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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2022

Present:

Maintained Primary School Head Teachers/Representative

Ms H Moreton, Holy Family

Dr E Allen, St John Vianney (attended for items 1-6 and item 10 only)

Primary Governor

Ms M Lonican, Our Lady (attended for items 4 -13 only)

Special School Maintained Representative

Mr N Oldham, Highfurlong

Special School Academy Representative

Ms G Hughes, Park (Sea View)

Academy / Free School Representatives

Mr G Dow, Anchorsolme (Sea View)

Mr R Farley, Westminster (FCAT) (Chair)

Ms T Harrison, Thames / Roseacre (AtC)

Mr A Hussain, Highfield (Star Academies)

Mr M McIver, St George's/Baines Endowed (Cidari) (attended for items 6 -13 only)

Mr E Vitalis, South Shore / Marton (Bright Futures)

Post-16

Ms J Gray, Blackpool Sixth Form

Early Years

Ms R Dey, Pebbles Day Nursery

Non-Schools Members

Mr N Adams, UNISON (attended for items 4 -13 only)

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

In Attendance:

Councillor J Hobson, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools

Mr D Maddocks, Senior Accountant

Mr P Turner, Assistant Director – School Improvement and SEND

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources

Ms A Wellings, Interim Head of SEND

Mrs D Bowater, Democratic Governance Adviser (minutes)

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1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Roger Farley welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Simon Brennand (Unity / FCAT), Simon Eccles (St Marys BEBCMAT), Victoria O Farrell (Education Diversity) and Mark Golden (Head of Accountancy, Deputy s151 Officer).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest noted at the meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12 October 2021 were considered and agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes:

Discussion on SEND budgets to be scheduled for a Schools Forum meeting in early 2022 –

At the October 2021 Schools Forum meeting it was noted that there were a number of items relating to SEND support including Early Help which were being reviewed and it was agreed that a more detailed overview would be presented to either the January 2022 or March 2022 Schools Forum meeting. At the January 2022 meeting, it was noted that an update relating to Early Help would be presented to the March 2022 meeting.

DSG Budget Monitoring – it had been requested that future papers contain information relating to the quality of provision as well as the efficiency of the provision – Hilary Wood confirmed that information relating to key performance indicators had been included within the High Needs update.

Covid Funding Update – an update was requested on the clawback process and implications of the Government's tutoring recovery programme – an update on Covid Funding was provided at item 11 including a link to the recently published government guidance on the National Tutoring Programme.

4 LOCAL AUTHORITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

(Michelle Lonican and Neil Adams arrived during this item)

Paul Turner presented the report to provide an overview of recent developments in the local authority. It was reported that attendance through the first term of 2021/22 had been steady with most schools recording a consistent 90% attendance. It was noted that cases of Covid had risen during the last half term resulting in an increase of both pupil and staff absence. It was reported that schools were managing the situation well.

It was acknowledged that the referrals to the Pupil Referral Unit were lower than previous

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years. It was recognised that there were also independent alternative provision providers within the authority area and that there was a need to maintain high quality alternative provision.

It was reported that elective home educated numbers had risen again although more slowly than the same period last year with a number of pupils returning to school since the beginning of the school year. It was noted that there would be discussion at the March Schools Forum meeting as to the funding relating to Elective Home Education and recognised that the Opportunity Area funding stream will reduce.

In relation to permanent exclusions, it was reported that they were marginally higher when compared to the same period in the last school year, but considerably lower than the pre-pandemic years.

The Forum then moved on to receive comments.

It was noted that in addition to the inspection information presented within the report, the Blackpool Sixth Form College had received a full Ofsted inspection in December 2021, the report was not yet published. Paul Turner agreed that this should have been included within the report and asked the Forum to note the information.

It was also highlighted that both colleges within the town (Blackpool Sixth Form College and Blackpool and the Fylde College) were monitoring attendance as a reduction could potentially impact the young people not in education employment or training (NEET). Paul Turner agreed to monitor this through the relevant local authority work stream.

It was commented that the reduction in access to Educational Diversity was positive however the increase in the elective home education numbers was a concern. One member asked whether this had impacted on staffing and resulted in any redundancies. It was also asked whether there was a financial plan for elective home educated children and acknowledged that they could be grouped into those whose parents had always chosen to elective home educate their children and then those who had done so as a result of Covid-19.

In response, Paul Turner indicated that there was no correlation between permanent exclusions and elective home educated children at the moment. It was noted that the local authority had sustained the pupil referral unit budget during the period of reducing pupil numbers. He also reiterated that the funding relating to high needs and early help would be discussed at the March Schools Forum meeting to address the deficit and also where to place funding in order to address current issues and reinvest for the future. Discussions as to early intervention at primary school age were required and a High Needs Block Working Group would be convened to consider a range of future funding options.

One member asked what the future plan was for the Pupil Referral Unit should the referral numbers remain low. It was queried whether there was too much resource and whether success in other areas would impact on the capacity at the Pupil Referral Unit. In response, Paul Turner indicated that there had been no absolute decisions regarding the Pupil Referral

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Unit however consideration was being given to the number of buildings, the curriculum on offer and other investment. A proposal would be presented to the Schools Forum in Spring 2022. Hilary Wood also confirmed that there had been a predicated fall in numbers at the Pupil Referral Unit due to the work undertaken on inclusion. The local authority had therefore agreed to a two-year fixed funding agreement for the Pupil Referral Unit and work was being undertaken to look at the model once the fixed funding period comes to an end.

One member also enquired about the Chefs Academy offer. Paul Turner confirmed that the capacity of the Chefs Academy was for 24 young people aged 14 plus. It was noted that a mix of young people were considered for each place and that schools could purchase a place for £2k per year which provided two days of provision each week, one in a working kitchen and one working towards an NVQ qualification. The aim was to slowly expand the provision to ensure sustainability and high quality.

Actions:

- **To note that the Blackpool Sixth Form College had received a full Ofsted inspection in December 2021, the report was not yet published.**
- **Paul Turner's team to monitor college attendance within the town and the potential impact on numbers of young people not in education employment or training (NEET).**
- **Paul Turner to convene a High Needs Block working group to consider future funding options.**

5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2021-2022

Darren Maddocks presented the update to report the budget position of the 2021-22 Dedicated Schools Grant as at 30 November 2021 and the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant reserves forecast as at 30 November 2021.

It was reported that budget monitoring to the end of November 2021 forecasted a £693k over spend against a deficit budget of £326k. Therefore, the total in-year shortfall was estimated at £1.019m. The major in year variances included a higher demand relating to Post 16 placements than budgeted of £306k; increased costs for the Oracle building and resilience coaches relating to access and inclusion of £105k; Special Schools placement growth of £154k and Exceptional Circumstances costs higher than budgeted £175k.

In relation to reserves, the local authority were able to account for a transfer into DSG reserves of £1.604m from a provision that had been set aside in the current and previous financial years. The provision was set aside to allow payments to be made to new and growing academies and free schools for the April to August periods, given that the academy financial year differed from the local authority and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) financial year. It had subsequently been established that the provision was not required, as the ESFA had paid those schools in full, including for the period from April to August. The discrepancy in accounting treatment only came to light some time after the provision was first established, and the local authority assumed that the ESFA would recover the funding. In November 2021, the Department for Education confirmed that they would not recover the funding, stating that it should be treated as part of DSG.

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When the transferred provision was added to the brought forward deficit of £5.766m and the in-year deficit of £1.019m, the resulting forecast DSG deficit by 31 March 2022 reduced to £5.181m. This excluded the maintained schools reserves (£3.919m) and the specific Union Fees reserve (£44k).

There were no questions following the report but the increase in money was welcomed.

Hilary Wood also provided assurances that the money that had been set aside had not impacted on schools but was a technical accounting adjustment. She also confirmed that there had been confusion between the local authority and the ESFA which took time to understand and which was why the amount grew. Following discussion, the ESFA confirmed that the money could be retained as a one-off situation.

6 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

(Matt McIver arrived during this item)

Hilary Wood presented the report to update on the latest developments relevant to the High Needs budget. As previously reported, owing to the pressure on the High Needs budget, a medium term financial plan had been developed to monitor forecast expenditure against the high needs budget and factor in predictions of where savings could be achieved.

It was noted that despite additional government funding in recent years, pupil numbers in high cost placements continued to increase. The latest forecasts showed a position where costs in 2021/22 would exceed the High Needs funding allocation by £2.254 million. However it was noted that the cumulative deficit against Dedicated Schools Grant was expected to reduce by a forecast £585k to £5.184 million by March 2022 due to the provision that had been released.

It was noted that the allocation of High Needs funding for 2022/23 had been confirmed. As reported at the last meeting, this would be the third and final year of the announced three-year settlement for schools and High Needs, with the increase for Blackpool equating to almost 11% compared to 2021/22. Furthermore, the Spending Review in October 2021 announced an additional £1.6 billion for schools and High Needs, on top of previous allocations. The High Needs element had been confirmed as £325 million, of which Blackpool would receive £946k, taking the year-on-year increase to almost £4 million, or 15%. It was anticipated that there would be enough in the High Needs budget in future years to cover spend, and that the cumulative deficit might be recovered in the next three years.

It was reported that the local authority, in conjunction with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Board, was in the process of drawing up a SEND Improvement Plan. A number of actions within the plan would have financial implications for the High Needs Block. In the short-term, due to the immediate need for additional space to accommodate pupils in Blackpool's special schools, plans continued to create additional capacity at the Oracle building for Park's post-16 students.

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It was also noted that the key performance indicator information provided showed trends and impact on SEND and inclusion.

The Forum then moved on to receive comments.

One member commented that the report was encouraging however queried why there was still a high cost relating to out of area placements and what the pressures were should this continue. It was also queried about low Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) numbers and the reasons for this. In response Paul Turner confirmed that all children who required an EHCP would receive one. In relation to provision, the local authority were looking at options for provision to reduce costs where possible and still provide the best options. The decision-making process for placing children out of borough would also be considered as would the questions asked at Annual Review meetings to determine whether the provision was correct.

It was noted that Blackpool Sixth Form were looking at their provision for young people with SEND to look to meet the needs and help to keep students within the borough. It was acknowledged that there were land based courses out of borough that could not be accessed in Blackpool colleges.

One member asked whether Blackpool needed its own Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) provision.

One member commented that as the special school provision available in Blackpool was renowned and parents felt confident choosing the provision for their children, this created an issue of increased demand for special school places. In contrast, the capacity within special school settings was full therefore support was needed to ensure that children were accessing the right education setting and those who could access that in mainstream schools, did so. The challenge remained of retaining parental confidence, supporting parental choice and making the system work.

7 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES FUNDING

Hilary Wood presented the report on the local authority's proposal to replace the current methodology for allocating Exceptional Circumstances funding to mainstream schools and the proposed reduction in the budget for Exceptional Circumstances from £165k to £100k from 2022/23.

It was noted that in 2013/14, the way that pupils with high cost needs were funded changed nationally. There was a significant transfer of funding from central Council budgets into mainstream schools' delegated budgets, and a new requirement for those schools to fund the first £6,000 of the costs of meeting the additional educational needs of each pupil.

As a school's notional SEN budget was not separate to its formula funding, but an assumed element of it, each local authority set out in its local formula how the notional SEN budget was calculated. In Blackpool, formula factors of prior attainment and deprivation were

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considered.

It was recognised that on occasion, a school may have a disproportionate number of pupils with more complex needs and may not have funding to cover the number of pupils with high needs. The Department for Education therefore allowed local authorities to define the circumstances in which additional funding may be provided from the local authority's High Needs block. As agreed by Schools Forum, in Blackpool, this additional funding (Exceptional Circumstances funding) was calculated by comparing 20% of a school's Notional SEN Budget with the number of pupils with EHC plans, and funding was allocated if the 20% was insufficient to meet the first £6,000 of additional costs for those pupils. The calculation was carried out three times a year, using a snapshot of pupils on roll at the start of each term.

It was noted that the number of schools receiving funding had increased from six in 2017/18 to 19 (so far) in 2021/22, with costs rising from £50k to a forecast £340k (against a budget of £165k) during the same period. In a situation where over half of mainstream schools were in receipt of funding, this could no longer be classed as "exceptional circumstances". It was also suggested that many schools did not anticipate the funding, given that a number of queries were received each year asking what the funding related to.

Due to the pressures on the High Needs Block, the local authority proposed a change to the current criteria for accessing funding to reflect only exceptional circumstances. In considering the options for change, account had been taken of practice across other North West authorities relating to this source of funding for schools.

Hilary Wood outlined the proposed methodology to be undertaken from April 2022 and the change in threshold from 20% of the notional SEN budget to 35%. Payments would also not be automatically generated, but schools would need to apply for funding if they felt they had insufficient funding to cover the first £6k of costs for pupils with high needs.

It was reported that had the 35% threshold been applied in 2021/22, it would have resulted in an estimated four schools receiving funding of almost £100k in total. It was therefore proposed that the Exceptional Circumstances budget for 2022/23 be reduced from £165k to £100k.

The Forum then moved on to receive comments.

It was suggested that the aim should first be to contain spend with the existing budget before looking to reduce the spend rather than an initial cut in the budget. In response, Hilary Wood confirmed that the model was based on the change of threshold of the notional SEN budget from 20% to 35%. Paul Turner also confirmed that a review of how the policy premise was originally determined was required.

A further question asked whether the young people with SEND could be distributed more evenly across the schools. Hilary Wood confirmed that there were 19 schools that provided for more children than their budget accounted for. It was also suggested that owing to the number of queries relating to the funding, some schools were not reliant on the funding however the retention of the ability to offer exceptional circumstances funding was needed.

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It was also suggested that there needed to be best practice to enable all schools to be appealing to families.

A concern was raised as to the wording and to determine what 'exceptional circumstances' were and the thresholds of the policy being discussed. In response, Paul Turner confirmed that the discussion in the Forum related to the finances as the proposal was to change the formula. It was also commented that some schools may have already budgeted for the funding.

It was reiterated that the local authority wanted to implement the new methodology from April 2022, however the awaited outcome of the government SEND review may provide a need for further changes. However the local authority wanted to proceed and support from Schools Forum members was sought.

Following a vote of those Schools Forum members in attendance, the majority agreed to support the local authority's proposal to replace the current methodology for allocating Exceptional Circumstances funding to mainstream schools with the alternative methodology.

Following a vote of those Schools Forum members in attendance, the majority did not agree to support the proposed reduction in the budget for Exceptional Circumstances to £100k from 2022/23.

Resolved:

- **Following a vote of those Schools Forum members in attendance, the majority agreed to support the local authority's proposal to replace the current methodology for allocating Exceptional Circumstances funding to mainstream schools with the alternative methodology.**
- **Following a vote of those Schools Forum members in attendance, the majority did not agree to support the proposed reduction in the budget for Exceptional Circumstances to £100k from 2022/23.**

8 DRAFT DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET 2022-2023

Hilary Wood presented the report to outline the provisional estimates for the use of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2022/23.

It was reported that in addition to the DSG, the Government had announced an extra £1.6 million for schools and High Needs in its Spending Review of October 2021. The allocation for Blackpool schools had been provisionally set at just over £3 million, taking the increase to £6.5 million, which equated to 6.9% compared to 2021/22. It was noted that the additional funding would be allocated directly to schools as a supplementary grant, with school-level funding amounts confirmed in spring 2022.

It was reported that Blackpool would also receive an additional £946k of High Needs funding, taking the year-on-year increase to £3.8 million, or 15.1%.

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The provisional forecast expenditure against DSG for 2022/23 was provided and it was noted that the additional £3 million that schools were to receive directly via the supplementary grant had been excluded, but the additional £946k of High Needs funding had been included.

It was reported that the local authority had proposed to add £90k to the Schools Block total of £98.8 million from the growth fund contingency, and also transfer 0.5% to the High Needs Block, which amounted to £494k. The net figure would be allocated to schools via the local school funding formula.

It was recognised that Central Schools Services Block had decreased in total by £87k and a proposal would be presented to the March Schools Forum meeting on the detailed proposed budget. It was also recognised that the total High Needs block increase of £3.8 million, including additional Spending Review monies, would have a significant impact on the ongoing pressures on costs for pupils with additional needs. It was proposed that the Early Years Block funding be fully allocated to Early Years provision and services. It was also noted that the birth rate was reducing and the implications that this would have.

In summary, it was estimated that the in-year surplus on DSG could amount to £2.3 million, which would reduce the forecast cumulative deficit at 31 March 2023 to £4.5 million.

There were no questions or comments following the report.

9 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA 2022-2023 PROPOSALS

Hilary Wood presented the report and it was noted that the principles of the Schools Funding Formula 2022/23 had been agreed at the last meeting. Members were asked to consider the local authority's proposal for the schools funding formula for 2022/23 and to note the estimated allocations of the Schools Supplementary Grant 2022/23 for schools for pupils aged between five and 16.

The Minimum per Pupil Funding levels, which were mandatory in local funding formulae, increased to £4,265 for primary schools, and £5,525 for secondary schools. It was noted that on 16 December 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) announced allocations of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2022/23. Based on a Pupil Unit of Funding of £4,747 and a Secondary Unit of Funding of £6,415, together with pupil numbers taken from the October 2021 school census, Blackpool's Schools Block of funding was £98.818 million, which included growth funding of £674k.

The growth funding of £674k compared to £645k in 2021/22. Currently in Blackpool, the only new and growing school was Armfield Academy. The requirement to fund the estimated new pupils from September 2022 to March 2023 was £770k, leaving a gap of £96k compared to the available growth funding. A growth fund contingency of £90k set aside from previous year's growth funding could be brought into the formula to practically bridge the gap. The 2022 intake at Armfield would see the secondary phase filled up, with only two further years of new year groups to follow in the primary phase. This means that the

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requirement for growth funding for Armfield in 2023/24 and 2024/25 would be much reduced.

It was noted that in October 2021 Schools Forum agreed to make a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, and to do this by way of a reduction to the Basic Entitlement factor values.

It was reported that the additional schools funding would be allocated through the schools supplementary grant from April 2022 before being incorporated into the National Funding Formula, the grant would continue from April to August 2023 for academies.

The schools supplementary grant would only be payable to public sector employers therefore further education colleges, sixth form colleges, independent learning providers, as well as private and voluntary sector early years providers would not be eligible to receive the funding.

The Forum then moved on to receive comments.

It was queried whether the allocation of the supplementary schools grant had to be based on free school meal allocation as this widened the gap in funding and was disproportionate. In response, Hilary Wood confirmed that the allocations were based on a national formula of a per pupil amount, a lump sum, and additional funding for those who received free school meals.

A further question related to the modelling for the costs. Hilary Wood confirmed that the government had undertaken some modelling and that there was an expectation that the funds would assist with the increase in teacher salaries as well as the introduction of the health and social care National Insurance levy.

A further observation was that some of the costs were not pupil premium related and yet the allocation was based on pupil premium figures which was unfair. In response, Hilary Wood confirmed that the formula had been developed centrally and the only influence would be for the local authority to participate in relevant consultation exercises relating to the allocation of funds and the formula.

Following a vote of those schools and early years members in attendance, the majority agreed to the local authority's proposal for the allocation of school funding in 2022/23 and noted the estimated allocations of the Schools Supplementary Grant 2022/23 for schools for pupils aged between five and 16.

In addition, Councillor Hobson agreed to the local authority's proposal for the allocation of school funding in 2022/23.

Resolved:

- **Following a vote of those schools and early years members in attendance, the majority agreed to the local authority's proposal for the allocation of school funding in 2022/23 and noted the estimated allocations of the Schools**

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Supplementary Grant 2022/23 for schools for pupils aged between five and 16.

To note:

- **Councillor Hobson agreed to the local authority's proposal for the allocation of school funding in 2022/23 as the elected member of the Forum.**

10 DE-DELEGATION OF SERVICES AND RETENTION OF FUNDING FOR EDUCATION FUNCTIONS 2022-2023

Hilary Wood presented the report and approval was sought for the de-delegation of services and the retention of funding for Education Functions. It was recognised that only maintained school representatives were eligible to vote on the recommendations. It was also noted that there had been a meeting of the Primary Headteachers prior to the Schools Forum meeting where the points had been discussed.

Free School Meals

It was noted that the de-delegation amount per Free School Meal pupil would be set at £13.23 in 2022/23, compared to £13.00 in 2021/22. The increase equated to 1.75% which was in line with the anticipated local government pay award for 2021/22.

Maintained mainstream primary school members in attendance agreed to the continued de-delegation of funding for free school meal eligibility checks at the rate of £13.23 per free school meal pupil.

Resolved:

- **Maintained mainstream primary school members in attendance agreed to the continued de-delegation of funding for free school meal eligibility checks at the rate of £13.23 per free school meal pupil*.**

Union Duties

It was noted that agreement was reached between unions on the number of days that each union could claim from the central pot to fund the facilities time of the teaching unions. In October 2020 Schools Forum agreed that Unison would be included within the collective funding arrangements. Therefore members of both teaching and non-teaching unions could be supported by local representatives during the school day. Schools Forum also agreed to a five-year plan for the use of accumulated reserves, which set out the per pupil rate payable by schools, as well as the day rate for union cover.

It was proposed that in line with the agreed five-year plan, the de-delegation amount for 2022/23 would increase by 20p per pupil to £4.40 compared to £4.20 per pupil de-delegated in 2021/22. However, it was noted that forecast reserves at March 2022 were likely to be higher than anticipated in the five-year plan.

It was queried whether the reserves could be utilised and either look to freeze the payment for 2022/23 or reduce the increase by half to 10p per pupil. Hilary Wood confirmed that the amount could be considered outside of the meeting following modelling of these options or brought back to the March 2022 Schools Forum for discussion.

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The maintained mainstream primary school members in attendance agreed to the continued de-delegation of funding for union duties but did not agree to a specified rate per pupil at this time.

Resolved:

- **The maintained mainstream primary school members in attendance agreed to the continued de-delegation of funding for union duties but did not agree to a specified rate per pupil at this time*.**

Action:

- **Hilary Wood to determine the rate per pupil options for the de-delegation of funding for union duties considering use of the reserves and either discuss with the mainstream primary school members outside of the Forum meeting or bring information back to the March 2022 Schools Forum.**

School Improvement

It was reported that in October 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) consulted on reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions were funded. In the consultation, the DfE proposed to reduce the LA School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant by half in 2022/23, and remove it completely from April 2023. Given the small number of local authority schools, Blackpool had historically received the minimum grant level of £50k each year.

It was recognised that the grant had been provided to local authorities since 2017 to enable them to fulfil their core school improvement responsibilities in respect of maintained schools. The funding available to local authorities to meet their statutory duties would need to be replaced by de-delegation of funding from maintained schools, or by setting up a traded service.

The rationale for the DfE's proposal to remove the grant was due to their belief that local authorities used the grant predominantly on early challenge and support in cases of potential underperformance, rather than for formal intervention powers. The DfE therefore proposed that funding for these activities be replaced by de-delegation from maintained school budgets or buy-back from a traded service, arguing that academies in trusts have their funding reduced in respect of school improvement through the MAT top-slice, and stand-alone academies have to pay for it from their school budgets.

The consultation closed in November 2021. A verbal update at the meeting confirmed that the outcome had been published in recent days, noting that the plans were to be taken forward as proposed, with Blackpool's grant reducing to £25k in 2022/23 before being removed completely from 2023/24. It was noted that in order to replace the lost income of £25k in 2022/23, and continue the same level of support for maintained schools, de-delegation of £5.58 per pupil would be required.

It was confirmed that through discussions with Primary Headteachers, they were overall in support of the proposal.

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The maintained mainstream primary school members in attendance agreed to the de-delegation of funding for school improvement services at the rate of £5.58 per pupil.

Resolved:

- **The maintained mainstream primary school members in attendance agreed to the de-delegation of funding for school improvement services at the rate of £5.58 per pupil*.**

*As a point of clarity, it was noted that the voting on the de-delegation of services did not apply to special schools however the maintained special schools member confirmed that those schools would be happy to adopt the de-delegation arrangements for free school meals, union duties, school improvement and education functions as discussed.

Education Functions

It was noted that in the 2015 Spending Review, the Government announced that it would be cutting £600m from the Education Services Grant (ESG), a funding stream paid to local authorities outside of the local government finance settlement in respect of certain education functions. There were two elements of ESG – the retained grant, and the general grant. Retained ESG was only paid to local authorities, and funded the responsibilities they hold for all pupils in the area, regardless of whether they could be educated in maintained or academy schools. The general element of ESG was paid to local authorities in respect of the pupils in maintained schools. It was also paid separately to each academy in respect of the pupils in their own school.

In November 2016, details were released of how the £600m of savings would be realised. The retained element of ESG was transferred into Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2017, and formed part of the Central Schools Services Block since April 2018. The general element of the grant ended in September 2017 for both local authorities and academies.

Despite this, the local authority remained responsible for providing the functions that were covered by it on behalf of its maintained schools. Financial regulations allow for funding to be retained from the budgets of maintained schools in order to cover the costs.

In previous years, Schools Forum agreed to allow the local authority to retain funding from maintained school budgets in order to cover specific support that was provided to maintained schools (but not to academies) at no cost.

The 2022/23 amount had been calculated at £36.94 per pupil, which equated to a 1.75% increase on the 2021/22 amount of £36.30, in line with the anticipated local government pay award for 2021/22.

The maintained school members in attendance, agreed to the amount of £36.94 per pupil being retained from school budgets for the purpose of funding education functions.

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Resolved:

- **The maintained school members in attendance, agreed to the amount of £36.94 per pupil being retained from school budgets for the purpose of funding education functions.**

11 COVID FUNDING UPDATE

Hilary Wood provided an update on developments since the last meeting regarding financial support provided in the education sector during the COVID outbreak. Information included a link to further information on the National Tutoring Programme, Coronavirus workforce fund for schools, providing school meals during the coronavirus outbreak and the national testing programme for schools and colleges.

One member asked whether the meal vouchers would be available for schools during the February half term break. It was confirmed that schools would receive an update and information outside of the meeting.

12 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday 15 March 2022.

It was recognised that the meeting would be held in person if feasible.

13 GLOSSARY

The glossary of terms was provided for information.

Chairman

(The meeting ended 11.02am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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