

**SCHOOLS FORUM
12 SEPTEMBER 2013
4.30 - 5.38 PM**



Present:

Schools Members

Sue Barber, Primary School Governor
Trisha Donkin, Primary School Representative
Ed Essery, Primary School Governor
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
Keith Grainger, Secondary Head Teachers Representative
Joanna Quinn, Primary School Representative
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative
Anne Shillcock, Special Education Representative
David Stacey, Primary School Governor Representative
John Throssell, Primary School Governor (Vice-Chairman)

Non-Schools Members:

George Clement, Union Representative (Chairman)
Robin Sharples, Oxford Diocese (Church of England)

Observer:

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Apologies for absence were received from:

Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
John McNab, Secondary School Governor
Tony Reading, Primary School Governor
Paul Salter, Secondary School Representative
Kathy Winrow, Secondary School Representative

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that George Clement be elected Chairman of the Schools Forum for the academic year 2013/14.

GEORGE CLEMENT IN THE CHAIR

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that John Throssell be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Schools Forum for the academic year 2013/14.

3. Declarations of Interest

Martin Gocke declared an interest in respect of Item 7 in relation to school balances.

Ed Essery declared an interest in respect of Item 8 in relation to Wildmoor Heath Primary and Sandhurst Secondary Schools, as a governor at the schools.

4. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- *Minute 36*: the allocation of grant funding to support the Education Capital Programme had been confirmed and £7.86 million had been allocated for the four projects at Garth Hill, Owlsmoor Primary, for a primary surge class for North Bracknell and a secondary SEN facility. Scheme details were now being worked up for approval by the Council and subsequent inclusion on the approved capital programme.

5. **2014-15 Schools Budget - Preliminary Arrangements**

The Schools Forum received an update report on the arrangements required for the 2014-15 Schools Budget and agreement was sought to distribute the briefing note and consultation document at Annex A to all schools and interested parties.

The briefing note and consultation document set out the mandatory changes that would apply to next year's budget and also sought views from schools on whether central management should continue on the budgets subject to 'de-delegation' and whether any changes should be made to the arrangements where there was a choice.

The Forum thanked the officers for the clarity and completeness of the briefing note and consultation document.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

- NOTED** that all the mandatory changes required by the DfE were expected to be straightforward to implement, with minimal impact anticipated (paragraphs 5.9 and 5.10);
- NOTED** the changes needed to be made to comply with the DfE Funding Regulations and the approaches to be taken (paragraph 5.20);
- NOTED** that work was ongoing to establish the reasons behind the high proportionate spend on rates compared to other Local Authorities (paragraphs 5.21 to 5.24);
- AGREED** that the briefing note and consultation document at Annex A be distributed and that views of schools on the questions posed be gathered and taken into account when the 2014-15 budget was set (paragraph 5.25);
- NOTED** the provisional timetable for the production of 2014-15 school budgets (paragraph 5.26).

6. **2012-13 School Balances**

The Forum received a report updating members on the level of balances held by schools as at 31 March 2013, how these compared to the previous financial year and were asked to consider whether any significant surplus balances should be subject to claw-back and re-invested within the overall Schools Budget.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 provided a statutory requirement for the balance of expenditure made by each school compared to its budget share to be carried forward for use by individual governing bodies in the next financial year. This requirement was confirmed in the Scheme for Financing Schools which applied to both surplus and deficit balances and related to all revenue funds held by schools in local authority accounts.

The key point of the paper was that whilst schools were managing their finances well in difficult economic conditions, the proportion of annual income remaining unspent and held in surplus balances was greater than that required as a contingency for unforeseen events, and that schools should consider spending more money to help achieve their key objectives.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

- i. **NOTED** the level of aggregate surplus revenue balances as at 31 March 2013 totalled £4.573m, a decrease of £0.054m (1.2%) from the previous year (paragraph 5.4 (1));
- ii. **NOTED** that at 6.5% of annual income, average surplus balances were in excess of the amount required for working balances and that more funds could have been spent by schools on their key priorities (paragraph 5.4 (3));
- iii. **NOTED** that significant surplus revenue balances totalled £1.143m, an increase of £0.017m (1.5%) from the previous year (paragraph 5.7);
- iv. **NOTED** that £0.443m of Devolved Formula Capital grant remained unspent at 31 March 2013, a decrease of £0.424m (48.9%) from the previous year (paragraph 5.11 (1));
- v. **NOTED** that relevant schools had indicated that the £0.092m of Devolved Formula Capital grant funding was due to expire at 31 August 2013 would be fully spent (paragraph 5.13 (4)).

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

- a. **AGREED** that all of the significant surplus balances held by schools had been assigned for relevant purposes and should not be subject to claw back (paragraph 5.9).

7. **Schools Budget 2013-14 Monitoring and Other Matters**

The Schools Forum considered a report to endorse budget transfers proposed for 2013-14; receive an update the 2013-14 forecast budget monitoring position for the Schools Budget; agree loan requests received from schools, and; agree changes to the criteria for in-year budget allocations to schools experiencing significant growth in pupil numbers for which a proposed revision was tabled as follows:

1, Criteria for in-year budget allocations to schools experiencing significant growth in pupil numbers.

(Paragraph 4) ~~There is one exception to this general rule. When a school is funded on the basis of estimated actual costs, which is ordinarily a new school or one that opens additional forms of entry during a financial year, it will not be entitled to any growth allowances, provided funds for the additional costs that will arise from a planned significant in-year increase in pupil numbers are allocated from an alternative~~

source. This relates to schools that agree with a Local Authority to open a 'surge' class, for example, one additional class to accommodate up to 30 additional pupils where additional funding will be allocated irrespective of the actual number of pupils admitted, if the pupils in the 'surge' class are admitted after the census used for funding purposes. The funding allocation will be calculated in the same way as for general in-year growth, applied from the beginning of the term that the 'surge' class is open (*rather than against the number of months the 'surge' class is open*).

Where a 'surge' class opens after the census point used for calculating the school's budget for the next financial year, a further funding top up will be made to cover the full year cost of a teacher on Mainscale Point 6 and a Learning Support Assistant on Bracknell Forest pay point 12 for the relevant financial year. This funding will be made available for one year only at the commencement of the relevant financial year.'

The tabled revision to the criteria for in-year budget allocations to schools experiencing growth in pupil numbers was in response to in-year pressure on places for Year 1 pupils in North Bracknell. The Forum requested further information on the need for an additional class and the associated timeline.

In light of the potential year end under spending on the centrally managed items within the Schools Budget, it was confirmed that members of the Forum should send details of any additional spending proposals, which must be of a one-off nature, to paul.clark@bracknell-forest.gov.uk for inclusion in the appropriate budget paper for consideration by the Forum at a later date.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:

- i. **NOTED** the budget variances being forecast on the 2013-14 Schools Budget that in total aggregate to a net under spending of £0.251m, which increased to £0.646m when unallocated year end balances were also taken into account (paragraph 5.6);
- ii. **RECOMMENDED** to the Executive Member that the required budget transfers between Pupil behaviour, SEN provisions and support services and Education out of school were **AGREED** (paragraph 5.3);
- iii. **AGREED** that due to on-going uncertainties, the use of any under spend forecast for 2013-14 was considered in January 2014 when the 2014-15 budget was agreed (paragraph 5.9);
- iv. **AGREED** the loan requests for Wildmoor Heath Primary and Sandhurst Secondary Schools (paragraph 5.11);
- v. **AGREED** the updated criteria for in-year budget allocations to schools experiencing significant growth in pupil numbers, as tabled at the meeting.

8. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Forum noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 28 November 2013 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber at Easthampstead House. If there was no business to discuss meetings would be cancelled.

CHAIRMAN

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