

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
DATE: 20 SEPTEMBER 2012
REPORT BY: IAN BUDD, DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING
SUBJECT: SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA REVIEW

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 The purpose of this report is to inform Scrutiny Members of the work and progress ongoing in relation to the Schools Funding Formula review.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 It is acknowledged by both schools and the Local Authority that the Flintshire Schools Funding Formula needs to be reviewed and updated. The Funding Formula was developed many years ago and has evolved incrementally to meet new requirements. As a consequence over time the formula has become complex and lacking in transparency. Some elements of the formula do not have a clear rationale and are not reflective of current thinking on educational and resource policies.

2.02 In March 2012 the Director of Lifelong Learning established a project to take forward the review of the Funding Formula. The Project Brief is attached at Appendix 1. The project aims to develop a new funding formula which is:

- predictable
- stable
- responsive to changed circumstances
- transparent
- fair & equitable
- able to support further delegation

2.03 A key element of the revised funding formula will be to support further delegation to schools in line with national funding reviews which have set an expectation that authorities will work to secure 80% delegation by 2012 and 85% delegation within the next 2 years. Renewed expectations of school responsibilities and outcomes will be set out in a revised Scheme for Financing Schools and the partnership agreements with schools.

2.04 The review will ensure that formula development proposals maintain the focus on education and learning and will aim to support schools in:

- raising achievement and attainment for all pupils;
- narrowing the attainment gap experienced by children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- securing early intervention to meet the special and additional educational needs of particular pupils; and
- working together and with other agencies for the benefit of children and young people in their community both within and outside schools.

2.05 To date a Project Board and three Project Sub-groups have been established represented each of the educational phases. The Terms of Reference for the Project Board are shown at Appendix 2. The Project Sub-groups met during the summer term to develop formula proposals across the primary, secondary and specialist phases. The Sub-groups have conducted:

- a review of the current formula;
- researched potential approaches and identified good practice;
- identified the cost drivers;
- established the financial principles; and
- considered the policy objectives that the formula should support.

2.06 Over the Summer period project officers have been pulling together the outcomes of these preliminary investigations into a series of formula proposals. These proposals will be shared with the project sub-groups, Schools Budget Forum and Heads Federations during September. Following this, recommendations will be brought forward to the Project Board for consideration. Subject to the approval of the Project Board wider consultation with Governors, Schools and Unions will follow.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The Authority believes that the funding formula review will provide a modern and equitable basis for funding schools to meet the needs of children and young people in Flintshire. However, any redistribution of funds as a consequence of the formula may result in 'winners and losers'. To maintain stability during the implementation of a new formula there will need to be an agreed transitional policy in place.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 Members are asked to consider the Schools Funding Formula project brief and to note the progress of the Schools Funding Formula

Review.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 At this stage the financial implications to the Authority are not quantifiable. The basis of the project is that the formula will allocate funds to schools within the existing envelope of resources available. However, it is possible that the revised formula may highlight a general under-funding of schools budgets.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 A key aspect of the formula review is to establish a funding proxy for the impact of deprivation on educational attainment.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 The funding formula contains an element for energy costs in schools. Energy usage in schools is a key contributor the Authority's carbon footprint. There will be consideration as to how the funding formula can encourage schools to become energy efficient.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The funding formula should ensure equal access and quality of education for children across the County.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 If the funding formula results in a redistribution across schools this could result in staff redundancy or redeployment.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Consultation with members, teachers, governors and unions.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 There has been consultation on the project brief with Flintshire Governors Association, Trade Unions, Headteachers, and Flintshire Schools Budget Forum.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1: Schools Funding Formula Project Brief

12.02 Appendix 2: Project Board Terms of Reference

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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