

**Schools Forum**

Date: 23 October 2014

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Venue: Shrewsbury
Training and Development
Centre

Paper

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Public

School Funding Consultation Update**Responsible Officer** Gwyneth Evanse-mail: gwyneth.evans@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 253875 Fax: 01743 254538**Summary**

Following the Government's announcement of the school funding arrangements for 2015-16, and significant work carried out by the Schools Forum Task & Finish group on Sustainability, Shropshire Schools Forum recommended changes to Shropshire's local funding formula for 2015-16 at its meeting of 18 September 2014.

Shropshire maintained schools, academies and free school were consulted on these recommendations. The consultation process included a briefing session open to all headteachers and chairs of governors held at the Lord Hill Hotel on 2 October 2014. The consultation period ended on 16 October 2014.

This report summarises the consultation responses received. Details of the individual school responses are attached to the report.

As a reminder, whilst Schools Forum can recommend changes to the funding formula, including redistributions, decisions are made by the local authority.

Recommendation

That Schools Forum consider the individual school responses to the consultation attached at Appendix A to this report and agree to recommend to the local authority the allocation of additional funding from April 2015 in line with Schools Forum recommendation of 18 September 2014.

REPORT**Background**

1. Following significant reforms to school funding arrangements from April 2013 the Government consulted on and published further reforms during the summer for implementation from April 2015. The changes continue the Government's move towards a national funding formula for schools during the next parliamentary period.

2. The latest reforms aim to address the unfairness in funding across local authorities and confirmed additional funding of £390m to the lowest funded local authorities in England from April 2015-16. Shropshire will receive an additional £297 per pupil in schools block funding within the DSG. Based on October 2013 census data this equates to an additional £10.37m, a 7.2% increase to the schools block. Shropshire is the 4th highest gainer out of 69 gaining local authorities.
3. The Schools Forum Sustainability Task & Finish Group, advised and supported by Shropshire Council's administration Task & Finish Group considered options for distributing the additional funding to Shropshire maintained schools, academies and free school. As a result, the Task & Finish Group recommended to Shropshire Schools Forum on 18 September 2014 an increase to the current sparsity funding delivered to schools through the funding formula to a level that demonstrated a fair and appropriate allocation and to distribute remaining funding on a flat rate per pupil basis across all schools.
4. Shropshire Schools Forum agreed with the Task & Finish Group's recommendation and a period of consultation with all Shropshire maintained schools, academies and free school commenced on the 22 September. As part of the consultation process a briefing session was held at the Lord Hill Hotel on 2 October 2014 where 154 people attended representing 85 Shropshire schools. The briefing session gave headteachers and governors the opportunity to discuss the recommendations in more detail.
5. The consultation period ended on 16 October 2014. A total of 25 responses (17%) were received, 21 from primary schools and 4 from secondary schools.
6. Overall the majority of responses received from schools to the consultation were in favour of the recommendations proposed by Schools Forum. A schedule of the individual responses received is attached at Appendix A.

Sparsity

7. The proposal to retain the sparsity distance criteria at 3 miles for primary and 9 miles for secondary and retain the primary number on roll threshold at less than 150 on roll was generally supported. Of the 25 responses 15 gave a Yes response, 6 gave a No response and 4 gave neither Yes or No response.
8. The proposal to retain the number on roll threshold for secondary schools at less than 450, as in 2014-15, was not made clear in the consultation documentation and the briefing session at the Lord Hill referred to the number on roll threshold, in error, as less than 600 on roll for secondary. However, whichever number on roll threshold is used, it remains that only one Shropshire secondary school will receive sparsity funding, due to the 9 miles distance threshold.
9. Of the 4 secondary school responses, one responded in agreement with a 600 on roll threshold for secondary schools, two agreed with the current 2014-

15 threshold of less than 450 on roll and one responded to say that sparsity should not be used for secondary schools.

10. In relation to the basis for determining the value of the additional sparsity funding, 17 gave a Yes response, 3 gave a No response and 3 gave neither a Yes or No response. In addition 2 secondary school responses agreed with the basis for determining the primary value but not the secondary value.

Per Pupil

11. The consultation included the proposal to allocate the remaining additional funding on a per pupil basis and asked whether the majority of additional funding should be allocated on a per pupil basis. Of the responses received, 22 gave a Yes response, 2 gave a No response and one gave neither a Yes or No response.

Other formula factors

12. Of the 25 responses received 15 schools responded in agreement with the proposal not to allocate any of the additional funding on other formula factors, 10 disagreed with the proposal and felt other factors should also be used. Other than some responses given that state additional funding should be applied to the lump sum factor to protect all small schools it is not clear from all of the responses not in agreement with the proposal the reason why additional funding should be applied to other factors within the formula.

Summary

13. Overall the majority of responses received favour the proposals within the consultation as recommended by Schools Forum.