

**SCHOOLS FORUM
14 MARCH 2019
4.30 - 5.50 PM**



Present:

Schools' Members

Jennifer Baker, Special School Representative (Substitute)
Marion Bent, Pupil Referral Unit (Substitute)
Liz Cole, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Neil Davies, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Keith Grainger, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)
Stuart Matthews, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)
Brian Poxon, Secondary School Representative (Governor)
Roger Prew, Primary School Representative (Governor)
Phil Sherwood, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Debbie Smith, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)

Non-Schools' Members:

Michelle Tuddenham, PVI Provider Representative (Co-Optee)
Greg Wilton, Teacher Union Representative (Co-Optee)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative (Governor)
Jane Coley, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)
Karen Davis, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Peter Floyd, Special School Representative (Governor)
Leslie Semper, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)
Richard Stok, Primary School Representative (Governor)

85. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Forum noted the attendance of the following Substitute Members:

Marion Bent for Martin Gocke
Jennifer Baker for Peter Floyd

In response to a query, it was also confirmed that any Forum Member could be represented by a substitute from their group.

Appointment of Vice-chairman

RESOLVED that Debbie Smith be appointed Vice-chairman of the Schools Forum for the meeting on 14 March 2019 only.

DEBBIE SMITH IN THE CHAIR

86. **Declarations of Interest**

Keith Grainger, Brian Poxon, Marion Bent and Jennifer Baker declared an affected interest in respect of Item 6 (Final Proposals for the 2019/20 High Needs Block Element of the Schools Budget).

87. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 17 January 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Forum questioned whether the Council had a proposal regarding SEN support and alternative provision for vulnerable young people. It was explained that the Council intended to implement a strategy proposal but had not been able to due to a lack of money. The Council had been waiting for the outcome of the bid to the DfE and hoped that this would have solved a lot of the issues. The bid being unsuccessful had hindered that process. Regarding alternative provision, meetings had been set for consultation on this but had been delayed due to sickness of the specialist engaged for this purpose. In summary, this proposal has been a work in progress but it was hoped that a proposal could be made soon. The Forum expressed regret that this has been ongoing for such a long time and requested that a date be set for sharing this proposal.

Arising also from minute 79 regarding the first phase of the HNB pilot scheme, Jackie Ross advised that the Hubs were involved in identifying the specific needs of the children and young people discussed using an evidence-based model. It was expected that the findings from this would be detailed in a report which would be submitted to the Forum at the end of term. Jackie Ross updated that four meetings in schools had already taken place and it had been encouraging to see the effort the schools had put in to meet these high needs without generating a high cost, having spent approximately £12,000 so far.

The actions arising from minute 80 and 81 were to be covered in Items 4 and 6 respectively.

88. **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment**

The Forum considered a report on the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

An explanation of the main findings was given; namely that, whilst Bracknell Forest had sufficient childcare, it was difficult to predict the potential child yield from the new homes planned for completion in 2018-19 to 2022-23. The Council was developing a strategy to consider work which may be needed including identifying location "hot spots", potential new locations to develop further childcare provision, and liaising with existing providers to see whether they can adapt their working models such as extending their provision to cover holidays. The strategy would be submitted to the Forum once completed.

The Forum expressed concern that only 7 out of the 7,264 children under the age of five living in Bracknell Forest had an EHCP as at 17 January 2019: children who were not identified as having serious needs at a young age were likely to struggle when attending primary education. It was acknowledged that this was a small percentage (0.1% compared to the national figure of 0.8%) although this was a higher number than previous years. However, children without an EHCP were able to receive support from the SEN inclusion budget prior to being put forward for an EHCP.

The Forum questioned the accuracy of the projected numbers of nursery-aged children being shown to be lower than the numbers of children in school years 1, 2 and 3 and what work was being done to ensure greater accuracy. Assurance was given that the Council was receiving better data from Health Visitors leading to stronger predictions. However, it was acknowledged that children were more likely to access cross-border early years' provisions so the Council was in a weaker position to identify those children as the funding would be from other Local Authorities.

Clarity was sought on the last sentence on page 9 of the report which stated that "[parents may also use provision which is not considered 'childcare', for example sports or arts clubs after school or in the holidays." It was noted that this related to primary schools as well as secondary schools. Schools were not expected to register sports or arts & crafts clubs as childcare provisions if they were not running more than two activities.

RESOLVED, to NOTE the contents of the CSA which indicated that there was sufficient childcare in Bracknell Forest to meet demand while noting the potential impact on demand of new homes planned for completion in 2018-19 to 2022-23.

89. **Final Proposals for the 2019/20 Early Years Block Element of the Schools Budget**

The Forum considered a report which sought agreement from the Schools Forum to the final proposals for the 2019-20 Early Years budgets, including the values to be attributed to the Bracknell Forest Council Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF).

The report detailed the following:

- The national Early Years Block (EYB) funding framework.
- The local EYB funding framework, which provided the context for setting budgets.
- The provisional estimate of the £7.566m anticipated EYB Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) income. Whilst the government had frozen hourly funding rates paid to LAs at 2018-19 levels, the total income expected will increase as a result from having a full year of the new 30 hours entitlement.
- A summary of the funding decisions previously taken by the Forum.
- Proposals for 2019-20 based on historic data, which included a summary of the proposed EYFF. There was one additional cost of £16,000 which related to implementing new ICT systems, which was proposed to be funded from the centrally managed funds as it was within the 3% cap.

There were no questions or comments from the Forum

RESOLVED, to AGREE:

1. That for the 2019-20 financial year, the Executive Member:
 - I. sets the total initial Dedicated Schools Grant funded budgets at £7.566m, it incorporates the changes set out in the supporting information, and relevant budgets are therefore updated to those summarised in Annex 1;
 - II. retains the hourly funding rates paid to providers of the free entitlement for 3 and 4-year olds at the amounts paid in 2018-19 as summarised in Table 2;
 - III. retains the hourly funding rate paid to providers of the free entitlement for 2-year olds at the £5.46 paid in 2018-19; and
 - IV. sets a ring-fence on funding allocations received from the government in respect of the Early Years Disability Access Fund and Early Years Pupil

Premium to ensure, where affordable, all funds are allocated to providers (paragraph 6.21).

2. That there are appropriate arrangements in place for Early Years provisions.

90. **Final Proposals for the 2019/20 High Needs Block Element of the Schools Budget**

The Forum considered a report which sought comments on the final budget proposals for the High Needs Block (HNB) element of the Schools budget that were being presented by the Council. There were also a small number of decisions for the Forum to take in line with the statutory funding framework.

The Forum was advised that historically there had been lots of spot-purchasing and there was not a strategic budget. It was acknowledged that there was a need for tighter future-needs forecasting underpinned by a greater understanding of the needs of children being born in Bracknell Forest. The Forum had previously considered in the meeting of the Forum held on 17 January 2019 setting up a Sub-Group of the Forum to work on a more strategic approach in closer partnership with the Council. It was recognised that the Council and schools were now working together more effectively and this was expected to be strengthened further by the Sub-Group.

Whilst the chairman, Martin Gocke, was unable to attend the meeting, he had read through the papers and the Forum noted his comments as follows:

- Martin expressed concern that the Schools Forum has historically not had enough information re HNB spending until the point at which decisions needed to be made.
- Martin was keen that the Forum be made more aware of how the various plans intended to make savings and better use of this resource, with outcomes properly reported back to the Forum.
- Regarding the proposal to establish a Sub Committee, Martin expressed the following reservations:
 - a. Paragraphs 6.9, 6.10 and 6.11 in the main report set out clearly the work that needed to be done and Martin's view was that a working group comprising Head Teachers, possibly SENCOs, Heads of other resource provision including Pupil Referral Services and KLS, and BFC officers was needed to progress that work as opposed to just having members of the Schools Forum.
 - b. Martin did not feel that he could commit to an additional six meetings per year as proposed.
- Martin agreed that there needed to be a link between any proposed group and the Schools Forum but felt that it should lie within the wider arrangements of the LA rather than the narrower confines of the Schools Forum.

It was explained that the Sub-Group would be made up of representatives from Schools Forum but could also include a wider representation. It was suggested that the first meeting of the Sub-Group could confirm membership and the onward plan. The first meeting was arranged to be held on 1 May 2019 commencing at 4pm at Time Square Ground Floor, Room 8. An invitation would be issued to all members of the Forum.

Action: Jackie Ross and Kashif Nawaz

The Forum noted the Tabled Amendment which was circulated to members during the meeting. The ongoing budget checking and review process identified an error on the original fee calculation for other LA students attending the Autistic Spectrum

Disorder Resource Provision at Garth Hill College. The original calculation understated the income by £33,000. However, there was no change to the gross cost of the Resource Provision.

The annual proposal required by the government of all LAs to seek agreement from the Forum that there are “appropriate arrangements” in place for the education of pupils with SEN and the use of pupil referral units had not been agreed by the Forum in each of the last 2 years. Considering the current situation, it was felt that the sticking point was the word “appropriately” as it meant different things to different people. It was queried whether not agreeing would give the Council more scope when making bids to the DfE but it was not expected that this would be the case.

The Forum noted that, whilst they could not agree that there were “appropriate arrangements”, there had been some recent positive steps taken to improve this; in particular there had been significant investment in Kennel Lane School which would help to avoid expensive out-of-area placements. It was felt that the Council was moving in the right direction.

RESOLVED, following consideration by the Forum of the HNB budget proposals from the Council, to AGREE that the Executive Member:

1. sets the total initial Dedicated Schools Grant funded budget at £15.409m, it incorporates the changes set out in the supporting information and amended Annex 3, and relevant budgets are therefore updated to those summarised in amended Annex 4;
2. NOTES the £0.111m budget gap that will need to be managed in-year through the change programme; and
3. APPROVES a Minimum Funding Guarantee for Kennel Lane Special School of plus 0.5%, the same amount as for mainstream schools (paragraph 6.13).

The Forum did NOT AGREE that there are appropriate arrangements in place for:

1. the education of pupils with SEN (paragraph 6.15); and
2. the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school (paragraph 6.15).

RESOLVED, to DEFER until the first meeting of the Sub-Group the proposal to agree the terms of reference for the Schools Forum HNB Sub-Committee, as set out in Annex 6.

The Forum noted that, whilst they could not agree that there were “appropriate arrangements”, there had been some recent positive steps taken to improve this; in particular there had been significant investment in Kennel Lane School which would help to avoid expensive out-of-area placements. It was felt that the Council was moving in the right direction.

91. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The next meeting of the Forum was due to be held on 20 June 2019 commencing at 4.30pm (preceded by a briefing for members at 3.30pm).

CHAIRMAN