

**SCHOOLS FORUM
9 DECEMBER 2021
4.30 - 5.40 PM**



Present:

Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative (Governor) (Chair)
Stuart Matthews, Academy School Representative (Headteacher) (Vice-Chairman)
Jennifer Baker, Special School Representative
Liz Cole, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Karen Davis, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Keith Grainger, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)
Jo Lagares, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Roger Prew, Primary School Representative (Governor)
Elizabeth Savage, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)
Phil Sherwood, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)
Debbie Smith, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)
Richard Stok, Primary School Representative (Governor)
Greg Wilton, Teacher Union Representative

Observer:

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning
(Observer)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Sue Butler, Early Years PVI Provider
Grant Strudley, Academy School Representative

209. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

210. Declarations of Interest

Richard Stok declared an affected interest regarding Item 4 (Education Capital Strategy) as a member of the "Save Jealott's Hill" campaign.

Councillor Barnard declared an affected interest as a governor of Warfield Primary School regarding Item 6 (2022-23 Budget Proposals for the Schools Budget: Schools and Central School Services Block Elements) in relation to recommendation 3.1 (3) for an additional £0.050m funding for Warfield Primary.

211. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Forum on 18 November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

Arising from minute 203, Cherry Hall would report on the proposed funding formula under Item 5 (Initial proposals for the 2022-23 Early Years Block Budget and Funding Formula).

Arising from minute 204, Paul Clark would report on the de-delegation model under Item 6 (2022-23 Budget Proposals for the Schools Budget: Schools and Central School Services Block Elements).

Arising from minute 206, Jenny Baker updated that the High Needs Block (HNB) subgroup had been working on two main projects. The first was around banding descriptors and this work started in Spring / Summer 2021. This was supported by a consultant who presented the subgroup with four models. The subgroup chose to pilot two of those models after refining some of the descriptors. The pilot involved Garth Hill College, The Rise at Garth Hill College, Owlsmoor Primary School, Jennett's Park CE Primary School, Kennel Lane School, and Whitegrove Primary School. After the consultant left, the subgroup took ownership of the project from September and subsequent work identified the Windsor & Maidenhead model as the preferred option. It was felt that this gave a better clarity and understanding of the descriptors of the needs of the children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) within the Borough, what provision might entail for a child with those needs, and the type of placement that the child may need. This was presented by KLS staff to Nichola Jones and other members of the SEN Service last month, discussing how the points could transfer to the different scales within that model. This was due to come back to the subgroup for further discussion but was postponed due to the Ofsted SEND inspection. The subgroup decided from an early stage that the descriptors should not have any monetary value attached to them as it should be about the needs of the child. The second piece of work was to review the Service Level Agreements (SLAs), and Jenny Baker believed that those were all agreed and completed, and discussions were now taking place with the individual schools. Jenny Baker added that, at the start of the academic year, the terms of reference were updated to ensure it was clear that the key aim of the subgroup was to save money and reduce the deficit of the HNB.

212. **Education Capital Strategy**

The Forum considered a report which presented the proposed capital strategy for Education & Learning. The Forum was encouraged to provide feedback on the proposals.

Chris Hilliard advised that the duty to provide sufficient school places was for all age ranges in both maintained and academy schools. Whilst the government had not defined what "sufficient" meant, the Department for Education (DfE) recognised that an excess of 5% surplus places would need to be addressed. Likewise, a deficit of places in excess of 5% would also need to be addressed.

There were no current issues regarding Early Years childcare capacity across the Borough. However, for mainstream primary schools in the Borough, forecasts indicated a surplus of places significantly exceeding the 5% target over the next five years. There was no immediate concern for the secondary sector, and it was broadly manageable but needed to be kept under review. Regarding Post-16 education, whilst there was no statutory duty to ensure sufficiency, the Council had identified a need to look at the balance of Post-16 provision and the courses available.

There was currently a deficit of SEND places within the Borough, meaning that a third of children with complex needs were being educated outside of the Borough. Therefore, the Council had proposed to consult with Headteachers, Governors and Trustees whether any surplus mainstream accommodation could be used for SEND. The intention was to consult on both of those issues (surplus mainstream places and

the deficit of SEND places) and then bring any proposals back to feature as part of the Council's capital programme.

Chris Hilliard, Chris Taylor and Nichola Jones had met with the three geographical clusters within the Borough (North Bracknell, South Bracknell, and Sandhurst and Crowthorne) and had engaging discussions with those colleagues. They had invited feedback to be made by 10th January 2022. The SEN sufficiency document would also be prepared by that date, which would feed through to the Capital Strategy.

The Forum expressed that some incorrect information had been included in the presentation shared with the Headteachers; slide 11 referred to an older version of the Local Plan. Chris Taylor agreed to review, correct and reissue as necessary.

Action: Chris Taylor

The Forum noted that Kings Academy Binfield had published their intention to increase their Primary phase Planned Admission Numbers (PAN) from 1FE (Forms of Entry) to 2FE. This was felt to disadvantage other local primary schools, and the Forum asked why this was happening now, especially in light of the Council being in a process of gathering information. Chris Taylor replied that Kings Academy Binfield had not increased their PAN yet and the proposal was to increase from September 2022. Chris Taylor acknowledged that this expansion would add to the problem of surplus primary places in North Bracknell, but the agreement to do so was reached between the Council and the academy some time ago. However, following discussions between the Council and Kings Academy Binfield, in acknowledgment of the Council's concerns about surplus places, the academy had made a concession to delay their primary expansion plans to September 2022 (it was originally planned to increase from September 2021). Chris Hilliard added that this was the subject of robust discussion with the North Bracknell cluster. The Forum asked whether there was a requirement for Kings Academy Binfield to do another consultation to increase their PAN. Chris Taylor replied that there was no requirement for consultation to increase their PAN, and admissions arrangements were published and set 18 months ahead of any planned change to the PAN, and because that time had passed, the September 2022 PAN was fixed.

The Forum noted the request for feedback from Headteachers and asked what format that should take. Chris Hilliard replied that there was guidance in the email that was sent out to Headteachers on 12 November 2021 which suggested four areas to feed back on. Chris Taylor added that any format would be welcome.

Chris Taylor confirmed for the secondary school representatives of the Forum that the headteacher cluster meetings referred to above were for primary school colleagues only, and it was just primary school Headteachers who were expected to reply to the consultation. Chris Hilliard added that this was due to the biggest challenges being the surplus places within the primary sector and the pressing demands of SEND, meaning those areas needed to be looked at first. Separate discussions were needed with the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and special schools and that had been planned for next term. Whilst there was less concern with secondary schools about surplus spaces, there was a desire to cover all sectors, so discussions with secondary schools were planned for the autumn term in 2022. The Forum highlighted that SEND discussions were relevant to all schools, including secondary schools.

The Forum asked whether funding was available as part of the SEND capital strategy. Chris Taylor confirmed that the Council was bringing together a funding envelope under the capital umbrella to put together an overall package. There was

some funding available from the DfE via their SEND grants, and some funding available through the Section 106 process (developer contributions from new housing). There was also an appetite within the Council to ensure there were enough facilities for SEND, so the Council may in future consider additional funding from its own resources. Chris Hilliard added that, if there were increasing numbers of children being educated within the borough rather than being educated outside the borough, this would represent financial savings in terms of revenue.

The Forum noted that over time, any trends within the primary sector would translate to the secondary sector. Chris Taylor agreed with this and explained that they make predictions for secondary schools up to seven years ahead.

The Forum expressed surprise in being able to predict declining birth numbers. The Forum also asked whether there were any calculations regarding impact of additional housing around North Bracknell. Chris Taylor replied, regarding estimates of declining birth numbers, figures were obtained from different sources. The ONS published population data, but more focused local data was available from the NHS by postcode, which meant that the Council could see the numbers of children being born in each catchment area. Whilst ONS and NHS figures did not exactly coincide, they both showed the same trend of a decrease in birth numbers. Regarding new housing, this was still prevalent, particularly in the north of the Borough. Since 2005, the Council had been undertaking surveys using consultants to the occupants of new housing in the Borough to undertake research on pupil yields. This was done every two or three years and had revealed that pupil yields had been reducing since 2016. Therefore, even though construction levels had been sustained, this had not seen an equivalent increase in children coming into Bracknell Forest schools from that housing. The figures also showed that, where families moved within the Borough, 85% chose not to move children from their existing schools, so the impact of new housing was not likely to be felt for some years after they had been built.

RESOLVED to NOTE the proposed capital strategy for Education & Learning as set out in the Appendix to the report.

213. **Initial proposals for the 2022-23 Early Years Block Budget and Funding Formula**

The Forum considered a report which sought agreement for changes to the Early Years Funding Formula from April 2022, the principles to be adopted for allocating the announced increases to the Early Years Block Budget, and to consider if appropriate arrangements were in place for administration of the early years' free entitlements.

Cherry Hall explained that the focus was on the formula itself rather than the monetary values which would be presented to the Forum in January 2022 on receipt of indicative figures.

The Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) had key requirements that Local Authorities needed to meet. The Council consulted with providers and the Early Years Forum around the proposed changes to the EYNFF. There were limited responses from the providers, so the proposals had been agreed by the Early Years Forum based on the feedback from the wider provider groups. One procedural correction was required as the deprivation supplements should apply to both the universal and extended entitlements for 3- and 4-year-olds with the current formula relating only to the universal entitlement. Also, the formula factor referencing the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) was subject to annual update,

and providers preferred more stability and predictability to plan ahead for more than one year.

The Chair asked why the recommendations were to the Leader of the Council and not the Executive Member. Paul Clark explained that it was due to the conflict of interest that Councillor Barnard had declared on the Schools Budget, with the Executive Member decision having already been set to consider both of these budget matters at the same time.

RESOLVED

1. to RECOMMEND to the Leader of the Council:
 - i. that taking account of comments from providers to the consultation on the Council's proposed changes to the Early Years Funding Formula from April 2022:
 - a. the deprivation supplement will apply to the universal and extended entitlements for 3- and 4-year-olds;
 - b. funding bands for the IDACI measure of the deprivation supplement are reduced from three to two;
 - c. calculation of the IDACI measure of the deprivation supplement is changed to a three-year rolling average score;
 - d. the revised process for allocating providers to the IDACI measure of the deprivation supplement, as set out in paragraph 5.15 of the report;
 - e. eligibility for the quality supplement will be limited to the setting in which the person with the relevant early years qualification at level 5 or above is based; and
 - f. there are appropriate arrangements in place for administration of the early years free entitlements; and
 - ii. initial proposals for the 2022-23 Early Years Block Budget as set out in the supporting information in paragraphs 5.34 to 5.36 of the report; and
2. to NOTE the final 2022-23 Early Years Block Budget proposals and funding rates to be allocated to the Early Years Funding Formula will be presented to the Forum for comment in January.

Councillor Barnard left the meeting at this point due to needing to attend another meeting.

214. 2022-23 Budget Proposals for the Schools Budget: Schools and Central School Services Block Elements

The Forum considered a report which sought to ensure that final 2022-23 budget decisions could be made at the 13 January Forum meeting in order to meet the 21 January 2022 statutory deadline. Therefore, updated proposals for the Schools Block (SB) and Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) elements of the Schools Budget were presented.

The report presentation reflected the specific membership voting requirements of the required decisions.

Regarding the proposed de-delegation of School Improvement Services, Paul Clark reminded the Forum that they had wanted to hear views from the Headteachers before making a decision. Primary Headteachers were asked to respond to Liz Cole if they did not support the proposal, and 2 replies were received. By default, the vast majority of primary headteachers were content with the proposal. The feedback from secondary Headteachers had not been received in time for sharing in the published report. Therefore, Debbie Smith provided a verbal update that two Headteachers had agreed with the proposal whereas one was not in agreement.

Items for Maintained Primary School representatives only

RESOLVED to AGREE

1. that the per pupil deduction amounts for existing de-delegated services be increased by 2.6%, the average increase in per pupil funding expected to be received by schools (paragraph 6.25 of the report); and
2. the de-delegation of School Improvement Service, to be funded by the remaining School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage Grant with no deduction from schools (paragraph 6.26 of the report).

Items for Maintained Secondary representatives only

RESOLVED to AGREE

1. that the per pupil deduction amounts for existing de-delegated services be increased by 2.6%, the average increase in per pupil funding expected to be received by schools (paragraph 6.25 of the report); and
2. the de-delegation of School Improvement Service, to be funded by the remaining School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage Grant with no deduction from schools (paragraph 6.26 of the report).

Paul Clark updated on the rest of the budget and highlighted the executive summary of the report. The DfE had released provisional data from the October 2021 school census update, but this needed to be verified by the DfE. From the data available, pupil numbers had increased by 0.8%. Therefore, there was an increase in funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and an increase in the growth fund. Paul Clark reminded the Forum about the extra costs of the Warfield split site and the request for an additional £0.050m funding allocation; the DfE had given their consent for that, and a proposal to agree this was included in the report.

Regarding the £0.050m funding cut on the Central School Services Block, Paul Clark explained that the budget proposals which the Council had published confirmed the intention for the Council to finance the shortfall.

Taking account of the new data, it was expected that there would be a funding gap of £0.346m. The report set out three options to manage the shortfall, which were the same three options that the Council considered every year. The Forum were asked for their views.

The Forum asked whether the issue of the falling numbers of children on roll was included in this report. Paul Clark explained that schools received funding based on actual numbers of children on roll. If those numbers were falling, then funding would be based on a lower number than the previous year, and the Council would ordinarily try to manage that by working with the school. Falling rolls and the financial difficulty this may cause in some schools was highlighted as a Strategic Risk in paragraph 7.4 of the report. The Forum noted that this would be an increased burden on Paul Clark and his team. Paul Clark added that he was grateful for the way that schools promptly highlighted issues of this nature.

RESOLVED to AGREE

1. that subject to any late changes proposed to the Forum in January, the 2022-23 budget is set in accordance with the supporting information, as summarised in Table 1, and in particular:
 - i. that no changes are made to the Start-up and diseconomy funding policy for new and expanding schools (paragraph 6.17 of the report);

- ii. that the Growth Fund, including appropriate elements is set at the amount reported in Annex 1 of the report;
 - iii. that the split site funding allocation to Warfield Primary school is increased by £0.050m to £0.125m (paragraph 6.23 of the report); and
 - iv. that the elements of the CSSB and relevant budget amounts are as detailed in Annex 2 of the report; and
- the preferred approach to be taken in balancing any remaining shortfall on the SB (paragraph 6.38 of the report).

215. Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Forum would be held at 4.30pm on Thursday 13 January 2022.

CHAIRMAN