

**SCHOOLS FORUM
9 FEBRUARY 2012
4.30 - 5.50 PM**



Present:

George Clement, Union Representative (Chairman)
Mike Beadsley, Secondary School Governor
Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
Joanna Quinn, Primary School Representative
Tony Reading, Primary School Governor
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative
Anne Shillcock, Special Education Representative
John Throssell, Primary School Governor (Vice-Chairman)

Observer:

Councillor Alan Kendall, Executive Member for Education

Apologies for absence were received from:

Maureen Beadsley, Secondary School Governor
Trisha Donkin, Primary School Representative
Andrew Fletcher, Secondary School Representative
Ed Glasson, Primary School Governor
Gill Harbut, Primary School Representative
Louise Lovegrove, Primary School Representative
John McNab, Secondary School Governor
Kelvin Menon, Primary School Governor
Kathy Winrow, Secondary School Representative

25. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Forum noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Mike Beadsley for Maureen Beadsley

26. Declarations of Interest

Joanna Quinn declared an interest in Item 5, the Local Authority Budget Proposals for 2012-13, as a Primary School Representative.

John Throssell declared an interest in Item 5, the Local Authority Budget Proposals for 2012-13, as a Primary School Governor.

27. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Arising on the minutes, the Forum noted that:

- A Primary School Representative vacancy would be filled by Liz Cook, Headteacher at Owlsmoor Primary School.
- There was no clash between the next meeting of the Schools Forum scheduled for 15 March 2012 and any primary or secondary headteachers' conferences.
- The Equalities Act for SEN provision reinforced existing legislation and was covered by day to day work already undertaken.
- The manual guidance in relation to the Off Site and Adventurous Activities Service had been updated for Headteachers. There were a number of options which Headteachers would discuss with their bursars and then they would inform which options they would like to take forward.

28. **The Schools Budget - Proposed Use of 2011-12 Forecast Under Spend**

The Forum received a report which sought agreement from the Forum on the proposed use of the 2011-12 forecast under spend on the Schools Budget.

Budget monitoring information indicated that there would be an under spend in the Schools Budget of £1.3million. Options for the use of the funding included proposals to carry forward funding into the following financial year, proposals to increase individual school budgets in the current year, and proposals to increase centrally managed expenditure in the current year.

A summary of the investment proposals was:

1. £0.500 million to be set aside in a reserve for building adaptations to allow the creation of SEN resource units on school sites, subject to a suitable business case;
2. £0.100 million for time limited funding for the Turnaround project for a new provision for pupils at risk of exclusion who would receive specialist support away from the school but still be on the school roll;
3. £0.285 million to be set aside in an earmarked reserve to help finance any additional costs falling on schools from the Job Evaluation exercise;
4. £0.015 million for Early Years providers in the PVI;
5. £0.400 million to be carried forward into 2012-13 to help manage the funding gap of £1.9 million, thereby reducing it to £1.5 million.

The financial implications from the proposed secondary SEN Units were expected to result in considerable medium to long term savings.

RESOLVED that the investments proposed to be financed from the forecast under spending, summarised at paragraph 5.18 of the report, be supported and presented to the Executive Member for Education for final approval.

29. **Local Authority Budget Proposals for 2012-13**

The Forum received a report which sought the views of the Forum as an interested party on the 2012/13 budget proposals. This was an annual report which involved consultation on the budget proposals and comments received would be submitted to the Executive on 21 February 2012 with details of the final finance settlement. The 2012/13 budget would be formally approved at Council on 29 February 2012.

Children, Young People and Learning would provide a £1.6 million contribution to the £5 million revenue budget and there would be growth bid of £1 million. The capital budget proposals were published before the government's announcement on the levels of capital grants to be allocated for Education. However, subsequent to

publication of the proposals the government had confirmed its intention to allocate £5.671 million to the Council for 2012/13.

The Executive was expected to propose that full grant amounts be allocated and fully spent on Education. Based on the confirmed grant allocations, if agreed this would remove the funding gap on the current work programme of schemes. There were two specific grants for pupils places and maintenance. A significant growth in pupil numbers was expected in the future and planning was needed for this.

The Forum commented on the 2012/13 budget proposals of the Executive for the Children, Young People and Learning Department in respect of the revenue budget (Annex B and Annex C) and the capital programme (Annex D).

There was concern amongst some members of the Forum regarding the scale of reductions proposed to the revenue budget of Children, Young People and Learning. In particular those proposed to the Youth Service and sexual health, Early Years, Connexions, School Improvement and Aiming High for Disabled Children as these were seen as very valuable services that in general supported vulnerable children and prevented more significant issues from developing. The potential impact of these service reductions would be brought to the attention of the Executive Member for Education.

30. **Initial 2012-13 Schools Budget Proposals and other Financial Matters**

The Forum received a report which updated members on preliminary budget information provided to schools on their potential 2012/13 budget and sought views on the latest proposals from the Council for the 2012/13 Schools Budget.

The key elements of the Spending Review announced in October 2010 were:

- annual real terms growth of 0.1% for 15-16 year olds;
- assumed £1 billion savings to be made by back office functions and procurement;
- a 60% reduction in capital spend;
- funding for the Pupil Premium would be targeted at disadvantaged pupils and would reach £2.5 billion by 2014/15.

The per pupil funding that the Council would receive from the Government through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would remain unchanged for the second consecutive year. Reductions in pupil funding at school level would be capped at maximum of 1.5% which was unchanged from the current year. More pupils were attracting funding for free school meals through the Pupil Premium which would now fund schools on the basis of a pupil's eligibility at any point over the last six years, rather than the existing basis of being eligible at the most recent January census.

The Forum considered the current financial position, which based on data obtained from the October 2011 census, indicated a potential funding gap of £1.459 million, if all pressures and developments were taken into account. In order to move towards a balanced budget, the Council proposed a number of the pressures and developments which it considered the lowest priority and should not therefore receive funding next year. This would result in around £1.5 million of new funding being allocated for the remaining pressures.

Members of the Forum were also reminded that this meeting represented the last opportunity to identify any other areas of budget work that should be undertaken and made available for consideration in the final proposals for next year's budget, which would be presented to the Forum on 15 March 2012.

In response to questions, the Forum was advised that:

- The Family Intervention Programme was currently fully funded by Bracknell Forest Council. There would be no change in the service provided but a shared contribution to the project was being sought to reflect the educational benefits from the service.
- The core welfare and psychology services would remain free.
- The DfE would not likely give a prescriptive format for schools on what should be reported to parents on their use of the Pupil Premium.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

1. **NOTED** that based on current information, a funding gap of £1.459 million existed (Table 1, paragraph 5.17).
2. **AGREED** that in light of the financial position:
 - i. the items set out in Table 2 were not affordable (paragraph 5.18 - 5.21).
 - ii. and subject to other decisions in this paper relating to funding pressures and savings, the funding rates to be used in the BF Funding Formula for 2012/13 remained unchanged from the 2011/12 values (paragraph 5.23).
 - iii. the hourly funding rates paid to providers of the free entitlement to early years education and childcare for 2012/13 remain unchanged from 2011/12 values, subject to previously agreed transitional adjustments (paragraph 5.23).
 - iv. the budget proposals set out in Table 3 are included in the provisional Schools Budget for 2012/13 (paragraph 5.24).
3. **NOTED** that schools faced real terms reductions in funding (paragraph 5.26);
4. **AGREED** the self balancing budget virement relating to the Looked After Children's Education Service (paragraph 5.29);
5. **NOTED** the changes introduced by the DfE in respect of funding school through the Pupil Premium (paragraphs 5.32 – 5.34);
6. **AGREED** that the arrangements in place for the following were appropriate (paragraph 5.37):
 - a. provisions for statemented pupils (where not delegated).
 - b. pupil referral units and other education out of school.
 - c. arrangements for insurance.
 - d. administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants.
 - e. arrangements for free school meals.
 - f. arrangements for early years.
7. **NOTED** the extent to which the Forum was expected to be requested to exercise its statutory powers (paragraph 5.38).

8. **NOTED** that the Council would receive £5.7 million of un-ring fenced education related capital grants that were intended to meet pressures for additional pupil places and improving the condition of school buildings (paragraph 5.39).
9. **NOTED** that in order that final budgets reflect the most up to date data, there would be a need to revisit any preliminary budget decisions agreed now in March (paragraph 5.41).
10. **AGREED** now any further work required in respect of the 2012/13 Schools Budget (paragraph 5.41).

31. **Update to the Scheme for Financing Schools**

The Forum considered a report which sought agreement from members to update the Bracknell Forest Scheme for Financing Schools.

The Local Authority had consulted with schools in the area and received a 35% response rate. Only one area of the consultation received adverse comments from schools to the proposals and this related to the intention to re-introduce the scheme to claw back significant surplus balances from schools, where six schools, 46% of respondents, and 16% of all schools disagreed. It was confirmed that the aim was not to claw back surplus and use the funding for other services but to ensure that governors carefully considered their spending plans and did not build up significant surpluses without good reason which would be detrimental to pupils currently in the school.

In response to questions, the Forum was further advised that additional clarity and guidance had been added to the text relating to school staff undertaking paid work outside their normal contract and that:

- Employees should seek permission from governors if they wished to undertake additional work outside of their main role of employment in case there were any negative impacts or conflicts with their main role. This was not unusual and was often included in contracts of employment.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

AGREED the changes proposed to the Scheme for Financing Schools as set out in the consultation document, which would be effective from 1 March 2012, after making the following amendments:

- i. That the provisions to claw-back significant surplus school balances was implemented from the 2012-13 final accounts;
- ii. That the text to govern arrangements for school staff undertaking paid work outside their normal terms of employment was as set out in paragraph 5.14 of the report.

The Forum agreed that the word 'consultancy' should be removed from ii above, to reflect any 'paid work'.

32. **Education and Children's Services Financial Benchmarking - 2011-12 Original Budget Data**

The Forum received an annual information report that provided members with financial benchmarking data in respect of the 2011-12 original budget that had been made available by the Department for Education (DfE).

Education was funded from ring-fenced grant and expenditure reflected the decisions of the Forum.

33. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Forum noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 15 March 2012 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber at Easthampstead House.

Future meetings were scheduled for the following dates but meetings would be cancelled if there was no business to discuss.

26 April 2012
14 June 2012
19 July 2012
13 September 2012
18 October 2012
13 December 2012
7 February 2013
14 March 2013
25 April 2013

CHAIRMAN