

**SCHOOLS FORUM
19 OCTOBER 2017
4.30 - 6.00 PM**



Present:

Schools' Members

Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
Liz Cole, Primary School Representative
Jane Coley, Academy School Representative
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative
Keith Grainger, Secondary Head Representative
Debbie Smith, Secondary Head Representative
Rhona Stainthorp, Primary School Governors
Val Woods, Primary School Governors
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
Peter Floyd, Special School Representative
Phil Sherwood, Uplands Primary School

Academies' Members

Jane Coley, Academy School Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Andrew Taylor, Primary School Governors
Michelle Tuddenham, PVI Provider Representative
Dominic Asater, 14-19 Partnership Representative
Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning

22. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

23. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2017 be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record subject to the addition of Marion Bent as a substitute for Martin Gocke.

24. Update to the Schools Forum Regarding the High Needs Block Funding Review

The Forum received a report from Ian Dixon on the High Needs Block Funding Review which included the Headline High Needs Block Plan and an update on progress against the actions. The number of children impacted was questioned however the exact figures were not available as a lot of children were not routinely checked. It was also questioned whether sufficient support was given by parents and it was acknowledged that engagement with the parents forum is improving and that this was being built up over time.

It was noted that a special post 16 institution do not have a specific definition in law but are places currently outside the authority focusing on areas of special need which could include an offer up to the age of 25.

The High Needs Block Reports that Kennel Lane School did not agree with whether £5,000 was sufficient additional funding on top of £10,000 place funding for early opportunity places despite local and national indicators. Further to this, it was questioned what the local and national indicators were. National Indicators are taken from S251 returns and Local Indicators were from information shared at South East regional network The calculation of top ups paid to Kennel Lane Schools was also discussed where it was confirmed that they had been calculated from the cost base in place at the time of the initial price review.

No approval was required for the report from the forum as the plan had already been to CMT and Full Council but this was an opportunity to provide additional clarification.

Questions were raised about what the basis of the calculations detailed in the report were and it was confirmed that they were based on consultations and current costs. It was noted that the local authority wanted a smooth transition to any new arrangements and would be looking at the calculations again in the future.

It was questioned whether the internal audit report relating to SEN Resource Units was available for members of the forum to view and it was confirmed that the auditors would be circulating a redacted version to participants in the audit once this was available.

Ian Dixon thanked the forum for their continued support and input.

25. **Proposals to revise the working arrangements of the Schools Forum**

The forum discussed proposals to revise the working arrangements for the Schools Forum in light of the important decisions coming up.

The idea of a pre-meeting was discussed in order to improve understanding of the complex topics which were considered during forum meetings however there were concerns this would reduce transparency. However, it was agreed that the purpose of the pre-meeting was to receive a briefing and not make any decisions. It was also acknowledged that a more user-friendly square table layout was preferred as it resulted in greater participation from members.

From these discussions it was agreed that all forum members could attend the chairman's briefing which would start at 3.30pm on the day of the formal meeting. The formal meeting would continue to commence at 4.30pm.

The appointment of an independent chair was discussed although it was explained that it had been difficult to find someone who was interested and had relevant experience but that any appointment would be time limited until the end of the academic year, and then subject to annual approval.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Schools Forum meetings be held in a more user friendly room (such as the Function Room)?; and,
2. that meetings be extended to include a briefing for all members immediately before the formal meeting.
3. David Cook be appointed independent Chairman of the Forum.

4. Martin Gocke be appointed Vice Chairman of the Forum.

26. **Update on School and Education Funding**

Paul Clark gave an update on school and education funding and presented options for funding for 2018 – 2019.

It was reported that for the next 2 years there would be transitional arrangements in place when local authorities (LA) would receive their funding for schools in two separate blocks: the aggregated amount from each of their school's National Funding Formula (SNFF) allocation; and a separate allocation for business rates, high pupil mobility and growth fund based on planned spend from 2017-18.

To assist a smooth transition to the SNFF, LAs would continue to use their local funding formula. It was also reported that DfE Regulations do not allow LAs to replicate the SNFF so LA school budgets will always be different to the SNFF.

There will be 2 elements of funding for protection for schools next year; the Minimum Funding Guarantee that will limit reductions in per pupil funding from 2017-18 to a maximum of 1.5%, although for the first time LAs have the power to set their own rate, although it must be between 0% (no change in per pupil funding) and minus 1.5% (schools need to absorb the first 1.5% reduction in per pupil funding); and new minimum per pupil funding rates of £3,300 for primary schools and £4,600 for secondary schools.

Despite there now being an extra £1.3bn funding (£416m 2018-19 and £884m 2019-20) in school budgets, there is no noticeable gain for BF schools from that previously announced in December 2016. This was because in general the extra money was being used to ensure those schools previously due to have a funding reduction or small increase would now all experience at least a 0.5% increase in per pupil funding. The overall change in funding based on 2017-18 census data showed an increase in funding over 2 years from the SNFF of £3.246m (5.1%), £1.696m in 2018-19 and £1.550m in 2019-20. For 2018-19 BF schools would see per pupil funding increases on the SNFF of between 0.5% to 3.9%.

It was also explained that LAs will be funded for the additional diseconomy costs for new schools based on the budget they set for 2017-18 whilst a new formula is developed for 2019-20. With BLV opening in September 2018, there would be a significant cost increase of new schools from the amount of funding provided, currently which is estimated at circa £0.555m in 2018-19 and a further £0.479m increase in 2019-20. This unavoidable pressure would need to be funded from within the overall £1.696m increase, meaning £1.141m would be available for distribution through school budgets.

The three funding options for schools to consider as part of the financial consultation were presented; option 1 was a close fit to SNFF, option 2 was the current Bracknell Forest formula with increases factors by the agreed budget strategy, option 3; was the current Bracknell Forest formula. Other questions on the consultation included whether maintained mainstream schools continued to support as they had done in previous years "de-delegation" of budgets where permitted by the DfE, whether maintained schools agreed to continue the £20 per pupil contribution to the council's unfunded education related statutory and regulatory duties, and finally whether the balances held by schools closing as a result of an amalgamation should be made available to the successor primary school, rather than reverting to the council.

It was questioned whether Academies would be funded in the same way as LA schools and it was confirmed that this was the case however funding for academies would come directly from the Department for Education.

The forum questioned what the positive and negative aspects were of each option and it was explained that all were increases but some with big changes. Every school had to be under the SNFF in two years and the forum was asked to consider which option should be recommended to schools.

RESOLVED that the Forum To NOTED:

- a. the latest announcements from the government on school and education funding reform
- b. the additional £0.555m of cost from new schools that will need to be funded next year
- c. that the council will not be requesting that the funding maintained schools receive for the SIMS licence fee is returned to the council for central management through the de-delegation route.

RESOLVED that the forum AGREED:

That the School's Forum should recommend that schools support option 1 for the calculation of 2018-19 school budgets.

It was noted that Paul Clark would also be discussing the options with school bursars, Business Managers and Chair of Governors meetings.

(Action: PC to send dates to JC)

27. Dates of Future Meetings

The dates of the next meetings are as follows:

- 7 December 2017
- 18 January 2018
- 22 March 2018
- 19 April 2018

CHAIRMAN