



**Oldham**  
Council

# Minutes

## Meeting of Schools Forum

**Wednesday 14 June 2023**

via Microsoft Teams

at 4.00pm

|                      |                  |  |
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| <b>Present:</b>      | Liz Travis       | Holy Trinity CE Primary (In the Chair) |
|                      | Joe Brownridge   | Oldham Academy North                   |
|                      | Iain Windeatt    | Trade Union Representative             |
|                      | Tracy Cavanagh   | Holy Rosary RC Primary School          |
|                      | Stuart Ash       | Oldham Sixth Form College              |
|                      | Rob Higgins      | The Cranmer Trust                      |
|                      | Anthony Leighton | The Cranmer Trust                      |
|                      | Paul McGrath     | St Thomas Werneth Primary School       |
|                      | Nigel Woodworth  | New Bridge Academy                     |
|                      | Andrea Skelly    | Kingsland School                       |
|                      |                  |  |
| <b>Also Present:</b> | Richard Lynch    | Director of Education                  |
|                      | Tony Shepherd    | Head of Schools and Learning           |
|                      | Liz Caygill      | Finance Manager                        |
|                      | Vicky Gibbons    | Senior Accountant                      |
|                      | Anne Ryans       | Director of Finance                    |
|                      | Andy Cooper      | Senior Finance Manager                 |
|                      | Jean Coombs      | Clerk                                  |

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| <b>1</b> | <b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>   |
| 1.1      | The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.  |
| 1.2      | Apologies for absence were received from Tracy Cavanagh, Karl Newell and Gerard Jones. Liz Caygill reported that Brian Lord had resigned from the Schools' Forum and members sent their regards and their thanks for all his work. |
| 1.3      | Members were requested to declare any business, pecuniary and personal interests. No declarations were made.   |

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| 2   | <p><b>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>  |
| 3   | <p><b>DSG OUTTURN REPORT 2022-23 AND BUDGET UPDATE 2023-24</b></p> <p>Liz Caygill gave an update on the final outturn position for 2022-23, including the DSG Note in the Council Accounts for audit; a budget update for 2023-24; information about the High Needs Block; the Recovery Plan; and the progress in Relation to Delivering Best Value in SEND.</p> <p>Main points referred to:</p>  |
| 3.1 | <p>The final outturn for 2022-23 has improved by £335,000 since the March 2023 meeting, making the outturn surplus £899,000. The deficit brought forward from 2021-22 of £2.773m, results in an in-year surplus of £3.233m. Liz commented that this a positive achievement and the first time the budget has been out of deficit since 2015-16.</p>   |
| 3.2 | <p>The main movements in funding since the March 2023 meeting are Early Years adjustments; savings on centrally administered High Needs funding; and in some Early Years budgets.</p>   |
| 3.3 | <p>The Council's draft accounts to go to the auditors will include a DSG note and this was included in the Appendix to the papers for the meeting.</p>  |
| 3.4 | <p>The DSG for 2023-24 has been updated and the current position, in comparison to that projected at the March 2023 meeting, means there will be an expected surplus of £2.5m, rather than £2.3m. This is due to the additional in-year surplus for 2022-23 of £335,000 less the additional spending in Special Schools of £164,000.</p>  |
| 3.5 | <p>A comparison table showing what the cumulative deficit would have been over the last 7 years</p> <p>The DSG Recovery Plan has been remodelled considering the budget position for 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. Anticipated increases in High Needs funding have been offset by the provision of a Service Improvement Development Fund to support a range of initiatives. The initial allocations were £3.000m and £4.800m in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25. A drawdown of £0.850m has been agreed for 2023/24, with the remainder not yet allocated. If the transfers in from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block had not been made. The resulting expected cumulative deficits for 2023-24 and 2024-25 are £1.155m and £0.908m.</p> |
| 3.6 | <p>Richard Lynch agreed that the DSG is in a strong position at the moment, but that in the long term, if nothing changes and there is continued growth in the High Needs sector and in general school funding, then the LA will be back in a deficit position again. He added that the LA needs to think more widely about funding allocations and once it is allocated to individuals in an EHCP it is out of the system for many years.</p>  |

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| 3.7 | <p>There has been progress in the Delivering Best Value in SEND Programme with meetings taking place in March 2023, including working with consultants, attending workshops and reviewing the outcomes of the modules. Special Schools account for 84% of the High Needs Block funding and the majority of the children with an EHCP begin their time in Special Schools at 4/5 years or at 11 years. The focus will be on provisions with the fastest expenditure growth and those making up the largest proportion of total spend; and special schools are the largest area of spend and where the biggest impact on outcomes can be made.</p> |
| 3.8 | <p>The next steps in the DBV Programme will be to have case review workshops, consult wider stakeholders and develop an implementation plan. The aim is to develop better outcomes for children by identifying issues earlier and having less EHCPs.</p>   |
| 3.9 | <p>The grant application is due to be completed by July 2023 and will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early identification and intervention to reduce EHCPs;</li> <li>• Development of mainstream provision to create an alternative to special schools;</li> <li>• Developing and targeting support for: autism; speech, language and communication needs; social, emotional and mental health.</li> <li>• Updating the resource allocation system;</li> <li>• Post 16 pathways to ensure better progression; and</li> </ul>   |
|     | <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> that Schools Forum note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the Dedicated Schools Grant outturn for 2022/23;</li> <li>(ii) Disclosure of the Dedicated Schools Grant within the Council's (Draft) Statutory Accounts;</li> <li>(iii) Dedicated Schools Grant budget update 2023/24;</li> <li>(iv) Current position in relation to the High Needs Block;</li> <li>(v) Current DSG recovery plan position and the requirements to manage a DSG deficit;</li> <li>(vi) The Council's progress in relation to the Delivering Best Value in SEND Programme.</li> </ul>  |

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| 4 | <b>SCHOOL BALANCES 2022-23</b>  |
|   | <p>Liz Caygill presented a paper setting out the maintained school balances for 2022-23. The final position is that there has been a reduction in these balances from £10m to £8m. This reduction equates to 18%.</p> <p>There are 8 schools with surplus balances and all have submitted plans for the use of these balances. Liz proposed that there will be no removal of these surplus balances in 2022-23, and that the LA will continue to work with schools to use the balances for the pupils that are in the school.</p> |
|   | <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> that Schools Forum note the contents of the report and the Council's decision that surplus balances for 2022/23 are not removed from maintained schools as all schools have submitted an official plan.</p>   |
| 5 | <p><b>FORWARD PLAN</b></p> <p>The proposed meeting dates are set out below:<br/> 27th September 2023<br/> 22nd November 2023<br/> 17th January 2024</p> <p>The main agenda items for these meetings were set out in the meeting papers. Members were asked to let the LA officers know if there are any additional items to be added to the agendas.</p>  |
|   | <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> that the information be received and noted.</p>   |
| 6 | <p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked Liz Caygill for her work and dedication in supporting schools and for administering the Schools' Forum, as this was to be her last meeting prior to retirement. Members wished Liz a very happy retirement. Liz replied that she has appreciated the support from members in moving the DSG to a better position.</p> <p>(There being no further business, members were thanked for their attendance and the meeting was declared closed at 16.40pm).</p>                   |
|   | <p>Signed:</p> <p>Date:</p>   |