



**SCHOOLS FORUM
14 SEPTEMBER 2017
16.30 – 18.00PM**

Present:

Schools' Members

Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
Karen Davis, Primary Head Representative
Debbie Smith, Secondary Head Representative
Marian Bent

Academies' Members

Jane Coley, Academy School Representative

Non-Schools' Members:

Michelle Tuddenham, PVI Provider Representative

Observer:

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning

Also Present:

Councillor Mrs Mary Temperton

Apologies for absence were received from:

Grant Strudley, Primary Head Representative
Keith Grainger, Secondary Head Representative
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
Peter Floyd, Special School Representative
Dominic Asater, 14-19 Partnership Representative

13. Election of Chairman

Since the July meeting of the Schools Forum no one had expressed any further interest in being the Forums Chairman for the 2017/18 year. During the summer period Officers had had a chance to reflect on this issue and proposed that an Independent Member of the Forum be sought to fill the Chairman's role. As an Independent Member this person would not have to declare an interest nor would they be restricted by voting constraints. It was stressed that a Chairman was vital to the Forum working effectively moving forward.

It was proposed that profiles of suitable Independent Member candidates would be brought to the Forum at its October meeting for review and then the successful candidate would be elected as Chairman at the December meeting.

Debbie Smith volunteered to fill the role of Chairman for this meeting and would do so for the Forum meeting on 19 October 2017.

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning commented that the issues facing the Forum over the coming years were

extremely complex and it was important to have a strong and impartial Chairman in place to lead the Forum through these issues.

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard also commented that the structure of the Forum meetings going forward could include a workshop section to work through the complex issues, which was a similar format to the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board.

14. Appointment of Vice Chairman

It was agreed that the nomination of Vice Chairman would be taken forward to the December meeting of the forum.

15. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

16. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record

Arising from the minutes:

- It was confirmed that an update on progress against the review of the High Needs Block action plan would be given during the October meeting.
- Item 8 which referred to new loan arrangements should have referred to Ascot Heath Infant School, not Ascot Heath Junior School.

17. Update on School and Education Funding

Paul Clark gave an update on the School and Education funding reforms following announcements made in July and September 2017 and a recap of changes announced earlier. However, key financial information remains outstanding with the Department for Education (DfE) indicating an end of September release, so further updates are expected to be provided in the October meeting.

The key points raised were:

- Implementation of the Schools national funding formula (SNFF) should bring a fairer approach to funding schools with changes being implemented over a two year period before the ESFA takes full responsibility for allocating funds to schools. This approach aids a smooth transition from current arrangements which are different across the country to the SNFF.
- A question was raised regarding the difference between local authority funded schools and academies and it was reported that they were funded using the same formula but paid directly from the government.
- It was reported that some funding to support schools and pupils will continue to be centrally managed by the council
- There is limited ability to transfer funds from the schools block to the high needs block. This is 0.5%, which is around £320,000, and will need agreement from the forum to proceed. This is not expected to be required in BF.
- In calculating total grant income for each LA, there is a commitment from the DfE to increase funding for every school by between 0.5% and 3%.

- There is a new minimum per pupil funding rate for secondary schools of £4,800. This is expected to benefit 4 schools, however, it will be expensive to implement. A question was asked about whether any secondary schools currently receiving more than £4,800 per pupil would have their funding reduced. A reduction in funding for these schools was not expected but cannot be confirmed until the detailed financial information is released.
- There is no minimum per pupil funding rate for primary schools
- Views were sought from Forum members regarding the approach to be taken by Bracknell Forest in setting the 2018-19 budget and forum members commented that it was hard to decide an approach without seeing financial modelling. Questions were also raised regarding whether certain sections of schools were particularly vulnerable. It was acknowledged that there were tough decisions for the forum to make so the full impact on schools needed to be considered.
- Paul Clark confirmed that as usual, financial modelling to individual school level would be undertaken once the detailed financial information was released, with the intention of presenting options at the October meeting for review, with a plan to launch a consultation with all schools at the end of October to canvas views.
- Early years funding is expected to increase by 5.8% next year. A workshop with providers is planned to take place to discuss how the increase should be applied and whether any changes need to be considered to the general funding arrangements for early years. If considered necessary, a separate consultation would take place for early years providers
- A question was raised regarding the removal of the 1% pay cap for teachers and whether any additional funding would become available to fund this however this has not been confirmed at this time.

The Forum **NOTED:**

1. the latest announcements from the government on school and education funding reform.
2. the key issues identified at this stage.
3. that detailed financial illustrations are expected to be made available by the DfE later this month, at which point the financial implications for BF schools will become clearer.

RESOLVED that the key issues to be included in the 2018-19 financial consultation with schools document be agreed.

18. **The Schools Budget - 2017-2018 Budget Monitoring and other Financial Matters**

The Forum received the annual report on the 2017-2018 forecast budget monitoring position for the schools budget and to explore the key issues and management actions being taken.

The key points raised were:

- It was acknowledged that under and over spend was very low due to the early time of the year.
- A long term solution was being investigated for the school loans scheme. An update will be provided in the October 17 meeting.

The Forum **NOTED:**

1. the budget variances being forecast on the Schools Budget totalling an aggregate net forecast under spending of £0.006m, (paragraph 6.8);
2. that the accumulated year end balance for the Schools Budget General Reserve was forecast to be £0.666m, £0.006m above the minimum prudential level required to be maintained to safely manage in-year budget risks (paragraph 6.8 (ix));
3. progress to date on the Education Capital Programme, as summarised at Annex 2.

that further work was planned in respect of the school loan scheme and funding arrangements in place for Early Years providers

19. **Schools Forum Membership Review**

The Forum received a report inviting it to endorse an amendment to the Forum's composition which was intended to bring it in to line with the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012 to correctly reflect the proportion of pupils in schools maintained by the Local Authority and those in academies.

Officers had undertaken a review of the Bracknell Forest pupil numbers to assess whether the Forum's membership was proportionate across all the groups.

Due to the increasing number of academy conversions within Bracknell Forest it had been proposed that an additional Academy Governor Representative should be added to the Membership.

There were a number of vacant Primary School Governor vacancies on the Forum. As no interest had been received in May 2017's election period, the Council was seeking to appoint to fill these vacancies directly for 2017/18, with elections held again in May 2018.

In addition to the two recommendations within the report a tabled verbal recommendation was added at the meeting as Members had agreed at the start of the meeting to appoint an Independent Member as Chairman. To accommodate this new role in the Forum Membership, it was proposed that the Diocese membership be reduced from two members to one member, as historically they hadn't taken up these vacancies, with the additional place being allocated to the Independent Member.

If the Diocese wished to provide both a Roman Catholic and Church of England representative in the future it was proposed that they could alternate their representative each year.

Jane Coley would try to seek two Academy Governors to fill the current vacancies on the Forum before the October meeting. It was mentioned that John Throssall who was previously a Forum Member may be interested in returning as an Academy Governor Representative.

RESOLVED that:

1. the composition of the Bracknell Forest Schools Forum as set out in Appendix A be approved.

2. that the proprietor bodies of academies be asked to confirm their nominees for the academy vacancy on the Forum.
3. that the Diocese membership be reduced from two members to one member and the vacancy being amended to accommodate a new role on the Forum for an Independent Member as Chairman.

20. **Schools Forum Workshops**

The Forum discussed whether a new approach to meetings should be adopted whereby a more informal setting and meeting style, such as a workshop would allow for a more productive meeting with greater understanding and involvement for members. The following points were raised:

- Workshops could not be held prior to the Schools Forum meeting due to time pressures
- Idea sharing would increase understanding between sectors and for members of the Forum.
- Concerns were raised regarding understanding around complex procedural items and a pre-meeting would allow Forum to raise questions before the meeting.
- The preferred option was an informal session the week before Schools Forum meeting to get clarification around reports especially considering upcoming challenges.
- Agreed that 4.00pm on Thursday would suit members, although this is likely to be very close to the publication of papers so members would have little time to prepare.
- Holding the informal session in schools was considered a better option than the council chamber which is not considered conducive to open and engaging meetings.
- Sandhurst school was happy to host the first such meeting.
- Paul Clark agreed he would bring a proposed structure and schedule to the next meeting with the new format to be adopted in December, subject to agreement by the Forum.

21. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The date of the next Forum was scheduled for the 19 October 2017.

CHAIRMAN