



**Walsall Council**

**Walsall Children's Services**

**Report to:** Schools Forum

**Date:** 25th September 2012

**Subject:** Schools Funding Consultation Responses

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**Purpose of the report:** As agreed at Schools Forum in July a consultation was sent to all schools regarding the principles to apply for a new funding formula compliant with DfE regulations. This report summarises the responses

**Recommendation:** See final section of report

## 1. Consultation

- 1.1 **Appendix 1 and 2** are the documents emailed to all schools in relation to consultation.
- 1.2 To further aid consultation there was an Extraordinary meeting of Primary Forum to discuss the formula changes and consultation. This took place on 14 September 2012 and approximately 30 primary heads attended.

## 2. Consultation Responses

- 2.1 As at the published closing date of the consultation, there were no responses to the consultation.
- 2.2 Primary Forum committed to send a joint response of heads attending the meeting of 14 September 2012 and this will be **Appendix 3** of the report which will be despatched as soon as received.
- 2.3 A written response was received after the closing date. The school in question had a changed e-mail address and therefore had not previously seen the information. Many of the comments were in line with what has been discussed at primary forum but a key comment was:

“In 2009-10 and 2010-11 we admitted an extra 17 children each year. In 2011-12 we admitted an extra 22 children. These are significant numbers for a primary school. While realising this is not a significant issue for many schools, it is an issue for my school which could see us losing a substantial sum which we feel is unfair.”

- 2.4 If further comments are received post the closing date then every endeavour will be made to ensure that these comments are considered.

## 3. Next Steps

- 3.1 The clear concern from the consultation has been lack of responses. It may be that schools are endorsing proposals but without written support this will be impossible to prove. Taking account of the comments in meetings and any late consultation responses we will discuss and finalise draft a financial model with the working group
- 3.2 To ensure that all schools have been informed as they possibly could be the proposal is to issue all schools with a comparison which will enable them to track the impact on their school by comparing their agreed budget for 2012/13 with what the budget could look like under the new funding framework. While these numbers will only be **indicative** it will ensure schools truly understand how the funding formula will impact them. As schools have not at time of publication objected to the principles then this exercise is to allow schools to understand these changes in the context of their own school.
- 3.3 Enabling schools to see how the new funding formula might impact on them may raise further questions from a financial planning perspective. It is therefore also proposed to add in dedicated time for council officers to spend time with schools and governors to ensure that as many queries as possible can be answered. Clearly the new funding formula will create adverse variances compared to the current budget

and it would be the intention to focus officer time on schools that would appear to be adversely affected by the new funding formula.

3.4 The clear aim of the working group has been to create a principle led formula wherever possible and a clear rationale for any decisions made. While the current formula may be the status quo, there may be schools who feel there are inequalities in the current funding formula. Therefore, while individual schools may have a reduced funding envelope, it is hoped that accompanying information will demonstrate the rationale of a new approach by proving that new per pupil rates are equitable even though there may be fluctuation from the current position.

3.5 Briefings to groups can also be arranged where appropriate.

3.6 **Appendix 4**, detailing figures, will be despatched once finalised. The aim is clearly to meet the DfE deadline of 31 October and still gain Cabinet approval before then. Clearly both producing the values per school, with explanation and then creating time in the process to meet with schools will put pressure on the timetable. At the time of writing response is being sought on several issues, including a response from DfE to ensure Walsall have a workable timetable.

#### **4. Recommendations**

4.1 Schools Forum note the report, final consultation document and consultation responses.

4.2 Schools Forum endorse a further round of consultation and the principle of giving each school indicative impacts of a new funding formula.

4.3 Schools Forum delegate responsibility to the Chair and Vice Chair to finalise the presentation and content of information issued to schools.

4.4 Schools Forum endorse Appendix 4 when received.