission provided comparative information on its website. Managing down back-costs - potential tension around asking teachers to do tasks originally done by back-office staff. Thrust entails schools working together across institutions. Business Managers to look at procurement/best value contracts. Schools to be given ideas on how they can make savings. Making schools aware of the DfE guidance document on efficiency. The Finance Team to assist and support schools. There was extensive learning/expertise in the Council which could be shared with schools.

9.9 Mr Paul Cassidy outlined the continuing budgetary constraints the Council faced going forward.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

10 SCHOOLS FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD (SFVS)

10.1 Ms Wendy Lees presented the report to provide an update on the requirement for schools to complete the self-assessment process against the Schools Financial Value Standard in order to meet the required deadline of 31 March 2013.

10.2 Main points included:

10.2.1 There had been 94% compliance. However, five primary schools and one secondary school did not complete the standard by the required deadline. The circumstances appertaining to these six schools and the arrangements put in hand to secure their returns were reported.

10.2.2 Details of all schools’ SFVS returns and schools that did not complete the return by the required deadline had been passed to Internal Audit and this would assist in the production of the draft Annual Audit Plan for schools within the Authority.

10.2.3 The Audit Team had produced a scoring system which would be used in schools over the next twelve months.

10.3 In reply to a member's challenge: Ms Lees confirmed that there was no financial risks in relation to the three schools which the Finance Team had reported required further work.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.
11 FORWARD PLANNING

11.1 Members noted the cycle of meetings for 2013-14 as being Wednesday 11 December 2013 and Wednesday 22 January 2014.

11.2 Members noted the proposed items for future agendas and were requested to forward any other agenda items to Miss Caygill.

RESOLVED: that Schools Forum note the report as presented.

12 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business to consider.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 11 December 2013 at 5.30pm.

There being no further business, the Members of the Schools Forum were thanked for their attendance and the meeting was closed at 6.45pm.

Schools Forum 25.9.13
jae
2.10.13