Oldham Council

# Minutes

## Meeting of Schools Forum

**WEDNESDAY 27 November 2024**
via Microsoft Teams
at 4.00pm

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| **Present:** | Stuart Ash | Pinnacle Trust (In the Chair) |
| | Nigel Yeo | Trade Union Representative |
| | Karl Newell | Crompton House School |
| | Anthony Leighton | The Cranmer Trust |
| | Nigel Woodworth | New Bridge Academy |
| | Kate Hoggard | Channings Childcare, PVI Sector |
| | Tracy Cavanagh | Holy Rosary RC Primary School |
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| **Also Present:** | Matthew Bulmer | Director of Education |
| | Andy Cooper | Senior Finance Manager |
| | Clare Roper | Senior Finance Manager |
| | Victoria Hayes | Senior Accountant |
| | Jean Coombs | Clerk |

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| **1** | **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES** |
| 1.1 | The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. |
| 1.2 | Apologies for absence were received from Iain Windeatt and Liz Travis. |
| 1.3 | Members were requested to declare any business, pecuniary and personal interests. No declarations were made. |
| **2** | **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING** |
| | **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. |
| | **MATTERS ARISING:** There is still a vacancy for a Primary School representative, but there is someone who has shown an interest in the position; the Governor vacancy is still available to be filled; and a Vice Chair has not yet been appointed. |

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| **3** | **SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS** |
| | Andy Cooper informed members that the Local Authority were required to publish the Scheme for Financing Schools annually. The DfE has published revised guidance which Local Authorities must take into account when they revise their scheme. The Council is in the process of updating the scheme, once completed it will be issued to schools and there will be a short, 14 day consultation period, with the intention that the scheme will be published in December 2024, and brought to the Schools Forum in January 2025. The Local Authority revisions are technical accounting adjustments in relation to International Financial Reporting Standard 16 which deals with Leases. Members were asked to note this information. |
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| 4 | **SCHOOLS BALANCES UPDATE** |
| | Andy Cooper reminded members that schools are permitted to carry forward up to 12% of their budget. As reported at the Summer Term meeting, 9 schools had surpluses above this limit of which 6 had submitted plans that have now been accepted. Two of the others have now had plans submitted and accepted and discussions are ongoing with the final school.<br><br>Six schools were projected to have a deficit in 2024-25 and each case has been considered for approval via the LA's Licenced Deficit Scheme. |
| 5 | **FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS** |
| | Andy Cooper reported that the reason for the delay, and for the verbal reports at the meeting, was that the Local Authority has not yet had confirmation of the Schools Block, High Needs Block and Central Services School Block funding. The confirmation is usually received in July, but it has not yet been received, it is anticipated that the allocations will be received in November/ December 2024.<br><br>The Budget in October 2024 confirmed an increase in core schools funding of £2.3bn which included £1.0bn for SEND, which is a 6% real terms increase, but how this will be allocated is not yet known. The Current DSG modelling was based on a 3% increase, a very crude calculation estimated that a 6% increase would provide £1.1m of additional High Needs Block funding.<br><br>Due to the delay in confirmation of the Schools Block funding officers have not yet been able to do the required modelling to ensure/ confirm we can afford to maintain schools funding at NFF levels.<br><br>A member asked where the Local Authority stood with regards to the DSG surplus and deficit. Andy replied that the position was as discussed at the July 2024 meeting and that further projections have been partly completed as discussed at item 6 on the agenda. |
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| 6 | **DSG UPDATE** |
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| | Andy Cooper reported that at the previous meeting in July 2024, the DSG forecast was for a surplus of £4.150m at the end of 2024/25, increasing to £4.507m for 2025/26. This incorporated in-year surpluses within the High Needs Block of £1.264m and £0.357m in 2024/25 and 2025/26 respectively. Additional costs of £5.825m have now been identified and introduced into the forecast, £2.498m (24/25) and £3.327m (25/26), this would produce High Needs deficits |

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| | of £1.234m and £2.970m in each of the two years and the resultant impact on the DSG as a whole would be a reduced surplus of £1.652m for 204/25 and a deficit of £1.318m at the end of 2025/26. This does not include the impact of any additional funding and further modelling is required in relation to Special Schools and EHCP's |
| | A member asked how many times changes had been identified since July 2024, or had there been a gradual realisation. Andy replied that certain elements of cost are gradually increasing (e.g. Out of Borough) whereas with other elements there is a pinch points when additional costs are identified and these were mainly at the beginning of the school year. DSG Updates are produced four times a year for the Schools Forum meetings. |
| 7 | **PROPOSED DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS FOR 2024/25** |
| | The proposed meeting dates are:<br><br>Wednesday 15 January 2025<br><br>Wednesday 26 March 2025<br><br>Wednesday 11 June 2025<br><br>The election of a Vice Chair is to be on the next agenda. |
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| | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |
| | The Chair thanked the Clerk who is retiring after this meeting. |
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| | (There being no further business, members were thanked for their attendance and the meeting was declared closed at 16.25pm). |
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| | Signed: _____<br>Chair<br><br>Date: _____<br>S04/jc/governorminutes/Autumnterm2024 |