

ST. HELENS COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Schools Forum
Held on Thursday 15th January 2015 at 4.30 p.m. at the Town Hall

Members:

Primary School Head Teachers

- *Mrs C Cropper, Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary
- *Mrs C Morris, St Julie's Catholic Primary
- *Mr I. Williams, Sutton Oak CE Primary
- Mrs C. Gowan, Eccleston Lane Ends Primary
- Mrs J Cottrell, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary

Secondary School Head Teachers and Representatives

- *Miss C Warburton, De La Salle
- Mr C. Sheeran, Cowley International College
- *Mrs D. Wilde, St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School

Special School Head Teacher

- Mr C. Myers, Mill Green

Primary School Governors

- *Mr T. A. Narayanan, Rectory Church of England Primary School
- *Mrs J. Dearden, Wargrave CE Primary
- *Mr W. Leatherbarrow, Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary
- *Mr K. Aspinall, Rainford Church of England Primary School
- Mr R. Ferry, Carr Mill Primary

Secondary School Governors

- *Mr D. Callan, De La Salle
- Vacant
- Vacant

Special School Governor

- *Mr. W. Bradbury, Mill Green School

Nursery School Head Teacher/Governor

- Mrs. M. Smith, Rainhill Community Nursery School

14-19 Partnership

- *Ms. M. Williams

Union Representative

- *Mr. P. Nightingale

PVI Early Years Provider Representative

- Ms L. Ashton, Brooklands Childcare

Diocesan and Archdiocesan Representative

- *Mr. T. Warren

Academy Representative

- Mr N. Gribben, The Sutton Academy
- Vacant

PRU Representative

- *Ms. J. Johnson

Elected Member Observer

Councillor S. Murphy

*Denotes Members Present

Also Present: Mr G. Tyrer, Business Support Manager
Mr A. Dempsey, Director of Children and Young People's Services
Mrs D. Gilchrist, Principal Accountant for Schools

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Ferry, Mrs J Cottrell, Mr C Sheeran, Mrs C Gowan, Cllr S Murphy, Mr C Myers and Mr N Gribben.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th September 2014

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Mr Narayanan expressed concern regarding schools that were facing financial difficulties in the future. Mr Tyrer explained that discussions would take place with Head Teachers regarding the possibility of reviewing the school funding formula, though this would not be possible for 2015/16.

4. School Funding Formula 2015/16

Mr Tyrer explained that at the previous meeting of the Schools Forum the provisional school funding formula had been approved and subsequently submitted to the Education Funding Agency (EFA). He stated that the previous model was based on data from the previous year which has now been updated by the EFA based on the October 2014 census, and the funding formula has now been revised to include the updated data. The EFA require the new funding formula to be submitted by 20th January 2015.

He explained that the £600k 2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) underspend had been included in the school funding formula following previous approval by the Forum. As the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) meant that not all schools would benefit from this additional funding, approval had been obtained from the EFA to exclude the additional funding from the MFG calculations.

Mr Tyrer informed the Forum that in previous years some DSG underspend had been set aside to fund capital expenditure, in particular for primary schools requiring additional capacity and for secondary schools relating to asbestos works. Although internal approval for this expenditure had been obtained the EFA have said that approval should also have been obtained from them. This approval has now been received.

Mr Tyrer stated that the funding settlement had been received in December, though it was still indicative. The 2015/16 settlement of £127m has increased by 1% from 2014/15. This increase is in relation to the overall increase in pupil numbers and an increase in the high needs element of the DSG. The Early Years Pupil Premium grant previously announced is also included in the 2015/16 DSG. There has been no increase in the amount of per pupil funding.

Mr Tyrer referred to Appendix 1a of the School Funding Formula report which gives a summary of the funding formula for 2015/16, and Appendix 1b which shows detailed individual school allocations. He explained that these allocations relate only to the

schools block element of funding, and exclude the high needs and early years allocations.

He stated that the class sizes of 30 allocations are based on the same unit values as 2014/15.

Mr Tyrer referred to the falling rolls criteria provided to the Forum and explained that Local Authorities are allowed to set aside funding for schools with short / medium term pressures relating to falling rolls. The funding regulations allow additional support to be allocated to schools in these circumstances. In previous years funds have been set aside to deal with this. Mr Tyrer stated that the Local Authority expect to have to allocate some funds to schools in 2015/16 from previous funds which have been set aside. The funding regulations require that the criteria for allocating these funds is approved by the Schools Forum.

Mr Tyrer confirmed that there had been little change to the Pupil Premium allocations for 2015/16; the primary allocations had increased slightly.

He explained that annually an element of DSG funding is set aside for central services, and that this amount cannot be increased from the 2012/13 allocations. There is a requirement to report the allocations for central service to the Schools Forum.

Mr Tyrer stated the requirement for the Schools Forum to decide annually which services they wish to be de-delegated. He explained that the individual school budget allocations provided include the delegated amounts. Appendix 4 sets out the decisions made for 2014/15 regarding de-delegation. Mr Tyrer confirmed that this arrangement does not apply to academies, special schools or nursery schools.

Mr Tyrer clarified the recommendations set out in the School Funding Formula report.

Mr Callan asked if schools would receive more or less funding in 2015/16. Mr Tyrer explained that if a school's pupil numbers have decreased then the school would lose funding. He explained that the majority of the school's formula funding is based on pupil numbers, and although the per pupil funding has been frozen school costs have increased due to pay awards and increases in superannuation contributions.

Mr Callan queried why the falling rolls criteria only applies to good or outstanding schools. Mr Tyrer stated that this is a mandatory condition decided by the DfE, it is not a local decision.

Mr Dempsey entered the meeting.

Mrs Dearden asked if the falling rolls fund is a reward for a school that has achieved good / outstanding status.

Mr Tyrer explained that the falling rolls fund would allow support to be given to a good school for an interim period until their numbers have increased.

Mr Leatherbarrow thanked Mr Tyrer and the finance team for the information provided to the Schools Forum. He stated that there is still a significant challenge to some schools in providing the best education possible, and that the funding formula appears to disadvantage some schools who do not also receive high levels of Pupil Premium funding. He requested that this be considered moving forward.

Mr Tyrer explained that there is a timescale to the process of remodelling the school funding formula. He stated that a short term solution would be looked at for the schools facing financial difficulties in 2015/16. He also clarified that schools are not allowed to set a deficit budget.

The Schools Forum:

- Noted the contents of the report
- Approved the proposed school funding formula as per Appendix 1a
- Approved the criteria for the allocation of additional funding to schools with falling rolls as per Appendix 2
- Confirmed that the centrally retained services at Appendix 3 are at the same cash levels as 2012-13

Mr Tyrer referred to the requirement to decide on which services should be delegated / de-delegated. He stated that if representatives required further time to discuss this with colleagues then this could be provided and the representatives could confirm the position by email over the coming weeks and report back to the Forum at the next meeting.

Mrs Wilde requested that the decision for secondary representatives be delayed as this had not been discussed at ASH.

Mrs Cropper stated that this had been discussed at length at PASH last year and she did not feel that the view of her primary colleagues had changed; therefore she was happy to de-delegate services on the same basis as last year.

Mr Nightingale expressed concern that the decision to delegate / de-delegate services should be made by representatives and not by colleagues who are not members of the Forum.

Mr Tyrer stated that if the decision is delayed until the next meeting of the Forum in March then this would impact on the calculation of school budgets.

He explained that if secondary representatives gave an indication over the next few weeks of how they wished to proceed then this could be built into school budgets on a provisional basis in time for the school budget setting meetings, and then a formal decision be made at the next meeting of the Schools Forum.

Primary phase representatives voted to de-delegate services on the same basis as 2014/15.

Secondary phase representatives decided to postpone the decision until the next meeting of the Schools Forum.

5. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

12th March 2015