



**SCHOOLS FORUM
10 MARCH 2016
4.30 - 6.15 PM**

Present:

Schools Members

Liz Cook, Secondary Head Representative
Karen Davis, Primary Head Representative
Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
Keith Grainger, Secondary Head Representative
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative
Anne Shillcock, Special Education Representative
Beverley Stevens, Academy School Representative
Grant Strudley, Primary Head Representative
John Throssell, Primary School Governor (Vice-Chairman)

Non-Schools Members:

George Clement, Union Representative (Chairman)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Sue Barber, Primary School Governor
Liz Cole, Primary School Representative
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
John McNab, Secondary School Governor
Debbie Smith, Secondary Head Representative

16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17. Minutes and Matters Arising

In respect to identifying an alternative funding stream for the Schools Music Festival it was noted that this had not yet been progressed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Members were advised that an additional item had been added to the agenda which was to receive an update on School and Education Funding following the release of two significant consultation documents from the DfE.

18. LA Revenue Budget 2016-17 - Further Savings Protocol

As part of the Council's consultation process, the Forum received a report on the 2016/17 further savings proposals of the Executive in respect of the revenue budget for the Children, Young People and Learning Department. This reflected the confirmed financial settlement for the Council which was £2.4m worse than expected.

Without this information, Council-wide initial budget proposals included economies of approximately £4m which left a potential budget gap of around £6.044m. An increase in Council Tax, an appropriate contribution from the Council's revenue reserves and identification of further economies were available as options to bridge this gap. The Council had established a Transformation Board to review the delivery of all services over the next four years and identify where further savings could be made. The initial review of five service areas, which did not include CYPL, identified potential economies of £2.183m for 2016/17 of which £1.816m was expected to be available to contribute to closing the £6.044m gap.

The provisional Local Government Financial Settlement was announced in December 2015 confirming the £2.4m gap in the initial budget proposals. Other Councils in Berkshire were similarly affected by the provisional Settlement and as such, a delegation of Berkshire Council Leaders, headed by the Leader of Bracknell, met with the Minister for Local Government and put forward a strong case for Berkshire to be treated more favourably. This had the result that Bracknell Forest would receive a newly introduced transitional grant of £0.9m in both 2016/17 and 2017/18. However, the Revenue Support Grant loss of £5.4m in 2016/17, which was £2.4m more than the anticipated loss, meant that in overall terms this still represented a further £1.5m loss of grant in 2016/17.

In respect of additional economies for CYPL in 2016/17, the report detailed the following proposed savings:

- A reduction in universal service provision within the Alders & Chestnuts Children's Centre area of £75,000.
- A number of savings within the Early Help Offer of £217,000. These included:
 - A reduction in resource support for the Every Child a Talker Programme.
 - Deletion of 2.2 FTE Development Officer posts.
 - Removal of resources budget at the Family Information Service.
 - 50% reduction in grant allocated to Homestart for the provision of trained volunteers to support families requiring early help.
 - Deletion of voluntary sector grant support to KIDS Young Carers.

The timetable for these proposals included a twelve week consultation period from 24 February 2016 to 17 May 2016, recommendations to the Council by the Executive on 14 June 2016 with the Council considering the Executive's recommendations on 13 July 2016.

The Forum was advised that generally speaking a number of service contracts were coming to an end and this had provided officers with an opportunity to review actual spend against service delivery. Anne Shillcock expressed her concern at the proposed additional savings and the likely implication of a reduced service to the most vulnerable families. In particular, Anne was concerned about the reductions in support for the Every Child a Talker Programme and in the Homestart grant which could impact on whether a vulnerable, young child would be ready to start school. In addition, Anne raised her concern about the deletion of the grant to KIDS Young Carers and asked what organisation would be able to replace the work carried out by KIDS at no cost. David Watkins, Chief Officer, Children, Young People and Learning advised members that £20,000 would still remain in the budget for young carers and therefore the service provided by KIDS Young Carers would be integrated into other service areas and support to young carers would continue to be provided but just delivered differently. Members were advised that the Department's performance in

terms of early years had increased and in some areas was in the top three in the country. As a consequence, officers had worked hard to look at the impact of potential savings and recognised that the proposed cuts were significant for a small authority. Members were advised that if the proposed savings were implemented following the consultation the affected services would be monitored very carefully and kept under strict review.

The Forum discussed alternative revenue streams to help offset the proposed savings such as bidding in the Big Lottery Fund. David Watkins advised this had been looked at by the Council and would continue to be pursued whilst being mindful they were competing against larger authorities who were able to demonstrate they could make a bigger and better impact on more children. In addition, Members were advised that the Department would look at partners such as Health, CCGs and CAMHS to assist in service delivery in order to build on the good start that had been made with the Family Focus Programme.

Members were advised that the additional capital savings proposals would be reviewed at a future meeting but it was noted that the reductions to buildings planned maintenance did not include schools. The Forum discussed the significant budget in 2016/17 for the construction of Binfield Learning Village. The forecast for school places meant the site was still required but even if the planned phasing for the completion and release of housing stock changed and affected that forecast, money from the capital programme could not be used to fill gaps in the revenue budget.

Members requested the following **COMMENT** was fed back to the Executive in respect of the 2016/17 further savings proposals:

The Schools Forum were unanimous in their view that the 2016/17 proposed further savings in respect of the revenue budget for CYPL would have a significant and detrimental affect on the outcomes for young people which, once realised, would be too late for those young people. The Schools Forum believed officers faced an unrealistic timeframe in which to determine where the cuts should be made and Members felt they too faced an unworkable timeframe in which to offer viable alternatives to the proposed cuts.

19. **Proposals for the 2016-17 Early Years and High Needs Block Elements of the Schools Budget**

The Forum was presented with a report on proposals from the Council for the 2016/17 Early Years and High Needs Block elements of the Schools Budget. Recommendations agreed from this report would form the basis of proposals to be presented to the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning.

Early Years Block

Paul Clark, Head of Departmental Finance, Children Young People and Learning said the DfE had confirmed that per child funding for Early Years Block for universal entitlement to 15 hours a week free education and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds would remain unchanged from 2015/16 meaning no allowance would be made for inflation or other pressures. The funding rate would therefore stay at £3,928.30 which was equivalent to £4.13 per hour per child using the DfE calculation of the standard full time education rate of 25 hours a week for 38 weeks a year (950 hours in a year).

Taking account of this information, the initial Early Years Block DSG income is forecast to be £5.196m, and the budget was recommended to be set at this level,

with funding rates to be paid to providers remaining unchanged from the current year with the following changes to the budget being proposed:

1. Updated budget provision for payments to providers to reflect:
 - Estimated actual participation rates for 3 and 4 year olds by provider using May 2015, October 2015 and January 2016 data for 2016/17. Payments would be adjusted during 2016/17 to reflect actual participation and any difference in actual payments to the estimates would be funded through the contingency. This would equate to an increase of £0.049m.
 - Actual participation rates for 2 year olds by provider based on January 2016 data which reflected the current take-up. Again, payments would be adjusted in-year to reflect actual participation and funded through the contingency as necessary. This equated to a cost reduction of £0.036m.
2. Following the restructure within the Early Help provision, the service delivered at the Margaret Wells Furby Children's Resource Centre was brought in-house with effect from April 2015. Third sector staff had transferred into the BFC Early Help Inclusion Team and the restructure had led to improved service delivery and outcomes for children and families. This change equated to a net nil budget adjustment.

The Forum examined the figures for the Early Years Block Budget of £5.196m for 2016/17. Questions and comments from forum members were received in respect of:

- The net cost of £11,210 for free milk to eligible children. Milk was donated by the EU and the budget was needed in order to manage the provision which some Members felt was beneficial to the children. Discussion took place as to whether the budget could be better utilised by being diverted to a service that had been identified in the proposed additional economies for CYPL. However, it was believed there was a requirement by LAs to provide free milk to eligible children but Members would be advised if this was not the case.
- Funding for one FTE Early Years Development Officer. Members were advised this was not a new post and was supporting early years providers in tracking and monitoring children's progress to ensure school readiness.
- Members were advised there was no further update from the DfE on the practical implementations of doubling free childcare entitlement from 15 hours to 30 hours for eligible working families with 3 and 4 year olds or the proposal to increase the average hourly rate paid to childcare providers.

High Needs Block

Members were advised that the Education Funding Agency had calculated an initial 2016/17 High Needs Block allocation for Bracknell Forest of £11.902m, an increase of £0.183m on the current budget. This allocation included £0.215m which was a share of the confirmed additional national funding of £92m added by the DfE for distribution to LAs based on population aged 2-19 years. Members were advised that as the final High Needs Block DSG would not be confirmed until the end of March it was proposed to retain the increase of £0.183m in case of an adjustment to the places deduction or if actual costs incurred exceeded budget estimates.

With regard to Rise@GHC, the new 56 place Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pupil facility at Eastern Road, the original funding model anticipated annual savings when fully opened of around £0.72m on placement fees from 35 BF resident students, with

additional placements being made, and paid for, by other LAs. However, the DfE were changing the way that non maintained special schools were to be funded for places, with there no longer being an increase to an LAs High Needs Block DSG if less external places are required. This therefore reduced the anticipated savings by half to around £0.36m which meant a lower contribution to planned cost reductions than previously anticipated. An adjustment to the 2016/17 budget plan would therefore be required.

The report set out the good progress made in managing down 2015/16 expenditure on high needs budgets, with a forecast saving of £0.447m together with an anticipated under spend of £0.048m by other centrally managed budgets in the Schools Budget making an aggregate forecast under spend of £0.495m.

The SEN Team, supported by Finance, had reviewed all High Needs budgets and a number of changes to budgets were proposed of which the key aspects were:

- The majority of savings being experienced in the current year on external placements were expected to continue into 2016/17, with a full year effect saving of £0.483m; £0.707m basic savings, with £0.224m arising from reduced numbers of ASD placements following the opening of Rise@GHC, where the resultant budget saving needs to be transferred.
- To reflect the additional number of post 16 places expected as the age of funding responsibility had been extended, provision for 15 additional element 3 top up payments and 25 new places at £6,000 each (EFA would pay the first £4,000). Estimated cost of £0.264m.
- An increase in average support needs in 2015-16 at Kennel Lane Special school was expected to create a pressure of £0.295m.
- Income from the EFA for post 16 places at Kennel Lane Special school would be above the current income target by £0.088m.

The report recommended the Forum agree this approach to setting the High Needs Block related budgets to the Executive Member and to confirm that appropriate arrangements were in place for the education of pupils with SEN and use of pupil referral units and the education of children not in school.

The report stated that further medium term pressures were anticipated from demographic and legislative changes. Therefore, the Council had proposed an independent review of High Needs funding in order to help identify further opportunities for the efficient use of resources and also to maximise the benefits for high needs pupils. The intention was to conduct the review during the summer term 2016 and that the team would comprise an experienced head teacher with senior leadership experience in both mainstream and special schools and a senior officer level post with experience of managing SEN services in at least two LAs. The proposed terms of reference were set out in Annex 6 of the report.

Questions and comments from forum members were received in respect of:

- The proposed budget of £5,000 to prevent exclusions. Members were advised this figure was intended for short term intervention and had been based on current spend.
- Was Bracknell Forest meeting its statutory duty to primary excluded children not able to access school education? Officers commented they were not

aware of any primary excluded children but provision would be made for them via the home tuition service. In those circumstances, the school making the exclusion had to provide the funds via a transfer of the initial monies allocated to it for that child to whichever service the child then received.

The Forum **AGREED** the following recommendations made in the report:

That the Executive Member makes the following decisions:

For the Early Years Block funded budgets:

- That funding rates for the free entitlement to early years education and childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds remain unchanged from those paid in the 2015/16 financial year.
- That the total initial budget was set at £5.196m.

For the High Needs Block funded budgets:

- The total initial budget was set at £14.312m.
- In its role of statutory decision maker, that there are appropriate arrangements in place for:
 1. Early years provision
 2. The education of pupils with SEN, and
 3. The use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school
- The terms of reference for the High Needs funding review.

20. **2015-16 funding allocations**

The Forum received a report on the in-year allocation of funds to schools through School Specific Contingencies and other centrally managed budgets that are funded from the DSG.

The Forum **NOTED:**

- Due to significant in-year increases in pupil numbers, 8 schools (5 Primary and 3 Secondary) had received additional funding which totalled £195,050.
- Four schools required to meet the Key Stage 1 Class Size regulations received additional funding totalling £42,479 due to actual changes in pupil numbers for the 2015 summer and autumn terms and the spring term 2016.
- A specific budget had previously been agreed to support new and expanding schools which specifically related to Jennett's Park Primary School. Top up funding was set aside to reflect the special circumstances arising from a rapid increase in roll from a 1 form of entry school to 2 forms of entry, opening a new class each academic year. Based on the assessed additional costs that the school would face, the Forum had agreed that £50,000 should be allocated each year a new class was required to be opened.

- Two Primary and 2 Secondary schools received additional funding allocations that totalled £68,842 as a result of having a disproportionate number of SEN pupils.
- Four schools in financial difficulties received additional financial support of between £2,000 and £23,206. Funds were allocated by the LA as a result of each school being awarded an Ofsted judgement of Requires Improvement or Inadequate to make the required improvements.

The recommendation to note the above was to ensure that the Schools Forum supported how contingency funds had been allocated to schools and that it was aware of the total amount involved.

Members were advised that existing policy text on funds used to distribute centrally managed funds to schools had been amended so that the School Specific Contingency would now be known as the Growth Fund. In respect of the policy for the allocation of additional funds to support new and expanding schools for 2016/17 only, Members were asked to agree the new policy wording which would be reviewed and updated before April 2017.

The Forum had agreed last year that The Pines Primary School should receive on-going additional financial support due to additional site costs associated with the expansion of the school where the Primary Professional Centre had been returned to school use to accommodate increases in pupil numbers. The report set out how the funding top up had been calculated and Members noted that the initial calculation indicated top up funding of £10,000. The amount would be subject to update in light of final account actual expenditure for the newly refurbished buildings and any further comments from the school or new matters that come to light during the costing process.

The Forum **AGREED:**

- An exceptional funding allocation of up to £10,000 for The Pines Primary School.
- The amendments to existing policy texts on funds used to distribute centrally managed funds to schools.

21. **Update on School and Education Funding**

Paul Clark gave a presentation to Members updating on school and education funding following a report received from the DfE. The key headlines were:

Schools National Funding Formula

- Main funding for schools and education to remain through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Pupil Premium Grants (PPG).
- Schools Block to be calculated from a national funding formula. There would be no local funding formula, everything would be centrally managed.
- The component parts of the funding formula included basic per pupil cost, a uniform amount for KS1/2, KS3 and KS4 and an amount for additional needs such as deprivation at pupil and area level and low prior attainment.
- There was a further £600m savings target on the Education Services Grant – of which Bracknell Forest's share was £1.5m – to be achieved from LAs "stepping back from School Improvement" and removal of other duties.

- The role of the Schools Forum to continue unchanged to 2018/19, subject to review thereafter.
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee would continue.
- Support for school efficiency to be developed to help relevant schools manage funding reductions.

There would be a 2 stage consultation process. Stage 1 was the setting out of the principles and factors to be used in the formula, closing date of 17 April 2016. Stage 2 was to seek views on the weightings for each factor. LAs to manage school budgets in 2017/18 and 2018/19 but to the funding levels allocated through the national funding formula. In 2019/20 all schools would be directly funded through the national funding formula.

High Needs Funding Reform

- Funding to continue to be allocated to LAs, not schools.
- New funding formula based on proxy measures to include low prior attainment, pupil and area deprivation, population aged 2 to 18, geographical costs.
- Fund mainstream schools with SEN resource units at £6,000 per place, with per pupil funding added to the main school budget.
- To add independent special schools to the institutions that receive £10,000 place funding from the EFA by deduction to LA DSG.
- A consultation would take place to consider how a post-16 funding formula would work for mainstream post-16 providers with a small number of high needs pupils.
- DfE to make available capital funding for invest-to-save schemes, such as Rise@GHC and other lower cost, high quality initiatives.
- £200m would be available to support the expansion of existing provision as well as the development of new schools to create new specialist places.
- Element 3 'top up' funding to all institutions for assessed support needs would remain.
- Local arrangements for alternative provision funding would remain unchanged.

There would be a 2 stage consultation process. Stage 1 was the setting out of the principles and factors to be used in the formula, closing date of 17 April 2016. Stage 2 was to seek views on the weightings for each factor and transitional arrangements.

Proposals for the Early Years Funding Reform would follow and were set to be implemented from April 2018.

Paul Clark said he would e-mail members the full DfE report and asked for comments to be returned to him no later than 10 April 2016.

22. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The next meeting scheduled for 21 April 2016 was CANCELLED.

The next meeting is scheduled for 16 June 2016.

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