

**SCHOOLS FORUM  
28 NOVEMBER 2013  
4.30 - 5.35 PM**



**Present:**

**Schools Members**

Sue Barber, Primary School Governor  
Karen Davis, Primary Head Representative  
Ed Essery, Primary School Governor  
Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor  
Richard Ireson, Academy School Representative  
John McNab, Secondary School Governor  
Tony Reading, Primary School Governor  
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative  
David Stacey, Primary School Governor Representative  
John Throssell, Primary School Governor (Vice-Chairman)

**Non-Schools Members:**

George Clement, Union Representative (Chairman)  
Kate Sillett, PVI Provider Representative

**Observer:**

Muriel Rant, Education Funding Agency

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Liz Cole, Primary School Representative  
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative  
Joanna Quinn, Primary School Representative  
Paul Salter, Secondary School Representative  
Robin Sharples, Oxford Diocese (Church of England)  
Kathy Winrow, Academy School Representative

**9. Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed Karen Davis, a new Primary Headteacher representative from Whitegrove Primary School on the Schools Forum.

Muriel Rant of the Funding Reform Team at the Department for Education was welcomed to the meeting as an observer and gave a brief overview of her role. The Education Funding Agency (EFA) observer role on Schools Forums was a consequence of the October 2013 changes to the regulations in relation to Schools Forums.

The EFA was undertaking a programme of visits to attend Schools Forum meetings to see how they were working and at present the EFA had attended Schools Forum meetings in 120 out of 152 Local Authorities. The aim was to visit all Schools Forums by the end of March 2014 and spread good practice across the country.

The key messages presented by the EFA were:

- The EFA had finished the first tranche of changes to Education Funding through the simplification of the composition of the local funding formula for schools which had generally been welcomed by local authorities.
- The second phase of change would involve the introduction of a national fair funding formula to distribute funding to local authorities. A consultation on proposed changes was expected to be published in the near future.
- On 18 October 2013, the EFA published an updated 'Schools Forums: Operational and Good Practice Guide' to help spread best practice and clarify roles and responsibilities for the Schools Forum.
- There was also a short guide 'Schools Forum: A guide for schools and academies on its role and their responsibilities' which was published in July 2013 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forum-a-guide-for-schools-and-academies> .

10. **Substitute Members**

Richard Ireson was present as Academy School Representative at the meeting as a substitute for Kathy Winrow.

11. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

12. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

13. **Provision of a Multi Professional Child Development and Assessment Service**

The Forum received a report to approve the outline of the tendering process and specification for the provision of a multi professional child development and assessment service.

The aim was for a strong assessment centre for 0-5 year olds, to identify difficulties at as early an age as possible, and to provide support for school education. The centre would offer a variety of services, including physiotherapy. There would be criteria for entrants to the centre, and the timescale for the procurement process was detailed at 5.11 of the report.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools Forum:

- i. **AGREED** the tendering process and specification for the provision of a multi professional child development and assessment service as set out in paragraphs 5.9 and 5.10.

14. **Surge Classrooms**

The Forum received an information report in response to the request from Schools Forum on 12 September 2013 for further information on the need for the Year 1 surge class at Harmans Water primary school and the associated timeline.

Bracknell Forest had experienced a four year period of rising school rolls across the Borough and the Council had a good track record of forecasting need and delivering places in accordance with the statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

During the summer of 2013 there was a significant and unexpected increase in the number of in-year admissions of Year 1 pupils. These had risen from the normal 60-70 applications to 96 meaning that there were no spare places in North or South Bracknell.

Based on this identified need, Harmans Water Primary school was selected for a Year 1 surge class from January 2014 to meet the demand for school places arising from in year admissions.

#### 15. **Schools Forum: Operational and Good Practice Guide**

The Forum considered a report on the latest version of the Department for Education's (DfE) Schools Forum: Operational and Good Practice Guidance. Agreement was sought to a small number of changes and also the identification by members of the Forum of any other changes that may be beneficial.

The DfE guide was designed to provide members of Schools Forums, local authority officers and elected members with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of Schools Forums.

The Forum's attention was drawn to the Executive Summary on pages 28 to 33 of the report. The guidance had been reviewed internally and changes would be made as required and improvements made where needed but the Forum was generally compliant with best practice.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools Forum:

- i. **AGREED** the changes proposed to the operational arrangements for the Schools Forum as set out in paragraph 5.5;

Members of the Forum would notify the lead officer of any other changes they wished to be made and 2.2. of the recommendations would be agreed at the next meeting of the Forum.

#### 16. **Educational and Children's Services Financial Benchmarking - 2013-14 Original Budget Data**

The Forum received an annual information report that provided members of the Forum with financial benchmarking data in respect of the 2013-14 original budget that had been made available by the Department for Education (DfE). It could be used to help identify budget areas that might require review due to their relative high or low cost when compared to other Local Authorities (LAs) in England or our statistical neighbours.

The report highlighted the significant variances to the average of the statistical neighbours, most of which were consistent with the issues raised in previous years.

#### 17. **Outcomes from the Financial Consultation with Schools**

The Forum considered a report summarising the results of the Financial Consultation exercise with governing bodies and other interested parties. It reported on schools' views regarding the questions raised and was intended to assist the Schools Forum in making recommendations in respect of the 2014-15 Schools Budget.

Preliminary decisions taken at this time would be used in the calculation of indicative 2014-15 budgets for schools. These were expected to be with schools by the end of term in order to assist in the early stages of financial planning.

All the recommendations for change represented the majority view of responses to the consultation which with a 78% response rate, provided the Forum with a high degree of confidence that the wishes of schools were being fully reflected in next year's budget.

In order to meet the requirements of the statutory funding regulations, final decisions on the 2014-15 Schools Budget would need to be taken at the next meeting of the Forum on 16 January 2014.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools Forum:

- i. **NOTED** the outcomes from the financial consultation with schools as summarised in Annex 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the additional comments made by schools, as set out in the confidential Annex;
- iii. **AGREED** the recommendations set out in the boxes in paragraphs 5.11 to 5.17 and 5.20 to 5.26 and that these would be incorporated into the calculations for 2014-15 indicative school budgets;
- iv. **AGREED** that the cost of those schools losing money, and receiving a funding top up through the Minimum Funding Guarantee, should be funded by on-going use of a cap on the increases being received by schools gaining through the changes (paragraph 5.28);
- v. **NOTED** that should an SEN specific contingency be established, it may need to be funded from Schools Block money rather than the High Needs Block allocation (paragraph 5.30);

Primary School representatives only:

- vi. **AGREED** the recommendations relating to de-delegation set out in the boxes in paragraphs 5.18 and 5.19 for primary schools and that these be incorporated into the calculations for 2014-15 indicative school budgets.

Secondary School representatives only:

- vii. **AGREED** the recommendations relating to de-delegation set out in the boxes in paragraphs 5.18 to 5.19 for secondary schools and that these be incorporated into the calculations for 2014-15 indicative school budgets.

## 18. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Forum noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 16 January 2014 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber at Easthampstead House. If there was no business to discuss meetings would be cancelled.

**CHAIRMAN**