

Oxfordshire County Council
Schools Forum – 7 February 2018
Schools Forum Budget for 2017-18

For Information and Decision

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To advise the Schools Forum of the budget for 2017-18, expenditure to date and projected carry forward at year end.

2. Recommendations/Actions/Decisions for Schools Forum

Schools Forum is asked to:

- 2.1 Note this report.
- 2.2 Refer the possible use or uses of accumulated surplus balance on the School Forum's account to the next Schools & High Needs Sub-committee meeting for consideration
- 2.3 Forum members are asked to submit for payment all travel and expenses claims as soon as possible.

3 Expenditure to 31 January 2018

3.1 The table below sets out the Schools Forum budget for 2017-18 and expenditure that has been incurred. It is, however, expected based on available information and few remaining meetings to be held that the budget will spend as shown. An underspend of £16,700 is projected for the financial year 2017-18.

	Budget £	Actual £	Commitments to year end £	Notes
Supply Cover	13,730		4,000	Supply cover for headteacher attendance [based on up to 7 Forum, 12 Working Group and 2 training meetings assuming ½ day attendance including contingency days. Daily rate £285].
Members expenses	4,700		300	Travel, child minding and incidental expenses for Forum members.
Supporting the Schools Forum	4,000	3,598	700	Includes clerking costs [basis 2 days per month].
Meeting expenses	3,000	3,461	750	Venue and catering costs [based on number of meetings and two ½ day training sessions].
Conferences	2,100		150	Attendance fees [assumed up to 8 conference days].
Training provision	2,000			Expenses relating to the training

	Budget £	Actual £	Commitments to year end £	Notes
				need of Forum members.
Consultancy	1,000			Specific project work undertaken by outside agency.
Contingency	200	1,000		Forum elections, F40 subscription contribution
DSG Income	30,730cr	25,608cr	5,122cr	
Total Budget for 2017-18	0	17,549cr	778	
Underspend from 2016-17	106,522cr			
TOTAL	106,522cr	17,549cr	778	
Projected Carry Forward	129,193cr			

- 3.2 The budget plan for 2017-18 has been calculated to reflect the number of Forum and Sub-committee meetings expected in the financial year. No inflation has been anticipated but both teaching and non-teaching staff a due a pay award in 2017-18. Any resulting increases in attendance and administrative costs will be borne by the Forum's budget. This is consistent with general schools funding.
- 3.3 Under the funding arrangements put in place from 1 April 2013 the Schools Forum budget is funded mainly from the Dedicated Schools Grant's (DSG) Schools Block (with small contributions from both the Early Years and High Needs Blocks)¹. Schools Forum budget falls under the Statutory function commitments category of funding items that the local authority, with Schools Forum approval can retain, however, there has been and continues to be no opportunity to increase the budget provision as the allocation is limited to the budget level for 2012-13 of £30,730 (though it is possible to reduce the budget provision, but any downward adjustment would be permanent).
- 3.4 The underspend from 2016-17 of £106,522 has, with prior agreement of Schools Forum been carried forward to provide the opportunity to commission appropriate specific works. The underspend is subject to audit.
- 3.5 The distribution of the budget will be reviewed annually, though as stated in paragraph 3.3 above, future year budgets cannot be increased.

¹ For 2017-18 the majority of funding within the Schools Block is delegated to schools. There are three categories of exception: (1) Where schools agree to pool funding for a service to be provided centrally (de-delegation); (2) Historic commitments and (3) Statutory functions commitments.

- 3.6 Further guidance on the use of this budget is given in Annex 1. The Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2010 require that “the authority must reimburse all reasonable expenses of members in connection with their attendance at meetings of the forum and charge expenses to the schools budget”. The guidance has been amended to provide clarification (amendments and additions are underlined). The Schools Forum Chair remains arbitrator of any disputed claim.

4. Year-end 2017-18

- 4.1 At present the Schools Forum account is predicted to show an underspend in excess of £129,000². This represents the equivalent of four years’ annual allocation. Forum has continued to carry forward their underspend to allow it the opportunity to commission, where appropriate, specific work, particularly work anticipated in respect of the review of Dedicated Schools Grant allocation methodology, the pending introduction of the national funding formula and their associated consultations and examination and addressing High Needs priorities and pressures. Much of these works are now complete or well advanced and the need to retain this high level of underspend may need to be reviewed. Given the constraint noted at paragraph 3.3. above it is therefore recommended that Schools Forum refer the possible use or used of accumulated surplus balance to the next Schools & High Needs Sub-committee meeting for consideration.
- 4.2 As this is the last full meeting of Schools Forum for the financial year 2017-18, Forum members are asked to submit their travel and other expenses claims to the clerk as soon as possible.

5. Contact Details of Lead Officers/Authors

If you have any queries or comments in advance of the Schools Forum meeting about this report, please contact:

Nick Baggett, Education Finance Manager
Telephone Number: 07584174692
Email Address: nick.baggett@oxfordshire.gov.uk

² For information 82% of maintained schools are projecting ending the financial with cash revenue balances below this amount.

Schools Forum Expenses

This statement covers expenses incurred by members of the Schools' Forum and, where appropriate, individuals who may be co-opted onto the Forum, or any Sub-Committee set up by the Forum.

Travel: expenses for members of the Forum will mirror that for employees of the County Council. The current approved rates are as follows:

Car - 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles, reducing to 25 pence per mile over 10,000 miles

Motorcycles - 24 pence per mile.

Bicycles - 20 pence per mile.

Car parking fees will be reimbursed.

Bus, train and other public transport fares will be reimbursed.

Actual cost of parking, with proof of parking fee paid, will be met.

Subsistence (overnight accommodation) will not be paid unless Forum member is attending an out-county meeting or conference on behalf of the Forum.

Supply cover costs: The cost of supply cover will be reimbursed to the school for attendance at Forum meetings, of nursery, primary, secondary and special headteachers. The reimbursement rate will be that as used by the Teaching Staff Absence Insurance Scheme (based on the daily rate). Reimbursement will be based on attendance listing for each meeting and transfer made to school at year-end.

Loss of earnings: An allowance will be paid. Entitlement to this allowance is subject to the respective member incurring any loss of earnings or any individual expenses.

Observers will look to their nominating body for reimbursement of any expenses, which will not be rechargeable to the Forum.

Child care arrangements: Care costs will be reimbursed subject to a maximum of £10.00 per hour per dependant.

Elderly or dependant relatives care arrangements: Care costs will be reimbursed subject to a maximum of £10.00 per hour per dependant.

Other costs: Members may claim reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred when carrying out their duties, including telephone charges, photocopying, stationery, subsistence, printing costs (3 pence per sheet) and any other justifiable expenses.

Claims should be submitted to the Schools Forum Clerk.

The Schools Forum Chair will arbitrate any disputed claim.