

**Monday, 13 July 2015**

## **Schools Forum**

*Official minutes, reports and the agenda will be available here:*

[http://www.manchester.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2503/schools\\_forum](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2503/schools_forum)

*I was welcomed as the forum's "first ever visitor".*

### **1. Urgent business**

### **2. Appeals**

Items 1 and 2 passed without discussion.

### **3. Minutes of previous meeting**

An error in the minutes was pointed out, Chorlton High School had not 'been forced to set a deficit budget' but had been forced to use its surplus to support Newhall Green.

### **4. Dedicated Schools Grant and School Balances 2014/15 - Outturn Report**

A report was given, and recommendations made, among them that the Forum approve use of £2.83m.

- Special school places development £1,113,000
- Post-16 learning disabilities £1,000,000
- Resource provisions within schools £720,000

Other points noted from the report:

- Academies report balances in a diff way
- Some schools are running deficits "we are working with them" to deliver "workable recovery plans"
- Much of the surplus is earmarked for planned work
- Reasons for deficits: "additional charges going through and expected growth not happening."
- There are concerns about the ongoing cost for developing more school place, it is suggested that Manchester needs more money from DfE for high needs blocks.

Discussion was then opened to the Forum.

Cllr Stone asked if there had been a response from DfE re. high needs blocks. The response was that MCC has fed back to DfE regarding certain pressures, a case is to be made to DfE in the Sep-Dec period. It was noted that DfE is busy.

As the committee moved to a vote, the Chair noted that “This is one of the few times [the committee is] being asked to make a decision with financial implications”

The committee voted to use the £2.833m DSG surplus as proposed, with 0 votes against and a couple of formal abstentions. It looked as if at least one member didn't vote or formally abstain.

## **5. Feedback from National School Funding Conference** *(also referred to as the National Fair Funding Conference in the agenda, Google denies knowledge of either)*

A report from the conference highlighted:

- Changes around Early Years Funding
  - 30 hrs commitment
- Changes in Dedicated Schools Grant funding
  - Different process in coming financial years
- Changes to national insurance and pensions will lead to a 9-10% increase in school budgets, which is not currently budgeted for.
- Schools are encouraged to save up surpluses to meet future real terms pressures on budgets
- There was a session on social care benchmarking
  - Members will come back to the Forum with plans later on
- Forum members attended a session on how to better prepare for Ofsted inspections.

The discussion was opened to the forum, one member asked about the time scale of the 9-10% budget increase but was not answered.

Another member enquire about the DfE formula for additional funding. This was said to £22 more per pupil, £3m. This was welcomed as good news, though the amount of additional funding was not very high 'given the characteristics of the city'.

It was agreed that a letter would be drafted (probably to Nicky Morgan) explaining the challenges faced in Manchester and appealing for additional funding.

There was some interest in an app for SEN children that had been discussed at the conference. Though once councillor raised his concerns re the safety of vulnerable children 'walking around with Iphones'.

The report was noted.

## **6. Launch of Scheme for Financing schools**

The main point discussed here was that MCC has moved its accounts from Co-op to Barclays, who don't give debit cards for school use. There is an interim measure in place but MCC are working on a long term solution.

## **7. Forward Plan**

## 8. Update on water charges

Water rates have doubled [by or to £40,000]

- Sefton Council are challenging United Utilities as they believe parks and cemeteries likely to be bankrupted
- NW councils pay more per pupil, UU says this is due to drainage and sewage (old)
  - Planned works to make more user- and environmentally-friendly

Q's

- Do the 12 affected schools know that they are affected?
  - Don't know
- If UU are profitable, why do we have out of date systems?
  - UU have to 'justify' charges to OFWAT.
  - We don't know when UU will bring sewers up to standard

The report was noted.

*The above is my account of the meeting I was present for, and not an exhaustive set of minutes.*

Ben Godfrey  
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