

**SCHOOLS FORUM  
7 DECEMBER 2017  
4.30 - 6.00 PM**



**Present:**

**Schools' Members**

David Cook, Independent Representative (Chairman)  
Liz Cole, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Karen Davis, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Peter Floyd, Special School Representative (Governor)  
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative (Governor) (Vice Chairman)  
Keith Grainger, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Roger Prew, Primary School Representative (Governors)  
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Debbie Smith, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Rhona Stainthorp, Primary School Representative (Governor)  
Val Woods, Primary School Representative (Governor)

**Non-Schools' Members:**

Dominic Asater, 16-19 Partnership Representative

**Observer:**

Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Jane Coley, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)  
Neil Davis, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Brian Fries, Secondary School Representative (Governor)  
Andrew Taylor, Primary School Representative (Governor)  
Andrew Taylor, Primary School Representative (Governor)

**Vacancies**

One Vacancy, Academy School Representative, (Governor)  
One Vacancy, Academy School Representative, (Governor)  
One Vacancy, Church of England or Roman Catholic Diocese Representative  
One Vacancy, Secondary School Representative (Governor)

**28. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**29. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held 19 October 2017 be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

Arising from the minutes of the last meeting, Paul Clark confirmed that an email was sent to all Head Teachers to update Bursars on the options for calculating the 2018-19 school budgets.

The chairman welcomed new members to the schools forum.

30. **Start up and diseconomy funding for new and expanding Schools**

The Forum received a report from Paul Clark to discuss the Start-up and Diseconomy Funding Policy for New and Expanding Schools. This is an annual report on an important policy that can generate significant costs for which the Forum has responsibility for agreeing.

As background to the report, it was noted that the policy needed to comply with DfE Operating Guidance and that current data identified the potential requirement for 6 new schools in the next 5 years, with Binfield Learning Village all through school opening in September 2018. All the new schools were required in response to new house building and are forecast to require £14m of additional funding support. At this point in time the DfE had not confirmed how areas experiencing cost increases from new schools would be funded other than for 2018-19 only, LAs would receive the same amount of money as they included in their 2017-18 budget.

Concerns were raised by Headteacher representatives that the DfE funding allocation was below the actual cost and that in order to meet the new commitment there would need to be a significant reduction to the amount of funds available to distribute to existing schools in the Borough.

**(Action: Funding policy for new schools to be revisited in advance every year by Schools Forum in terms of schools placing and numbers so Schools Forum can make a decision on the budgets proposed)**

The key component parts of the proposed funding allocation remain unchanged; pre-opening start-up costs; rates at actual; enhanced fixed lump sum; and per class funding. The policy would only apply to basic need pupils and would not cover pupils from outside the area who want to attend due to the popularity of the school. New schools would be moved to the Schools National Funding Formula (SNFF) as soon as possible with schools moving over at 95% capacity for 1 Form Entry (FE) Schools, 90% for 2 FE Schools and 85% for 3 FE and over Schools.

It was noted that the funding for Binfield Learning Village would be capped at 4 classes i.e. 120 pupils and it was confirmed after questions that any additional pupils attending following school admission appeals above the 120 pupil limit would be funded by the Academy.

An initial vote was held to gauge first impressions following the presentation on the recommended funding policy with the number of votes being 3 approved the policy and 3 rejections.

Forum members highlighted concerns about the cost of a full time Head Teacher when only 120 pupils would be educated in the first year and questioned whether a 'school share' arrangement would be possible which had been the case in previous BF school expansions. It was suggested that this wouldn't be possible as the academies operating new schools were not based in Bracknell and would be unlikely to accept a BFC nominated appointment and there would be significant difficulties in recruiting a high quality Headteacher on a part time basis. A 'school share' approach is possible for school expansions and has been the model used to date in BF. It was confirmed that the contract had already been offered to the new Headteacher so rescinding this decision would be challenging and the academy were keen to ensure good leadership from the opening of the school. It was also acknowledged that

alternatives were unclear as stopping the academy from employing a full time head teacher could influence them to open all year groups which would disrupt education in other Bracknell Forest Schools.

Whilst it was acknowledged that new schools would need additional funding, the forum also expressed strong concerns about maintaining the quality of current schools which were already under the pressure of further budget cuts. Councillor Gareth Barnard updated the forum about his meeting with Dr Phillip Lee MP to express concerns about lack of funding for schools especially in respect of having to fund new schools that were required as a result of government housing targets.

It was explained that any money for the opening of new schools which was not taken from the schools budget, would need to be found from the council's revenue budget which would put pressures on other areas and would be difficult to accommodate.

Another vote was taken following these discussions where 1 forum members rejected the proposals and 5 agreed, under the condition that their strong concerns were noted and that future decisions concerning new school funding would be brought to the Schools Forum for a decision.

It should be acknowledged that the forum strongly felt that there was not enough money from National Government to run schools at the current level.

**(Action: School performance data to be brought to Schools Forum to consider the impact of funding on school performance)**

The forum congratulated the authority for looking at the policy in an innovative way under challenging financial constraints linking it to the SNFF.

**RESOLVED that the Forum AGREED:**

**That the updated new / expanding schools funding policy should be applied in the 2018-2019 financial year.**

### **31. 2018-19 Schools Block element of the Schools Budget - initial matters**

Paul Clark reported to the schools forum on the key issues to consider at this stage of the budget setting process for 2018-19 including the responses received from schools through the recent financial consultation exercise. The key points were:

- Responses from schools showed clear support to:
  - Moving as close to the SNFF as possible
  - The MFG should be set at the highest permitted amount i.e. 0%.
  - Continue ongoing de-delegation of permitted services (note the council would no longer request this in respect of SIMS licenses)
  - Continue the £20 per pupil contribution from maintained schools to LA education related statutory and regulatory duties
  - Schools amalgamating that close to form a new primary school should retain any aggregate surplus balance
- Subsequent to last meeting and the issuing of the financial consultation with schools, the DfE would now allow LAs to implement an MFG rate of up to +0.5%. This would assist LAs in matching the SNFF although other difficulties remain to prevent a perfect match.
- Taking account of estimated levels of income, the LA proposed the following initial budget changes for 2018-19:
  - +£0.325m for additional pupils
  - +£0.512m diseconomy funding for new schools

- -£0.102m adjustments to business rates
- +£1.264m balance is “new” money that can be used to offset cost increases e.g. pay price inflation, pension changes, impact of the Living Wage

The next steps would be to distribute the indicative 2018-019 budgets to schools by 15 December, using BFC pupil data and the preliminary decisions taken by the Forum. Then calculations would be updated in light of data from the DfE which is expected during the week commencing 11 December 2017. The final recommendations would then be made by the Forum on 18 January and its recommendations would be endorsed by the Executive Member and DfE notified for the 19 January deadline.

**RESOLVED That the Forum AGREED:**

**That in accordance with the majority views of schools as expressed through responses to the financial consultation, that:**

- 1. The allocation of additional funds to schools should be through Option 1, aim for a close fit to the 2018-19 SNFF allocation for each school;**
- 2. The cost of meeting the MFG will be via an equal proportionate deduction from all schools experiencing a funding gain;**
- 3. That taking account of the additional funding to be provided through the Pupil Premium, that funding for Looked After Children is removed from the BF funding formula.**

**On going central retention by the Council of Schools Block and Central School Services funding for the services set out in Annex 2.**

**The provisional budget changes for 2018-19, as set out in Table 2, and that indicative budgets are sent to schools this term, based on these decisions.**

**That taking account of the recent revision by the DfE to allow for LAs to closer match the allocations from the SNFF in their local funding formula, that the MFG is set at the highest affordable rate, at the same proportional increase most schools can expect, which currently indicates an MFG rate of + 0.38%.**

**Item for Primary School representatives only:**

**RESOLVED That the Forum AGREED:**

**That the continued de-delegation of budgets for the services requested by the council.**

**Item for Secondary School representatives only:**

**RESOLVED That the Forum AGREED:**

**That the continued de-delegation of budgets for the services requested by the council.**

**Item for all School representatives only**

**RESOLVED That the Forum AGREED:**

**That a £20 per pupil contribution continues to be made by maintained schools towards the cost of delivering 'general' education related statutory and regulatory duties.**

**That subject to agreement of the DfE, where schools amalgamate to form a new primary school, that any balances from the closing schools should be made available for use by the successor school rather than be retained by the council.**

**32. DfE Consultation: Changes to the criteria for agreeing loan schemes**

Paul Clark presented a report on the consultation regarding changes to the criteria for agreeing loan schemes.

The key points from this discussion were:

- DfE will only allow new loans for capital related purchases and not to cover short term recurrent funding difficulties
- Conditions relating to existing loan arrangements will remain unaltered to maturity
- Financial support to schools to move to licensed deficits (subject to suitable scheme being developed)
- The key issue to be aware of was confirmed as where a school converts to an academy with a deficit and it is eligible for intervention, and underperforming schools which the Secretary of State judges are not strong enough to become an academy without a strong sponsor, the deficit remains with the LAs Schools Budget

It was commented by Forum members that a number of Bracknell Forest Schools were performing poorly and therefore at risk of being forced to convert to an Academy and where relevant schools had loans, these could not be recovered, presenting a financial cost to the Schools Budget.

**(Action: Paul Clark to present the Forum with current figures on outstanding loans for the Forum to consider current risk)**

There were no comments from the Forum regarding the consultation as key decisions had already been made by Government.

**RESOLVED that the Forum NOTED:**

- 1. That the proposals contained in the DfE consultation on the implementation of the changes to the criteria for agreeing loan schemes;**
- 2. That the Forum decided that they would not be sending a consultation response**
- 3. That the licensed deficit will be reviewed and a report presented to the Schools Forum in the new year.**

**33. Any Other Business**

The chairman encouraged forum members to put forward agenda items for future meetings.

The next meeting date of 22 March currently clashed with the Head teachers conference and it was proposed that the meeting would be brought forward to accommodate this.

**(Action: Paul Clark to propose new date)**

**34. Dates of Future Meetings**

The date of the next meetings will be as follows:

18 January 2018

15 March 2018

19 April 2018

**CHAIRMAN**