

**SCHOOLS FORUM
19 JULY 2012
4.30 - 5.45 PM**



Present:

Schools Members

Louise Lovegrove, Primary School Representative
John McNab, Secondary School Governor
Tony Reading, Primary School Governor
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative
Anne Shillcock, Special Education Representative
John Throssell, Primary School Governor (Vice-Chairman)
Kathy Winrow, Secondary School Representative

Non-Schools Members:

George Clement, Union Representative (Chairman)

Also Present:

Paul Clark, Bracknell Forest Council
Amanda Roden, Bracknell Forest Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Maureen Beadsley, Secondary School Governor
Liz Cole, Primary School Representative
Andrew Fletcher, Secondary School Representative
Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
Gill Harbut, Primary School Representative
Joanna Quinn, Primary School Representative
Paul Salter, Secondary School Representative

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. Membership of the Schools Forum

The Forum received a report regarding a change to the membership of the Forum.

Nominations were recently sought to fill two vacancies for primary school governor representatives and one vacancy for a secondary school governor representative on the Forum following the end of the terms of office for Kelvin Menon, John Throssell and Mrs Maureen Beadsley.

Three application forms were received; from John Throssell, who continued to be a governor at Crown Wood Primary School; Edward Essery, who was a governor at Wildmoor Heath Primary School, and Margaret Saner, who was a governor at Garth Hill College.

In accordance with the Forum's Constitution and as the nominations were uncontested Mr Throssell, Mr Essery and Ms Saner were duly appointed to fill the vacancies.

The Forum noted that Mr Throssell, Mr Essery and Ms Saner would be appointed to the Forum for a period of one year until 31 August 2013.

The Forum were also updated on further changes to its membership. Ed Glasson had resigned as a governor of Meadow Vale primary school and therefore would no longer be a member of the Forum. As nominations had already been sought for the 2012-2013 term of office, the Director of Children, Young People and Learning nominated Sue Barber, governor at Winkfield St Mary's school to fill the vacancy for one year until 31 August 2013. Ms Barber also worked in the Education IT department at Bracknell Forest Council but the Forum's Constitution stated that only officers who had a strategic resource management role in the authority were ineligible from being a member of the Forum.

Due to changes in the Schools Forum regulations 2010 and other funding changes, the Education Funding Agency proposed to include Pupil Referral Units as a separate group among Schools Forum members to reflect their receipt of delegated budgets from April 2013. Consequently, the Chair of the Management Board at the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Bracknell, College Hall, had been contacted and a representative of the PRU was sought to fill this place on the Forum.

4. School Meals Service

The Forum received a report which advised members on the decision and outcome of awarding the school meals contract to ISS Education.

The procurement had been successful in that it had also resulted in a number of significant improvements and benefits for Bracknell Forest schools, including:

- The contractor had provided a signed compliance statement that all of the features of the specification would be met, and this would form part of the contract documentation.
- The new contract could be delivered at a zero subsidy by schools, which amounts to an overall saving of £90,000 per annum when compared to the current contract.
- Moreover the primary meal cost payable by schools from September 2012 would be £1.91, which was £0.09 below the current meal price charged to parents. Schools were consulted about how this surplus should be managed. 30 schools responded to the question with only two schools wishing to charge a lower price than the current £2.00 per meal price, the majority of schools opting to retain the surplus. Based on latest take-up figures, the aggregate surplus would amount to £32,000 per annum.
- There was also an additional 1% rebate back to schools as part of the contract. Based on latest take-up figures, the aggregate rebate payable to schools would amount to £7,000 per annum.
- The service from July 2012 would be to the higher Food for Life Silver Standard.

- ISS would provide and manage an on line pre-payment facility for parents
- Parents would also be able to pre-order on-line on behalf of their children
- Pupils would also pre-order their meals each morning via the interactive whiteboard
- There would be a new and more efficient financial management system
- ISS would work with schools to market the service to parents to increase meal take-up
- ISS would continue to be responsible for providing light equipment
- Heavy kitchen equipment continued to be a school responsibility but the Council would continue to offer a management service for repairs and replacements through the SLA.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

- NOTED** the outcome of the re-tendering of the school meals contract which had been awarded to ISS Education with improved financial and other benefits.
- NOTED** that following consultation, schools wished to continue to charge the current price per meal of £2.00.

5. **Update on progress towards meeting the requirements of DfE School Funding Reform**

The Forum received a report which updated the Schools Forum on progress made by the School Funding Review Group on reviewing the changes required from the Department for Education (DfE) proposals for school funding reform that were expected to be implemented from April 2013.

At this stage, changes were focused on local funding arrangements, with the national funding framework expected to be updated during the next Spending Review period 2015-2018.

There were two phases to the school funding reforms:

Phase 1 implementation from April 2013, changes mainly at local authority level arrangements;

Phase 2 implementation during the next Spending Review Cycle (between 2015 and 2018) with changes mainly at national level arrangements.

Both phases would result in a redistribution of funding, which for some areas and schools would be significant. Phase 1 (2013) would include local authority level changes, simplification and standardisation of the funding formula, creating a new national benchmark to which mainstream schools would be responsible for supporting SEN pupils (with a statement of special educational needs) from within their general budgets, and delegation of additional responsibilities and resources to schools.

Phase 2 would include National Level changes (from 2015) introducing a national funding formula to determine the level of resource for each local authority, a basic amount per pupil, additional per pupil funding for deprivation, additional funding to protect small schools, an adjustment for areas with higher labour costs, and possibly additional funding for pupils who had English as an additional language.

All local authorities needed to develop a local offer of SEN provision, to define the financial contribution mainstream providers would make for high needs pupils, to agree number of places to be funded in each specialist provider, to put in place

arrangements for PRUs to receive delegated budgets, to recalculate budgets for specialist providers, and to develop local commissioning arrangements.

A consultation with schools was under way at present to seek views on what changes should be made and responses were due back by 28 September 2012. This had been constructed from the views of members of the School Funding Review Group. The Forum would need to make final decisions on changes at its meeting on 18 October to ensure the DfE could be informed of the composition of the 2013-14 BF Funding Formula by the 31 October deadline.

A presentation was made that set out the key questions being asked and the recommended option for change as proposed by the School Funding Review Group, which all schools were being asked to support.

Evening briefings for governors had been arranged for 11 and 12 September as it was agreed that the issues were complex and significant.

Forum members on the School Funding Review Group were thanked for their contributions in relation to the framing of the consultation document.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

- i. **NOTED** the progress towards meeting the requirements of the funding reforms.

6. **2011-12 Provisional Outturn on the Schools Budget and other relevant matters**

The Forum received a report which informed members of the Schools Forum on the provisional outturn on the 2011-12 Schools Budget and to confirm the level of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to be received in 2012-13.

The provisional final accounts include net expenditure in the Schools Budget of £75.476 million, an under spend by £2.366 million. This comprised over spendings of £1.041 million against approved budget allocations and under spendings of £3.407 million. These figures remained subject to change, pending external audit, although no significant movement was anticipated.

In agreement with the Schools Forum, £0.9 million of the under spending had been placed in new reserves, although as a result of completing some early preparatory works, the SEN resource unit initiative spent £0.009 million, and the Turnaround project spent £0.012 million, the total now available in these reserves had reduced to £0.491 million and £0.088 million respectively. A further £1.7 million of the under spending related to delegated school budgets which were managed by governing bodies and required to be placed in earmarked reserves.

The Department for Education (DfE) had now confirmed the amount of DSG for 2012-13 at £76.487 million which is £0.387 million higher than the budget. In setting the budget £0.243 million was set aside as a contingency for in-year cost pressures. Furthermore, £0.086 million was set aside for the LACSEG deduction for academy schools. The remaining £0.058 million variance is accounted for by slight differences between DfE census numbers and BFC calculated equivalents. These were now subject to checking.

Proposals for the use of the additional DSG and unallocated Schools Budget balance would be brought to the Schools Forum in September with the first budget monitoring report for the year.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

- i. **NOTED** that the outturn expenditure for 2011-12, subject to audit, showed spend of £75.476 million which was £2.366 million less than the approved budget;
- ii. **NOTED** the current balances on specific earmarked reserves within the Schools Budget amount to £5.98 million;
- iii. **NOTED** that the DSG for 2012-13 had now been confirmed at £76.487 million, £0.387 million above the amount included in the budget and £0.058 million more than that originally anticipated.

7. **2011-12 School Balances and other related matters**

The Forum received a report which updated members of the Schools Forum on the level of balances held by schools as at 31 March 2012 and how these compared to the previous financial year.

At 6.7%, the aggregate level of school revenue balances was considered to be higher than required to cover normal in-year variances against the budget and suggested that more money could have been spent in-year on key priorities. Within the overall total, as should be expected, a small number of schools were running deficits in order to implement financial change over the medium term, in a managed way.

For the second consecutive year, the level of increase in school balances was not expected but it was significant and therefore explanations had been requested from schools. There was no proposal to claw-back any money from 2011-12 accounts, but the Forum had agreed that a claw-back scheme be implemented against the 2012-13 accounts, where governing bodies could not demonstrate that any significant balances were not being held for a valid reason, as defined in the claw-back scheme.

A better understanding of the reasons for the increase would help with the construction of next year's budget. Therefore, primary schools that had increased their surplus by £15,000 or more during the year and secondary schools with increases of more than £50,000 were asked to give reasons for their increase. This covered 17 primary and 2 secondary or special schools and £1.046 million.

The Forum was also requested to agree an extension of one year to the licensed deficit agreement at Cranbourne Primary, which would then become fully repaid by 31 March 2014.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

- i. **NOTED** the level of aggregate surplus revenue balances as at 31 March 2012 totalled £4.531 million, an increase of £0.784 million (21.0%) from the previous year;
- ii. **NOTED** that at 6.7% 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;
- iii. **NOTED** that significant surplus revenue balances totalled £1.1 million, an increase of £0.385 million (54%) from the previous year;
- iv. **NOTED** that £0.827 million of Devolved Formula Capital grant remained unspent at 31 March 2012, a decrease of £0.707 million (53.8%) from the previous year;
- v. **NOTED** that £0.211 million of Devolved Formula Capital grant must be spent by schools by 31 August 2012, or returned to the DfE.

As the Schools Forum was not quorate at the time this item was considered the following item would be deferred to the next meeting for agreement:

- i. That the repayment term for the £0.050 million licensed deficit previously agreed for Cranbourne Primary School be extended by one year, for full repayment to be made by 31 March 2014.

8. Dates of Future Meetings

The Forum noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 13 September 2012 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber at Easthampstead House but meetings would be cancelled if there was no business to discuss.

CHAIRMAN