

**SCHOOLS FORUM  
18 JANUARY 2018  
4.30 - 6.00 PM**



**Present:**

**Independent Chair:**

David Cook, Independent Representative (Chairman)

**Schools' Members**

Liz Cole, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Jane Coley, Academy School Representative  
Karen Davis, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Peter Floyd, Special School Representative (Governor)  
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative (Governor) (Vice-Chairman)  
Roger Prew, Primary School Representative (Governor)  
Debbie Smith, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Val Woods, Primary School Representative (Governor)

**Academies' Members**

Jane Coley, Academy School Representative

**Non-Schools' Members:**

Dominic Asater, 16-19 Partnership Representative

**Observer:**

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

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Brian Fries, Secondary School Representative (Governor)  
Keith Grainger, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Rhona Stainthorp, Primary School Representative (Governor)  
Michelle Tuddenham, PVI Provider Representative

**Vacancies**

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

**35. Declarations of Interest**

Declarations of interest were received and listed below:

- David Cook, Chairman declared an interest as the Chair of Governors at Bracknell and Wokingham College.
- Cllr Gareth Barnard declared an interest as a governor of Garth Hill College.

**36. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting on 7 December 2017 were approved subject to the following changes:

The following actions were attributed to Paul Clark:

**(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)**

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

Matters arising from the minutes and to be presented at a future meeting of the Forum were:

- current figures on outstanding school loans for the Forum to consider current risk.
- school admissions data to understand where there were surplus school places and what the projections were going forward.
- the SEN Strategy
- The SEN Resource Unit internal audit report.
- The number of EHCP requests that were refused

### 37. **Initial Proposals for Changes to Early Years Funding Arrangements for 3 and 4 year olds**

The Schools forum received a report from Cherry Hall, the Strategy and Development Manager (Under 5's) on the initial proposals for changes to early years funding arrangements for 3 and 4 year olds from April 2018.

The report presented initial proposals for changes to funding arrangements for providers of free early years care for 3 and 4 year olds including how the additional 5.8% increase in funding should be allocated. A provider Steering Group had been established to identify proposals for change which were then presented for comment to all providers through a formal consultation.

The main changes proposed were:

- Removal of top up funding for flexibility of available hours e.g. holidays and out of normal school hours
- Reduce top up funding paid to providers based on the qualification held by the lead practitioner in the setting
- Retain the current amount of funds to be distributed through deprivation but change the weighting of measures being used away from IDACI with more weighting to Early Years Pupil Premium numbers.
- Update the criteria to be used to allocate funds to providers to support children with SEN and increase the relevant budget.
- Maximise the amount of funding paid to all providers through the universal core base rate
- Retain centrally managed budgets at no more than 3% of total funds

The vast majority of respondents agreed with the proposals.

The following responses were made to comments made by members:

- It was questioned whether additional qualifications were a clear indication of better quality provision and it was confirmed that research supported the view that better qualified staff resulted in better outcomes for the child. It was noted that the qualifications must be relevant to the post
- It was confirmed that no provider would receive less funding as a result of the changes.
- It was questioned how children were identified as having additional needs and it was noted that often needs are known from as early as 6 months old where there was a diagnosis of Cerebral palsy or Downs Syndrome. In other cases, an emerging need would be made apparent if the child wasn't meeting key milestones.

**RESOLVED the Forum NOTE:**

**That the vast majority of responses to the consultation proposals on changes to the Bracknell Forest Council Early Years Funding Formula supported the proposals made by the Council (Annex A, Restricted Annex C and paragraphs 5.11 to 5.13).**

**The changes to the BF EYFF and summary financial implications anticipated from the proposals on provider hourly funding rates (paragraphs 5.16 and 5.18).**

**RESOLVED the Forum AGREE:**

**That taking account of the responses from providers, the following changes to the arrangements for funding Early Years services are implemented as set out in the consultation document:**

- a) The Bracknell Forest Council Early Years Funding Formula for 3 and 4 year olds should allocate around 94.1% of available funds, as summarised at Table 2.**
- b) The budgets to be centrally managed by the council for:**
  - i. SEN inclusion fund of around 1.4%**
  - ii. Provider contingency at around 1.5%**
  - iii. BFC services at around 3%**
- c) The changes to the eligibility criteria for the Early Years Special Education Needs Inclusion Fund as set out on Annex B**

**38. Proposals for 2018-19 Schools Block and Central School Services Block Elements of the Schools Budget**

The Forum received a report on the final proposals for the 2018-2019 Schools Block and Central School Services block elements of the schools budget that built on the following provisional decisions made at the previous meeting, and in particular:

- Budget allocations to schools would aim to replicate the School National Funding Formula (SNFF) as closely as possible
- The local Minimum Funding Guarantee would be set at the highest permitted rate of +0.5%
- Maintained schools would continue to contribute £20 per pupil to statutory and regulatory duties.
- That on-going de-delegated to Council management of permitted budgets.

No new issues had been identified that needed to be considered in the final budget proposals, but a number of relatively minor changes to budget amounts were presented that reflected the most up to date information. To ensure that existing schools received the full £1.7m (2.7%) benefit from the SNFF, £0.4m (approximately half the available balance) was recommended to be drawn down from the New School reserve to fund the additional costs arising from supporting new schools.

Additional costs expected from new schools remain a significant cost pressure risk in BF moving forward and the DfE had very recently requested volunteer LAs interested in working on a national funding model to consider a long term funding solution to attend workshops. BFC has expressed interest in contributing to this development.

It was also confirmed that all key data had now been provided by DfE for 2018- 2019 budgets which has resulted in an additional £1.992m funding. This is made up of £1.728m from the impact of the SNFF – a 2.7% increase in core funding compared to 2017-18 funding - and £0.264m from increased pupil numbers.

However, DfE identified an error on the numbers of pupils eligible to a free school meal (FSM) that had previously been supplied to LAs to calculate budgets, which required the re-issuing of the data and the recalculation of individual school budgets. This was released after the publication of this report and required revised versions of Annexes 1, 2 and 4 of the report to be issued at the meeting. It was confirmed that there was no overall financial impact from the updated data but the distribution of funds between schools had change as a result of the corrected FSM data.

The following responses were made to comments from members:

- It was acknowledged that although the financial settlement for schools was better this year, there were still considerable challenges for schools as cost pressures are starting to rise.
- It was confirmed that no new information had been provided by DfE regarding funding for 2019-2020.
- The position on school places at Binfield Learning Village (BLV) was clarified as 120 Year 7 funded places available from September 2018 to be followed by 150 in September 2019. There would be one primary school class of 30 pupils from September 2019. Only places needed to meet basic need would be funded by the council. There would be no funding for parental preference.
- It was questioned whether these arrangements could change, however the academy had elected Bracknell Forest Council to administer their admissions arrangements, and agreed to the admissions consultation proposals including admitting only up to the agreed pupil numbers of 120, then 150 in secondary, and 30 in primary.

- Strong concerns were raised about risks to school funding as a result of school place allocation to BLV and it was questioned what risk migrations were in place for schools who would now have lower pupil numbers. Forum members were reassured that the position would be made clearer once the BLV places had been allocated.
- It was noted that Edgbarrow was the only school which needed a per pupil funding top up as they fell short of the new £4,600 minimum funding per pupil.

The revised Annex 1 detailed the new funding levels for schools once SNFF had been implemented and it was reported that eventually 70% of BF schools would get more funding under the national funding formula, and there would have been an average 5.8% increase in funding if the 3% “cap” on increases was not in place. During the next 2 years to cap SNFF increases to the stated 6% maximum (excluding meeting minimum per pupil rates), this prevents 19 BF schools (52%) from receiving the full increases they are due - up to a 13.08%. At this stage it is not known when the SNFF will be fully implemented and relevant schools receive the full benefit of the reforms.

Concerns were raised in particular over the difference between pre and post SNFF Funding for Great Hollands Primary School who were due a 13% increase in funding and it was questioned how the school would cope without the additional funding until then. It was reported that the government had not allocated sufficient funding to move immediately to the SNFF, however every school would receive an increase in per pupil funding which had not been the case in recent years.

The key new costs which need to be considered in 2018-2019 budgets were reported and included; pay and price inflation, including the Local government pay offer of a core 2%, but with higher increases to the lower paid, LG Pension scheme deficit contribution, and the BF supplement.

**RESOLVED that the Forum AGREE:**

1. that the arrangements in place for the administration of central government grants are appropriate;
2. the budget amounts for each of the services centrally managed by the council and funded from the Schools Block and Central School Services Block DSG elements are as set out in Table 1 and Annex 3, with the Schools Block totalling £0.463m and the Central Schools Services Block totalling £1.041m;

**In its role as the representative body of schools and other providers of education and childcare, the Forum RECOMMENDED that the Executive Member AGREES the following decisions for the 2018-19 Schools Budget:**

1. that the amount of DSG funding for delegation into school budgets through the BF Funding Formula be set at £67.425m;
2. that £0.394m be drawn down from the New School start-up / Diseconomy Reserve and be included in delegated school budgets;
3. that the units of resource for the BF Funding Formula be set at those shown in column 3 of Annex 2;
4. that other Schools Block related grants be reset to the amounts anticipated in 2018-19;

5. that the DfE pro forma template of the 2018-19 BF Funding Formula for Schools as set out in Annex 4 be submitted by the 19 January deadline.

It was RESOLVED that the Forum NOTE:

1. that the full £1.728m increase in funding from the SNFF is allocated to existing schools;
2. that proposals in respect of the Early Years and High Needs Block elements of the Schools Block will be presented to the Forum in March;
3. the 2018-19 cost pressures that schools are likely to need to finance from within their budget allocation, estimated at between 2% and 3%;
4. the on-going uncertainty from the DfE in respect of a long term funding solution for new and expanding schools, where significant cost increases are expected in BF in future years and which may impact on funding levels for existing schools;
5. that whilst transitional funding protection is in place during the next 2 years to cap SNFF increases to 6%, this prevents 18 BF schools (49%) from receiving the full increases they are due, up to a 13.94% increase.

### 39. Local Authority Budget Proposals for 2018-19

As part of the council's consultation process, the Forum received a report on the Local Authority Budget proposals for 2018-2019 with a particular focus on the Children, Young People and Learning (CYPL) Department.

It was reported that the Council continues to face significant reductions in government grants, most notably the Revenue Support Grant (down £2.6m) and the New Homes Bonus Grant (down £2m) whilst at the same time experiencing rising costs through general inflation as well as significant demographic pressures, most notably impacting on social care support arrangements.

As well as looking to generate efficiency savings, the council continues to implement significant changes through the Transformation Programme, with proposals in the 2018-19 budget for aggregate cost reductions of £6.4m. Other savings of £2.9m are proposed as well as pressures of £5.3m.

In respect of proposals relating to CYPL Department, £0.827m of net savings were identified in the Council's Commitment Budget and this included £1.165m of savings through the Transformation Programme, mostly relating to social care costs and arrangements for senior leadership.

Concerns were raised about how this would be possible as currently children's social care workers were struggling with capacity and there was a lack of staff to do preventative work with families. It was reported that an extra 4 social workers were being recruited to ease pressure through the Family Safeguarding Model that was being funded by a DfE grant. It was also confirmed that the savings in social care were coming from improved commissioning and not reductions to staffing numbers.

In respect of the Family Safeguarding Model, it was reported that earlier work by Herefordshire Council had resulted in a 34% reduction in children going into care.

Members commented that thresholds were different in every local authority and it was questioned whether Bracknell Forest would be able to replicate those results. It was confirmed that the programme would be subject to external review to establish outcomes and impact, but the model had proved a success elsewhere.

Further concerns were expressed by members in respect of making savings on edge of care services. These services are seen as important in schools as helping to keep families together and the positive impact this has on families.

In a further update, the Executive Member for CYPL commented that over the next two years, the Adults, Health and Housing would be combined with Children's, Young People and Learning to create a new 'People' directorate. This would create economies by having a shared senior leadership team and reduced number of heads of service whilst maintaining operational staff. The appointments below Director level were expected by the end of February 2018 with a timetable to merge both departments over the next 18 months to 2 years..

Concerns were raised about the effect of the CYPL transformation on outcomes for young people and an itemised budget and further information on the areas identified was requested to further understand the programme.

**(Action: Paul Clark)**

A clarification was provided in respect of the proposed saving on Educational Psychology costs through using the Schools Budget to fund a share of cost. The work that this is intended to fund relates to supporting the SEN Tribunal process through expert assessments and evidence to support LA placement proposals that tend to be lower cost than those proposed by parents. The expectation is that the work undertaken will significantly reduce placement costs and result in a net reduction in expenditure.

Concerns were raised about the reduction in advocacy services for children and young people in social care settings who need support as this was considered an important non statutory service. The Forum were reassured that this reduction in cost would still sufficiently meet the needs of young people and that looked after young people would continue to be closely monitored.

It was agreed that any additional comments on the budget proposals could also be forwarded to Cllr Barnard.

**40. Schools Forum - Operational and Good Practise Guide**

The Forum were asked to note the latest Schools Forum – Operational and Good Practice Guide, that was published in September 2017 by the Department for Education and to accept the revised constitution for the Forum that updated on how to deal with declarations of interest in light of the latest advice from the DfE.

**41. Dates of Future Meetings**

The dates of future meetings would be:  
15 March 2018  
19 April 2018  
20 June 2018

**CHAIRMAN**

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