

**SCHOOLS FORUM
14 JULY 2011
4.30 - 5.50 PM**



Present:

Schools Members

Maureen Beadsley, Secondary School Governor
Trisha Donkin, Primary School Representative
Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
Ed Glasson, Primary School Governor
Louise Lovegrove, Primary School Representative
John McNab, Secondary School Governor
Joanna Quinn, Primary School Representative
Tony Reading, Primary School Governor
Paul Salter, Secondary School Representative
Anne Shillcock, Special Education Representative
John Throssell, Primary School Governor
Kathy Winrow, Secondary School Representative

Non-Schools Members:

George Clement, Union Representative (Chairman)

Also Present:

Paul Clark, Bracknell Forest Council
David Eagle, Bracknell Forest Council
Emma Silverton, Bracknell Forest Council
Chris Taylor, Bracknell Forest Council
Bob Welch, Bracknell Forest Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Gordon Anderson, Diocese Representative (Vice-Chairman)
Andrew Fletcher, Secondary School Representative
Gill Harbut, Primary School Representative
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative

The Chairman Welcomed Louise Lovegrove to her first meeting of the Forum as a Primary School Governor Representative.

72. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

Minute 67: Consultation with schools on planned maintenance was still underway and therefore an update would be presented to the Forum when available. In addition, the Council was currently out to tender for new Condition of Works Surveys for all schools in Bracknell Forest.

73. Membership of the Schools Forum

The Forum received a report from Emma Silverton, Democratic Services Officer, regarding a change to the membership of the Schools Forum.

Nominations were recently sought to fill three vacancies for primary school governor representatives on the Forum following the end of the terms of office for two members, and the resignation of a third member of the Forum.

Two application forms had been received from Tony Reading, who continued to be a Governor at Sandy Lane Primary School and Louise Lovegrove, who was a Governor at Cranbourne Primary School.

There were insufficient nominations to fill all three vacancies therefore, in accordance with the Forum's Constitution and the Regulations, the Executive Member for Education and Director of Children, Young People & Learning in consultation with the Chairman of the Forum, would appoint to the remaining vacancy on behalf of the authority.

The Forum noted that Mr Reading and Ms Lovegrove be appointed to the Schools Forum for a period of three years until 31 August 2014.

74. Review of Forum's Constitution

The Forum received a report which sought endorsement of an amendment to the Forum's Constitution which was intended to bring it into line with the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2010 following the order for Ranelagh School to become an academy.

From August 2011, Ranelagh School was expected to become an academy. The Schools Forums Regulations came into force on 1 April 2010 and stipulated there must be at least one academy member on a Schools Forum where there were academies in the local authority's area.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Constitution of the Bracknell Forest Schools Forum be amended to add an academy representative to the schools representatives;
- b) a review of the schools membership be undertaken by officers to ensure that the allocation of seats on the Forum was broadly proportionate to the ratio of pupils.

75. Services to Schools: School Meals

Chris Taylor, Head of Property & Admissions, presented a report which advised the Schools Forum on arrangements for the re-tendering of the schools meals contract. The current schools meals contract with ISS Education was due to end on 31 July 2012. A working group had been established to review the tendering procedure to inform the renewal of the contract.

28 primary schools and 1 secondary school in Bracknell Forest had signed up to the school meals catering contract which was arranged by the Council at a time of little interest from contractors in providing schools meals which meant that the initial terms of the contract were costly to schools. This has been re-negotiated in the final year of

the contract to terms that are much more financially advantageous to schools with a relatively small subsidy to pay, estimated at £78,000..

A new feature of the proposed contract would be a wrist band ordering system which would help to ensure children received the meal they had ordered and would reduce waste. This service had been previously trialled in Bracknell Forest schools and had proved successful. It was noted that monitoring would be needed to ensure the allocating of meals and wristbands did not impact adversely on school staff time.

The Forum noted that Primary School meal uptake had increased to 30.7% in 2009/10 compared to 28.5% in the previous year, however was still below the national average of 44.1%. Work was being undertaken by officers to increase the level of school meal uptake.

It was also confirmed that there may be an increase in the cost of school meals to parents however, affordability would be carefully considered and would be consistent with neighbouring authorities.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the reasons for the re-tendering of the school meals contract be noted;
- b) the proposal to re-tender the school meals contract be agreed.

76. Services to schools: School Cleaning

The Forum received a report from Chris Taylor, Head of Property & Admissions, which gave details of the arrangements for the re-tendering of the corporate cleaning contract in which schools participated.

Currently a total of three primary and seven secondary schools participated in the corporate cleaning of civic offices and other council sites. The current contract with KGB Cleaning was due to end on 31 October 2011. A working group had been established to review the tendering process and consider future options with schools being consulted during the first half of the autumn term. A present 20 schools had expressed an interest in the re-tendering of the corporate cleaning contract.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the reasons for the re-tendering of the corporate cleaning contract be noted;
- b) the proposal to participate in the re-tender of the corporate cleaning contract to allow continued school involvement be agreed.

77. The Academy programme and implications for Bracknell Forest

Bob Welch: Chief Adviser: Learning and Achievement, presented the report which outlined the coalition government's programme for schools to become academies including the financial implications and potential impact on services provided by the Council.

An Academy was a state funded independent school which was exempt from local authority control. There were two forms of Academies; Sponsored Academies which replaced schools that had been deemed to be unsuccessful and Converter Academies which were successful schools that chose to change to the status of an Academy.

Academies had freedoms in a number of areas including; staff pay and conditions, the curriculum, school improvement, infant class size, length of term and school day and greater freedom on how they used their budget.

Academies would still be able to purchase services from the Council however, it was noted that should an academy chose not to do so and the number of academies increased then the buy-back levels would have a direct and immediate effect on services available from the Council.

The LA would retain residual statutory functions should a school become an academy such as provision of schools places, SEN and children out of school.

It was noted that in Bracknell Forest the number of schools choosing to convert their status was not as high as in other areas with only one school converting at present. Ranelagh VA secondary school had received consent from the Secretary of State to become an Academy and would do so at the end of July 2011.

Ranelagh School had felt that becoming a Converter Academy was the right choice for the school and would protect the church school ethos; it was not in any way related to dissatisfaction with the service received from the Council. As a Voluntary aided school many of the provisions needed to for a school to become an academy were already in place.

Arising from members' questions and comments the follow points were noted:

- The responsibility of school governors would increase with governors having to approach the role differently. Ultimately the Academies Trust were responsible for the performance of the school however more emphasis would be placed on the role of the school governor.
- Concern was expressed that the need for governors with high skill levels could prevent a broad spectrum of people from the community becoming governors.
- There was no clear research as yet, showing the effect of academies on neighbouring schools or out comes for education and finances.
- There was a general feeling of concern from teachers unions across parts of the country. In particular, disquiet was expressed to the fact that academies do not have to abide by the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document. This, however, is not the case with Ranelagh.

Paul Clark, Head of Departmental Finance, gave a presentation in respect of financial implications for Bracknell Forest in relation to academies which included funding provided to an academy and funding removed from local authorities.

Academies would receive a basic one-off conversion grant of £25,000 to help manage the cost of the conversion process. The normal individual school budget share would be received through the home local authorities Funding Formula for school, with some potential adjustments and top-up funding would be added to meet certain costs currently paid for from local authority budgets.

The funding given to an academy was not the same amount as taken from the home LA. Whilst discussions were underway with the DfE on various areas of the transfer process, initial indications are that funding for Education in Bracknell Forest would be reduced by between £230,000 and £165,000.

Concern was expressed by some members of the Forum that funding for education could be lost, particularly if more schools chose to become academies. It was noted that at present there was only certainty for the current budget but that DfE could refine the funding formula to improve the situation.

The Forum agreed that The Academy Programme and Implications for Bracknell Forest report be noted.

78. **2010-11 School Balances**

Paul Clark, Head of Departmental Finance, gave an update on the level of balances held by schools as at 31 March 2011 with a comparison to those held in 2009/10.

Statutory Regulations required that each school's year end balance of revenue budget be held as an earmarked amount and made available for use in the next financial year.

It was reported that aggregate surplus balances had increased to £3.747m which was an increase of 44.5%. Nine schools had been assessed as having a significant surplus balance, compared to three at the end of 2009/10. On average, at 5.7% of total budget, overall reserves are considered to be at a more than adequate level required for working balances and schools should be considering whether sufficient funds are being spent to support school improvement.

It was noted that whilst Capital Funding balances had reduced during the year, this mainly related to contributions to the rebuild at Garth Hill College, and that overall, current balances of £1.534m were similar to amounts held over the preceding 3 years. It was also confirmed that Capital Funding must be spent on eligible expenditure within three years and one term of receipt or be returned to the DfE.

The Schools Forum **NOTED** that:

- a) the level of aggregate surplus revenue balances as at 31 March 2011 totalled £3.747m, an increase of £1.154m (44.5%) from the previous year (paragraph 5.4 (1));
- b) at 5.7% of annual income, average surplus balances were in excess of the amount required for working balances and that more funds could have been spent by schools on their key priorities (paragraph 5.4 (3));
- c) significant surplus revenue balances totalled £0.715m, an increase of £0.479m (203%) from the previous year (paragraph 5.8);
- d) £1.534m of Devolved Formula Capital grant remained unspent at 31 March 2011, a decrease of £0.569m (27.1%) from the previous year (paragraph 5.12 (1));
- e) £0.149m of Devolved Formula Capital grant must be spent by schools by 31 August 2011, or returned to the DfE (paragraph 5.12 (4)).

79. **2010-11 provisional outturn on the Schools Budget**

The Forum considered a report which informed members on the provisional outturn on the 2010-11 Schools Budget.

It was reported that provisional final accounts indicated expenditure in the Schools Budget of £67.650m, an under spend of £1.549m. It was noted that this figure was subject to change, pending external audit.

Main changes from the approved budget plan included:

- Delegated school budgets – an under spend of £1.160m
- SEN provisions and support services – an under spend of £0.300m
- Education out of school – an over spend of £0.066m
- Pupil behaviour – an under spend of £0.049m
- School staff absence and other items – an over spend of £0.258m
- Combined Service Budgets – an under spend of £0.099m
- Standards Fund LEA Managed – an over spend of £0.061m
- DSG – £0.328m additional income
- Balance from 2009-10 – an over spend of £0.016m

NOTED that:

- a) the outturn expenditure for 2010-11, subject to audit, of £67.560m, which represented an under spend of £1.549m compared to the approved budget (paragraph 5.2);
- b) the current balances within the Schools Budget and other specific earmarked reserves (Table 1).

80. DfE consultation on school funding reforms

The Forum noted an information report presented by Paul Clark, Head of Departmental Finance, which updated members of the Forum on the initial proposals from the government on school funding reform, which may be introduced from 2012-13.

On 13 April, the Government launched two parallel, six-week consultations on school funding: 'School funding reform - Rationale and Principles'; and 'Academies pre-16 funding – Options for the 2012/13 academic year'.

The Forum noted that the implications of the changes proposed in the consultations were potentially significant, such as any potential shift of resources between (and within) the maintained and other sectors, or between local authorities with different characteristics.

The LA had not made a formal response to the initial consultation and awaited details from the second consultation which was expected to include specific proposals for change. Due to the delay in publication of the second consultation, there are doubts that significant changes can now be implemented for the start of 2012-13 financial year.

81. Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Schools Forum was scheduled for Thursday 15 September 2011 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber, Easthampstead House.

Future meetings:

- Thursday 13 October 2011

- Thursday 8 December 2011
- Thursday 9 February 2012

CHAIRMAN