

Full Council

18 July 2017



Report of: Service Director, Education & Skills

Title: Update Report on Bristol Education Funding

Ward: Citywide

Member Presenting Report: Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills

Recommendation

To note this update.

Summary

This report summarises the actions taken since December 2016 by the Mayor and Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills in relation to the Full Council motion on education funding.

The significant issues in the report are:

The Mayor and Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills have taken a number of actions to lobby Government on Bristol education funding and officers have been seeking to support schools in managing their budgets.



Policy

1. Not applicable

Consultation

2. **Internal**
Not applicable
3. **External**
Not applicable

Context

4.
 - 4.1. The Council passed a motion on education funding at the Full Council meeting in December 2016. (See Appendix A)
 - 4.2. The Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills established a cross-party Member task & finish group to respond to the National Consultation on the Fair Funding Formula. A collective response was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE received a very high response rate to this national consultation is currently in the process of reviewing the responses.
 - 4.3. The Bristol Schools Forum also submitted a response to the consultation and all schools were encouraged to respond too.
 - 4.4. A meeting with the Education Minister, Nick Gibb MP, was secured by the Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills and she was joined by the Service Director, Education & Skills, at this meeting in February. The aim of the meeting was to lobby Government about education funding for Bristol both in terms of school budgets and also the High Needs funding for children with additional needs.
 - 4.5. At the May Strategic Briefing for Governors and Headteachers, the Service Director, Education & Skills provided an overview of education funding and highlighted advice and guidance to support schools in managing their budgets.
 - 4.6. The Mayor and Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills invited Headteachers of Bristol schools to meet with them on June 16th to discuss the challenges of education funding and to explore ways in which the City could support education further. Approximately, 60 school leaders attended this meeting.
 - 4.7. Following the above meeting, the Cabinet Lead has written to the Secretary of State for Education seeking clarification on the Government's Manifesto statements regarding school budgets. This letter was sent in June and the Cabinet member is awaiting a response.
 - 4.8. The Mayor has committed to working with Core City Leaders to lobby Government on funding for Cities, including the importance of education funding.
 - 4.9. The Schools Forum has received a report on 11th July summarising the overall budget position for Local Authority Maintained Schools. In summary this evidences that the net surplus at the end of the 2016/17 financial year was £4.9m Compared to £10.2m at the end of the 2014/15 financial year. The reports are available at <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/resources-professionals/schools-forum-papers-and-minutes>

Proposal

5. The Mayor and Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills continue to promote education in Bristol and to lobby for appropriate funding for Bristol schools and the Local Authority.

Other Options Considered

6. Not applicable

Risk Assessment

7. Not applicable

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 8a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.
- 8b) Constraints on school budgets is likely to impact on the additional support provided to disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people. This could, for example, mean that there are less support staff and fewer opportunities for curriculum enrichment. These reductions could have a disproportionate impact on children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or with additional needs.

Legal and Resource Implications**Legal**

None sought

Financial**(a) Revenue**

Schools face challenging financial circumstances. The reports to Schools Forum on 11th July 2017 indicate that levels of individual school balances had reduced to £5m at the end of March 2017, from £10m the year before. The position on the Dedicated Schools Grant showed a deficit of £1.6m at the end of March 2017, forecast to rise to £6m by the end of March 2018. Pressures are particularly acute in the High Needs Budget, which provides funding for special schools, alternative learning provision and specialist support for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream settings. The Authority is working with Schools Forum to develop a plan to get to a sustainable financial position.

(b) Capital

Not applicable

(Financial advice provided by David Tully, Interim Finance Business Partner)**Land**

Not applicable

Personnel

Not applicable

Appendices:

Full Council Motion, December 2016

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**Background Papers:**

None

APPENDIX A: Full Council Motion – December 2016

Council views with great concern the impending cuts in funding to Bristol schools' budgets. Over the last 15 years, Bristol schools have dramatically improved, being previously judged one of the worst services it is now performing far better than equivalent areas. Huge effort, over a prolonged period, with all party support, has produced a dramatic positive change and over the last few years the pupil premium has helped to reduce inequalities in results and improve funding in Bristol schools. The freezing of school budgets by the new government has presented challenges to schools but this is added to dramatically by the huge threat to school grants at present. Along with most core cities, Bristol has been funded above the national average of all local authorities. However a move to a single national funding formula is likely to result in a substantial reduction in funding for Bristol schools. The Council notes the previous coalition Government and the current Government have not increased the national allocation to the Schools Block. With pressure from staff increments and other inflationary pressures, this freeze on income represents a real terms cut for our schools. Council also notes with concern the pressure on the SEN budget, that large cuts to SEN funding continue to be implemented to cope with increasing demand and underfunding by Westminster. We further note Bristol, along with most local authorities, is experiencing pressure on its High Needs block spending. As a result, we note the Schools Forum has agreed to reduce the funding allocated for individual top up applications. This represents an additional cut in income for most schools in Bristol. In addition we note the Council has historically received an Education Services Grant to fund the Council's education duties. The Government has announced that this Grant will be ended. In 2017/18 the Grant level will reduce significantly and be taken from the Dedicated Schools Grant which will further reduce the funding available for per-pupil formula.

The Council Resolves to:

Calls on the Mayor and the Cabinet member for Education and Skills to meet with Government Cabinet Members to argue that funding for Bristol schools is increased to take into account inflationary pressures and levels of deprivation, and is protected in the proposed revisions to the National Formula.

Calls on the Mayor and the Cabinet member for Education and Skills to join with other core cities to lobby for a more realistic level of funding for students with High Needs, based on their explicit needs.

Calls on the Mayor and Cabinet member to report back with a written report to Full Council within 4 months detailing the results of any talks, and the impact of any changes on Bristol's schools.