

**SCHOOLS FORUM
19 SEPTEMBER 2019
4.32 - 5.32 PM**



Present:

Liz Cole, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Karen Davis, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative (Governor)
Keith Grainger, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)
Stuart Matthews, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)
Brian Poxon, Secondary School Representative (Governor)
Roger Prew, Primary School Representative (Governor)
Debbie Smith, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)
Richard Stok, Primary School Representative (Governor)
Greg Wilton, Teacher Union Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Jane Coley, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)
Neil Davies, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Peter Floyd, Special School Representative (Governor)
Phil Sherwood, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Michelle Tuddenham, PVI Provider Representative

103. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

There were no Substitute Members.

104. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Martin Gocke be elected Chairman of the Schools Forum.

Martin Gocke in the Chair

105. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Stuart Matthews be appointed Vice-chairman of the Schools Forum.

106. Declarations of Interest

Debbie Smith declared an affected interest in respect of Item 9 (Arrangements for Additional Financial Support to Schools)

107. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 20 June 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Arising from minute 94 Kashif Nawaz confirmed that the terms of reference of the Sub-Group had been finalised. It was proposed to add a standing agenda item to

present the approved minutes from the Sub-Group to the Forum, and this would ensure the terms of reference are reported.

Arising from minute 95 Paul Clark advised that he had further discussions with Cherry Hall relating to early years providers keeping places open for children not attending regularly. It was explained that the policy did not require providers to keep the space open. The LA would pay an empty place for up to six weeks. If a child is absent for 3 weeks the provider should inform the Early Years team, they will then investigate if there is a safeguarding concern and escalate if necessary.

A complementary general attendance guidance note was being prepared for distribution to providers.

Action: Cherry Hall

Arising from minute 96 (the pilot mechanism for children and young people to have prompt access to short-term additional specialist support from the High Needs Block (HNB) without having to go through an Education Health Care (EHC) Plan statutory needs assessment to access Element 3 'top up funding'), this would be reported on in November.

Arising from minute 97 the Forum agreed that the Alternative Provision review would be deferred to the November meeting. The paper would be provided to all schools. The Forum noted that papers had already been presented to the Sub-Group but there was some doubt as to whether it was agreed at that meeting to share with all the headteachers.

Arising from minute 100 Paul Clark would add to future reports on school balances additional historic information relating to how many years individual schools have had surplus balances.

Arising from minute 101 Paul Clark advised that he hadn't received sufficient clarity from the DfE yet regarding the Growth Fund. However, a proposal would be presented to the Forum in November.

Action: Paul Clark

In respect of a question in respect of receiving an update on forecast pupil numbers and available places, the Forum was advised that the latest projections would be presented in December.

Action: Chris Taylor

108. Additional Item – Flow of Funds to Schools and Spending Review 2020-23

The Chairman gave notice that he had agreed to the addition of an item of business to the agenda for the meeting. The report was presented via PowerPoint presentation and related to the flow of funds from the DfE to the LA and then schools and also the 2020-23 Spending Review. This update was necessary as it added important information received after reports had been published.

The Forum was advised that whilst relevant details had yet to be received to provide an indication of likely funding in BF schools, the overall financial settlement was very positive with at least a 4% increase in the DfE school national funding formula..

The aggregate increase to the SNFF was predicted to amount to £7.1bn a year after three years. This equated to a three-year increase of over 15% which the Institute for Fiscal Studies reported would restore school spending to pre-austerity levels.

The Forum questioned how the increase had gone from 4% to 15%. Paul Clark explained that the 4% increase was for the first year and would increase over three years.

The Forum noted that the formula for calculating the teachers' pay grant and teachers' pension employer contribution grant was likely to remain the same and outside the SNFF with relevant per pupil funding values yet to be confirmed.

For High Needs budgets, where significant pressures are also being experienced, LAs could expect between an 8% and 17% increase in per capita funding. Again, insufficient details were available to predict the likely increase for BF.

The Forum requested that the PowerPoint slides be shared.

Action: Paul Clark

109. **Outcome from July 2019 Financial Consultation with Schools**

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the responses from the recent financial consultation from schools which sought views on how funds should be allocated to schools. It was noted that there was a good response rate from schools which provided a clear steer for the Forum with the report recommending adopting the majority school view to each question. The report also updated on the outcomes from the spending review for schools.

Regarding the question outlined in item 6.10 of the report (whether the extra funding required to support new schools should continue to be taken at an equal proportionate rate from all schools, other than those receiving the lowest per pupil funding rates or whether all schools should make the same proportionate contribution), the Forum requested this point to be deferred until next meeting. The Forum wished to explore whether there were any other means of funding new schools rather than the historic way.

RESOLVED

1. to NOTE the outcomes from the financial consultation with schools as summarised in the supporting information and Annex 1 of the report;
2. that the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning (CYPL) is asked to AGREE that the allocation of funds to mainstream schools from 2020-21 should be through Option 1 of the consultation, with each factor value set to the relevant amount of the School National Funding Formula (SNFF), scaled by the same proportional amount to available fund;
3. to DEFER to the meeting of the Forum in November the decision on whether the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning (CYPL) is asked to agree that the extra cost of funding new schools should be deducted at the same proportionate amount from all schools, including those on the Minimum Per Pupil Funding Level;
4. to AGREE (Maintained Primary School representatives only):
 - i. the continued de-delegation of budgets for the services requested by the council; and
 - ii. that the per pupil contribution for the scheme to centrally finance classroom staff on maternity leave be increased by 35%;
5. to AGREE (Maintained Secondary School representatives only):

- i. the continued de-delegation of budgets for the services requested by the council; and
 - ii. that the per pupil contribution for the scheme to centrally finance classroom staff on maternity leave be increased by 35%; and
6. to AGREE (Maintained School representatives only) that a £20 per pupil contribution continues to be made by maintained schools towards the cost of delivering 'general' education related statutory and regulatory duties.

110. **SEND Needs and Sufficiency Strategy**

The Forum considered a report which informed of the current needs and provisions for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND). The report aimed to provide an evidence base to develop services for better SEND provision. The report highlighted four key themes: Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), SEN support and out of borough placements.

The Forum noted that there were differences in the way special schools recorded information.

The Forum questioned whether HNB funding was for 0-25 years as well as the SEN code of practice. It was confirmed that this was the case.

The Forum accepted that the data was a wonderful starting point. The Chair was very pleased that the Forum had received the alternative provision report as well, as this would help to make plans. The Forum expressed thanks to Katie Flint and Kashif Nawaz.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum NOTE the finding of the report.

111. **Financial Consultation with Schools and Early Years Providers**

The Forum considered a report which outlined two proposed consultations: the first to gather views on transferring funds from schools to part finance the 2020-21 budget on supporting pupils with high needs if there were insufficient funds from the government, and the second to consult on the funding framework for the free entitlement for Early Years childcare.

The Forum queried whether the indicative figure of £0.338m which could be transferred from the schools block funding to the HNB would reduce proportionate to any funding increase from central government. Paul Clark confirmed that the council would only seek to transfer funds to the level of a forecast over spend, if there was one. This would be clarified in the consultation document before distribution to schools.

Action: Paul Clark

The outcomes from the HNB consultation and the Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF) consultation would be reported to the Forum in the meeting in November.

Action: Paul Clark

RESOLVED

1. to AGREE the proposed change to the attached consultation document to clarify that any funding increase from central government would be used to top-up to the requirement of the indicative figure of £0.338m, which is intended to gather views

- on transferring funds from schools to part finance the forecast overspend on pupils with high needs; and
2. to NOTE the areas where views will be sought from Early Years providers on potential refinements to the free entitlement funding framework.

112. **Arrangements for Additional Financial Support to Schools**

The Forum considered a report which sought agreement in respect of proposals for additional financial support to schools; in particular, approval of new or amended applications for licenced deficit arrangements. The report also updated on the position in respect of previously agreed financial support arrangements as well as the funding allocations made to date to schools in financial difficulties.

It was acknowledged that for an increasing number of schools there was a dual difficulty of deficits and challenges around standards and effectiveness. Standards and effectiveness would generally take priority over finance until performance was at an appropriate level at which point the LA would move towards a position where it could be more focused on finance.

Of the schools emerging with these twin pressures, it was expected that some repayment plans would be in place in 2020/21. Any repayment plans would be brought to the Forum for agreement.

The Forum commented that spending increases were not reflected in the spending review.

The Forum queried whether schools were expecting challenges in 2020/21 due to turbulence of pupil numbers. The Forum was advised that this was the case.

The Forum questioned what would happen if financial issues cannot be resolved in a timely way. The Forum was reminded that there was a good track-record and, whilst it was acknowledged that this was a difficult task, there were positives in terms of the spending review.

The Forum asked whether the deficits were getting worse. It was explained that the number of school deficits remained consistent but the size of the deficits was larger than before.

RESOLVED

1. to NOTE the previously agreed financial support arrangements for the following schools were on target to be repaid in accordance with the agreed conditions:
 - i. Birch Hill Primary School;
 - ii. Ascot Heath Infant School;
 - iii. Sandhurst Secondary; and
 - iv. Winkfield St Mary's Primary School;
2. to AGREE:
 - i. that subject to the school governors confirming the financing schedule and compliance with the associated terms and conditions of the deficit scheme, that Sandhurst Secondary School's licensed deficit agreement be amended to a maximum deficit of £0.440m, for full repayment by 31 March 2023 (paragraph 6.23 of the report); and
 - ii. that the council continue to work on repayment schedules with the following schools, and that subject to the school governors confirming the financing schedule and compliance with the associated terms and conditions of the deficit scheme, that maximum deficits are as follows:

- a. Ascot Heath Primary School receives a licensed deficit of up to £0.220m;
- b. Harmans Water Primary Schools receives a licensed deficit of up to £0.190m;
- c. The Pines Primary School receives a licensed deficit of up to £0.213m; and
- d. Easthampstead Park Community School outstanding loan of £0.360m is converted to a licensed deficit in the same value.

113. The Schools Budget - 2019-20 Budget Monitoring

The Forum considered a report which updated on the 2019-20 forecast budget monitoring position for the Schools Budget and progress to date on the Education Capital Programme.

The Forum questioned when this information will be presented again. The Forum was advised that it could make a request for the information to be presented early but otherwise would be reported on annually.

RESOLVED to NOTE:

1. the budget variances being forecast on the Schools Budget that total to an aggregate net forecast overspending of £1.996m (paragraph 6.10 of the report);
2. that the unallocated balance on the Schools Budget Reserve is forecast at a £0.439m deficit (paragraph 6.12 of the report); and
3. progress to date on the Education Capital Programme, as summarised at Annex 2 of the report.

114. Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Forum was due to be held on 21 November 2019 commencing at 4:30pm (preceded by a briefing for members at 3:30pm).

Paul Clark took the opportunity to confirm the arrangements for reimbursement of car-parking expenses. The attendance registers had been used to confirm claims for reimbursement of carparking charges each time. However, given the small number of claims coming through, it was proposed to make a termly payment whereby attendance registers would be used to aggregate claims and reimburse Members at the standard carparking rate at the end of each term. It was suggested that a column be added to the attendance register to indicate carparking reimbursement requests.

Action: Joanna Gibbons

CHAIRMAN