

**SCHOOLS FORUM  
25 FEBRUARY 2010  
4.30 - 5.45 PM**



**Present:**

Mr George Clement (Chairman), Mr G S Anderson (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Beadsley, Messrs Cunningham, Francis, Glasson, Grainger, Reading and Throssell, and Ms Harbut

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Messrs Elsey, Fries, Menon and Dempsey, and Councillor Mrs Shillcock

**19. Declarations of Interest**

Gordon Anderson declared an interest in the item concerning Jennett's Park School where he was a member of the temporary governing body. Cllr Mrs Beadsley declared an interest in Easthampstead Park School. Both agreed not to enter into discussion on the item concerning the Schools Budget proposals.

**20. Minutes and Matters Arising**

There were two amendments to be made to the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January: Gordon Anderson, Vice-Chairman, was missing from the list of those present, and Paul Clark had been listed with the wrong surname.

Following these amendments, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Under Matters Arising, Ed Glasson asked that the meeting about exclusion be held sooner rather than later, and it was agreed that this should take place after September 2010.

**21. Audit Commission School Survey 2009 and Services to Schools Survey 2009**

Sue Curbishley, Senior Performance Analyst, introduced the report on the Audit Commission School Survey and Services to Schools Survey, which had been circulated. She told the meeting that the surveys looked at perceptions of the Council and partnership services to schools. The data on the Audit Commission School Survey were unfortunately not comparable with the previous year's data as the Audit Commission had changed the scale from five ratings to four. Bracknell Forest was in the highest quartile for 47 out of 63 questions. For the "Stay Safe" question, Bracknell Forest received the highest rating in England. Overall there were no causes for concern.

The online survey about the 28 services to schools available from the Council had been run in Summer 2009, and it was planned to repeat this every three years in the future. Again, views of schools indicated a high degree of satisfaction on the services provided.

The Chief Officer: Performance and Resources told the meeting that the surveys presented positive and pleasing views of Bracknell Forest, but that there was work to be done.

The Chairman thanked Ms Curbishley, and asked for questions. Mr Reading asked about question 2.2 – safeguarding and was told that there had been an issue, but this had been dealt with satisfactorily by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. There had been a perceived lack of direction regarding safeguarding when the new Ofsted had been put in place, but this had now been clarified.

Ed Glasson thanked Ms Curbishley for her report, and agreed that this was very good news. He told the Forum that the change in scale was frustrating, but that the new scale made sense. He commented on the standard deviation, which was very high in places, and queried the response to 5.4, suggesting that this might be because of a lack of data. He also asked about school meals, and was told that the response in the report was about a perception of school meals, and not all schools were using Caterhouse. When asked when there were better school meals providers, Ms Curbishley told the Forum that Caterhouse worked hard to encourage the take up of school meals.

In response to a question about the level of response to the survey, Ms Curbishley told the Forum that just under half had responded. Additional data is appended to these minutes.

The Chairman summed up by saying that whichever way the survey measured Bracknell Forest Council, it was doing very well according to the Audit Commission.

The Forum **AGREED**:

1. That the Schools Forum **NOTED** the summary results from both the 2009 Audit Commission School Survey and the 'Services to Schools 2009 Survey';
2. That the Schools Forum **NOTED** that, as indicated last year, the 2009 Audit Commission School Survey had changed considerably. Most notably the rating scale had been reversed and now reflected Ofsted ratings as follows:
  - i. Excellent (4)
  - ii. Good (3)
  - iii. Adequate (2)
  - iv. Poor (1)
3. The Forum **NOTED** that the 2009 survey was shorter and now reflected 'local services' in addition to specific council services. In 2009 no questions were included about our buyback services in the Audit Commission Survey but conducted a separate online survey of all 'Services to Schools' in-house.

## 22. **2010-2011 Standards Fund and other allocations to schools for school improvement**

Bob Welch, Chief Advisor: Learning and Achievement presented the report which had been circulated. He explained to the Forum that this was part of a three-year cycle; major changes had been made to the way allocations were made two years ago, and this was the final year of a three-year period.

The report and recommendations were brought to the Forum under statutory regulations for their views. The circulated report gave indications of how funds were allocated and devolved to schools. Attention of the Forum members was drawn to the School Development Grant which gave schools more flexibility to support their own priorities. There was also a Leadership Incentive Grant element, for which two Bracknell Forest schools initially qualified, but this funding was now being allocated to all schools. The School Meals grant was given to promote take up for school meals.

The appendices to the reports gave details of the grants. Attention was drawn to the large increase in Early Years funding, due to a requirement for 25% of the most disadvantaged three and four year olds to access 15 hours of free nursery education over 38 weeks of the year.

The Chairman thanked Mr Welch for the report, and invited questions. Tony Reading asked whether “low attainers” at 5.8 in the report were those who displayed low attainment in any of the reading/writing/mathematics areas, or in all, and was told that it was for any of these

Following discussion, the Forum **AGREED**:

- i. To **NOTE** the basis of grant allocations to schools as set out in Part (i) of Appendix A.
- ii. To **NOTE** the grants available to the LA to support schools as set out in Part (ii) of Appendix A.
- iii. To **NOTE** that as previously agreed, the Leadership Incentive Grant element of the School Development Grant relating to funding for named schools would be set at 33% of the 2008-09 level in 2010-11 (paragraph 5.13).
- iv. To **SUPPORT** the proposal that 50% of any unallocated School Development Grant be distributed to schools through an equal percentage increase to 2009-10 levels of per pupil funding and the remaining 50% by an equal amount for each pupil eligible for a free school meal (paragraph 5.15).
- v. To **NOTE** that as previously agreed, the School Lunch Grant would be allocated to schools increasing meals take up, a fixed allocation to each school and an amount per meal served (paragraph 5.16).
- vi. To **NOTE** the support to School Improvement budget and budget to support schools in financial difficulty (paragraphs 5.19 and 5.20).

## 23. **Local Authority Proposals for the 2010-2011 Schools Budget**

The Head of Finance, Performance and Resources introduced the report on local authority proposals for the 2010-2011 Schools Budget. He told the Forum that these were the final budget proposals, and that any recommendations from the Forum would go to the Executive Member for Education for final decisions.

There had been some changes to the budget proposals since the Forum meeting in January to reflect more up to date data. The estimated number of pupils had increased by 27 for the next school year increasing grant income through the DSG by £136,000. The changes to budget proposals related to funding the £60,000 overspend from 2009-10, budget allocations based on pupil numbers had reduced by £126,000 while budget allocations based on non-pupil numbers had increased by £37,000 and Early Years provisions reduced by £18,000. The subsidy for primary

school meals contract was reduced by £10,000 to reflect increased meal take-up, an additional £2,000 had been allocated to the start up costs for new primary school planned Jennett's Park school, and support for statemented children, with an increase of three pupils, showed a cost increase of £9,000.

A new item had been added to the budget - £3,000 for the cost of secondary school appeals in voluntary aided schools. SEN costs for out of borough placements were now £46,000 higher, and an increase in the school contingency fund of £78,000 was also proposed. There was also a new item of additional rental income amounting to £5,000.

This left £60,000 unallocated for distribution to schools, and it was proposed that £20,000 of this be used to support reactive school building maintenance, and £40,000 through a budget strategy basis of 85% by pupil numbers and 15% as an equal lump sum amount per school.

The Head of Finance, Performance and Resources closed his presentation by telling the Forum that in the future there would be a much tougher financial environment in education and that a number of future cost pressures were emerging .

Following discussion, the Forum **AGREED**

1. That the Schools Forum **RECOMMEND** to the Executive Member for Education that the 2010-11 Schools Budget include:
  - i. the unavoidable budget pressures as set out in the shaded column of Annex B calculated at £2.051m;
  - ii. the economies and new budget developments as set out in the shaded column of Annex C calculated at £0.980m, which included the new proposal to allocate £0.020m to schools in respect of reactive maintenance and the remaining £0.040m balance of unallocated funds to schools, 85% based on pupil numbers and 15% via a fixed lump sum amount (paragraph 5.24);
  - iii. funding secondary schools for deprivation through weighted pupil eligibility to free school meals reverts to using the census data available at the January prior to the commencement of the relevant financial year (paragraph 5.17);
  - iv. that the fee payable to Early Years providers of the free entitlement to education and childcare is increased by 3.6% at April 2010, equivalent to the average increase in per pupil funding for statutory aged pupils in maintained schools (paragraph 5.22);
2. That the Schools Forum **AGREED** the following decisions that it was solely responsible for:
  - i. that the school specific contingency for 2010-11 be set at £0.308m and that a new specific contingency of £0.145m be set aside for providers of early years education and childcare (paragraph 5.26 (1), Table 4);
  - ii. That as a result of these budget proposals, the Central Expenditure Limit be exceeded by £0.375m (paragraph 5.26 (2));
  - iii. That the Minimum Funding Guarantee payment due to Brakenhale Secondary School be fully removed by the end of the 2012-13 financial

year with the resultant savings redistributed within the Schools Budget (paragraph 5.26 (3));

- iv. That £0.036m be added to the combined services budget to support Education Health Partnerships and families subject to domestic abuse (paragraph 5.26 (4)).

- 3. That the Schools Forum **NOTED** the resultant budget for each service as set out in Annex D.

24. **Any Other Business**

The Chairman reported that Mr Orrie Dempsey had resigned from the Schools Forum due to altered employment. Democratic Services will seek a replacement for him.

**New Director of Children, Young People and Learning**

The Forum was told that the new Director of Children, Young People and Learning at Bracknell Forest Council would be Dr Janette Karklins, who would be taking up her post on 15 March. It was hoped that she would come to a future meeting of the Schools Forum. An announcement had appeared on the Bracknell Forest Website.

25. **Date of Next Meeting**

The meeting of the Schools Forum scheduled for 29 April has been cancelled. Dates for Schools Forum meetings in the next municipal year will be circulated.

**CHAIRMAN**