Oldham Council

Minutes

Meeting of Schools Forum

WEDNESDAY 25 January 2025
via Microsoft Teams
at 4.00pm

Present:	Liz Travis (LT)	Holy Trinity CE Primary (Chair)
	Stuart Ash (SA)	Pinnacle Trust
	Rob Higgins (RH)	The Cranmer Trust
	Karl Newell (KN)	Crompton House School
	Nigel Woodworth (NW)	New Bridge Academy
	Tracy Cavanagh (TC)	Holy Rosary RC Primary
	Iain Windeatt	Trade Union Representative
	Kate Hoggard	Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector
Also Present:	Amber Burton (AB)	Assistant Director, SEND & Inclusion
	Lee Walsh (LW)	Assistant Director of Finance
	Andy Cooper (AC)	Senior Finance Manager

1	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1.2	Apologies for absence were received from P McGrath, Matt Bulmer, Tony Shepherd, Vicky Gibbons, Clare Roper and Victoria Hayes.
1.3	Members were requested to declare any business, pecuniary and personal interests. No declarations were made.
1.4	Members were reminded of the 40% attendance requirement for the meeting to be quorate
2	**MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**
2.1	**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
2.2	**MATTERS ARISING:** No matters arising. It was noted that there is still a vacancy for primary school representation. TC has been following this up with Gary Needle at St Joseph's but needs pursuing.

3	**SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS**
3.1	AC talked through the report that had been circulated with the agenda, confirming that the Local Authority revisions to the scheme are technical accounting adjustments in relation to International Financial Reporting Standard 16 which deals with Leases. Members were asked to note this information. The full Scheme for Financing Schools 2024/25 has been circulated to Members
4	**DSG FUNDING UPDATE**
4.1	**Funding**: Received formal funding announcement in December. Across the board the funding has increased by 32.3m. **Schools Block** 273.9m, increase of 7.3%. The Authority is proposing to mirror the NFF with exception of ACA which will be reduced to 1.001 compared to 1.0025 last year. **High Needs**: 8% increase on previous year. **Early Years**: Increase of 28% on previous year, significant increases to working parents' entitlement increased from 15 to 30 hours and also 'under 2 year olds funding'. Modelling on provider rates for 25/26, to be completed by end Feb. Updates need to be agreed and an update will be brought to the next meeting. **Central Services Schools Block (CSSB)**: Increased by 3% despite the continuing 20% annual reduction for Historical Commitments, for which a reinstatement application has been made, decision pending.
4.2	**DSG Management plan**: Start 2024/25 with a £3,702k cumulative surplus (subject to Audit). For 24/25, forecasting an in year deficit of £4,275k with a £573k deficit being carried forward. Significant adverse movement of £4,723k since the last meeting. There is an anticipated in year deficit of £2,774k with a cumulative deficit of £3,347k deficit expected by end of 25/26. Early Years and central services will be distributed in accordance with regulations. Main overspend drivers are as expected in the High Needs Block: This includes EHCP's and out of borough (INMSS) costs. Anticipation/ assumption that this will continue into future financial years. Despite the significant downward shift, anecdotal evidence suggest we are still in a relatively good position in relation to other LAs and the worsening potion of the DSG and the pressures within High Needs is a national issue. Override currently scheduled to end in March 26 which means DSG deficits will fall onto council budgets. The Government may write off deficits but more likely that statutory override will be extended (again). The increased settlement this year indicates that the Government is aware of the pressures in the sector. Other points that were noted • **Central services expenditure**: includes 13k for Administration of the School's Forum; options for clerking being considered for administration. • **De-delegated funding:** will provide central provisions (unions, etc). • **Schools Block Growth funding:** underspend in 24/25 to be carried forward and applied in 25/26, amount currently being calculated, Forum therefore asked to agree in principle to agree the underspend can be carried forward, the amount will be confirmed at the March meeting.

	NW: Asked what are the drivers for the HNB now going into overspend? AC/AB: this is a combination of growth in EHCP's, INMSS costs rising, Section 19 provision being required and special school places rising. **SA**: Made the point that the 8% increase in schools funding was misleading and significantly lower in real terms due the fact that the 25/26 allocation included a number of grants that were issued as stand-alone grants in 24/25. **LW**: confirmed there has been no update on a potential extension to the Statutory Override and that at a national level 'speculation' of a 3 year funding settlement continue but not sure if this will actually happen, particularly for the next funding round.
4.3	In considering the report recommendations, Schools Forum: • Noted the DSG settlement for 25/26 • Note the current 2024/25 projected DSG deficit of £0.573m • Approved the deployment of Dedicated Schools Grant- 24/25 and 25/26 • Approved allocation for each service area totally 1.703m of funding from the CSSB. • Approved retention of £0.720m retained duties funding in the Central Schools Block • Approved in principle to carry forward the 24/25 growth underspend In addition representatives from the Maintained Primary Sector approved the de-delegation of funding for School Improvement and under performing schools, Teacher Union Duties, contingencies and Insurance for 2025/26 in the sum of £0.784m. The Forum approved the de-delegation of funding for School Improvement and under performing schools, Teacher Union Duties, contingencies and Insurance for 2025/26 in the sum of £0.098m on behalf of the Secondary Sector. However in the absence of representation from the Sector at the meeting this will (as in 23/24) be deferred to the Secondary Heads for final approval.
5	**PROPOSED DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS FOR 2024/25**
	The proposed meeting dates are: Wednesday 26 March 2025 Wednesday 11 June 2025
6	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
6.1	No other business was discussed
6.2	(There being no further business, members were thanked for their attendance and the meeting was declared closed at 16.50pm).
	Signed:_____(Chair) Date: _____