

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 12 July 2012

Present:

Primary Maintained School Head Teacher: Patrick Foley
Primary Maintained Governors: Geoff Boyd
Angela Chapman
Primary Academy Governor: Colin Ashford
Secondary Academy Head Teacher: Nick Cross
Secondary Academy Governor: Andrew Downes (Chairman)
Special Head Teacher/Governor: Keith Seed
Non-School Representatives: David Bridger – Church of England (Vice-Chairman)
Neil Proudfoot – Joint Teacher Liaison Committee
Anna Boshier – Catholic Church

Also present

David Bradshaw (Head of CYP Finance)
Gill Bratley (Senior Finance Officer)
Mandy Russell (Head of Schools Finance Support)
Kerry Nicholls (Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Karen Raven. Apologies for lateness were received from Colin Ashford, Primary Academy Governor.

The Chairman was pleased to welcome Nick Cross, Head Teacher of Bullers Wood School to the Schools' Forum representing Secondary Academy Head Teachers. He also noted that Fiona Mills had resigned from her role representing Primary Maintained School Head Teachers and thanked her for her contribution to the Schools' Forum.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOLS ON PROPOSED FUNDING REFORM

Members of the Forum considered a report providing information on the consultation responses received from schools across the Borough regarding the proposed School Funding Reform for 2013/14 and 2014/15. Thirty one schools had responded to the consultation, including 1 special school, 1 primary academy, 22 primary maintained schools and 7 secondary academies. The consultation had focused on three main areas which comprised delegation of central expenditure, changes to the funding formula and optional de-delegation for maintained schools.

The Chairman indicated that no definitive decisions were being taken on this paper at this meeting. The conclusions from the consultation and this meeting would be used for detailed modelling by Officers of the funding consequences to each school. That modelling and the issues it threw up would be considered at the Forum's meeting on 20th September 2012.

In answer to questions raised by the Vice-Chairman, Officers confirmed the following:

- a) The figures shown in the consultation for central expenditure items to be delegated were 2012/13 figures. The actual figures to be delegated in 2013/14 and future years were of course unknown at this stage but could be very different to the figures for 2012/13.
- b) All of the central expenditure to be delegated was initially divided between Primary, Secondary and Special schools before the delegation bases were applied. Hence the result of this delegation process would not cause shifts of funding between these three groups.

Delegation of Central Expenditure

Schools had been invited to comment on how central expenditure should be delegated under the new formula. This included the allocation of contingencies, behaviour support services, support to underperforming ethnic minority and bilingual learners, free school meal eligibility and staff costs supply cover.

The responses from schools appeared to show strong support for the proposed models for delegation of funds for contingency, underperforming ethnic minority and bilingual learners, free school meal eligibility and staff costs supply cover. With regard to the delegation of funds for contingency it was noted that proposed contingency funds for primary and secondary schools would be split 50/50 between the two groups, and that contingency funds for special schools would be identified separately. The delegation of the secondary schools contingency was required to be on a basis which did not include numbers of sixth form pupils. In response to a query, Mandy Russell confirmed that staff costs supply cover included funding to cover absence by school representatives carrying out union duties.

The responses from schools had been more varied with regard to the proposed model of funding delegation for behaviour support services. The majority of primary schools had supported a proposed split of 10:45:45 of funds comprising basic entitlement/AWPU, deprivation and low cost/high incidence SEN (Special Educational Needs), which recognised that all schools had some level of behaviour need, but that deprivation and SEN were more substantial indicators of the need for behaviour support services. The response from secondary schools had been mixed and it was proposed that a higher proportion of funding be allocated through AWPU. Following consideration, members of the Forum agreed to model a proposed split of 20:40:40 for secondary schools.

Changes to the Funding Formula

Schools had been invited to comment on how elements of formula funding should be delegated to schools under the new funding formula. This included funding for the age weighted pupil unit, deprivation, English as an additional language, lump sums for schools and transferred grants.

The responses from schools appeared to show strong support for the proposed delegation of funding formula for the age weighted pupil unit, for deprivation and in respect of primary schools for transferred grants. With regard to the age-weighted pupil unit, the Local Authority had the option of using one funding rate for both Key Stage 3 and 4 or separate funding rates for each key stage under the new legislation, although the amount of funding to be delegated would remain the same. The majority of secondary schools were in favour of a single funding rate being used and members of the Forum agreed to use this for modelling. Deprivation funding was currently allocated using actual free school meal eligibility as a proxy indicator and schools had the option to retain this or to move to the use of Ever 6 eligibility (which comprised those eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and was currently used for the pupil premium). The majority of schools supported the move to Ever 6 eligibility, and this would be used for the modelling, although there were concerns that the change in funding mechanism might initially cause issues for schools.

In considering transferred grants, members of the Forum noted that it was proposed that funding be allocated proportionally against pupil numbers, deprivation, prior attainment and English as an additional language as 40:18:40:2 for primary schools and 60:18:20:2 for secondary schools. The majority of primary schools had been supportive of the proposed allocation, as had just over half of responding secondary schools, although concerns had been raised around the fact that all or more of this funding should be allocated through AWPU. In response to a query around whether all pupil numbers including sixth form would be used for distribution and if some allowance would be made for specialist funding, Mandy Russell confirmed that funding could only be allocated on the elements allowed by the Department for Education, and that AWPU funding could only be directed at pupils below the age of 16. Specialism grants would no longer be provided and it was highlighted that selective schools would not benefit from the proportion allocated to prior attainment funding, although the minimum funding guarantee would offset to a significant degree the impact of any changes in funding allocation in the short term. Members of the Forum agreed to undertake modelling as proposed for both primary and secondary schools but, once this had been done, to re-consider the allocation, especially at secondary school level. In addition, the Schools' Forum working party would review the proposed secondary schools split which had been developed by Officers based on historical information of all of the transferred grants involved.

English as an additional language was currently allocated based on data provided by the Local Authority and took into account pupil achievement and refugee status. Under the new regulations this funding could only be allocated using data regarding the length of time that these pupils had been in the maintained school system and could be allocated on the basis of 1, 2 or 3 years. The majority of respondents had indicated 3 years was their preferred option, although a number of

schools had indicated that 1 year was their preferred option. Following discussion it was agreed to model this on 3 years.

With regard to the allocation of lump sums, members of the Forum noted that the current formula allocated different lump sums to small primary schools which included 1 and 1.5 entry primary schools and secondary schools with falling rolls. Under the new regulations only one lump sum amount could be allocated to all schools. In order to ensure that sufficient funding was provided to small schools, this lump sum would need to be set at an appropriate level with the additional costs of paying this to every school offset against basic AWPU entitlement funding. There had been a spread of respondents across the various options, however the majority of primary schools had asked for the level of funding to be set at £100,000 to £150,000 which included 3 small schools. It was noted that following consultation, the Department for Education had increased the level at which funding could be set to £200,000 if needed, and that the minimum funding guarantee would protect the amount received by schools in the short term. Schools' Forum members underlined the need to set funding at a level at which all schools remained viable, and agreed that modelling be undertaken around the needs of small and 1FE schools, taking into account other factors such as the removal of threshold and premises funding.

Optional De-Delegation for Maintained Schools

Maintained schools had been invited to consider whether some funding be retained centrally rather the delegated for certain services. This included contingencies (including support for schools in financial difficulties and to support basic need growth), free school meal eligibility, staff costs for supply cover (not including the long term sickness scheme), support for minority ethnic pupils or underachieving groups and the Behaviour Support Service.

For each area it would be for the Schools' Forum members in the relevant phase to decide whether a service should be retained centrally. The decision would then apply to all maintained schools in that phase. However, if funding was delegated it might be possible for a group of schools to buy back a service as a sold service. Academy schools were also able to purchase sold services as needed.

The responses from schools appeared to show strong support for de-delegation in all areas. However it was noted that the Local Authority would have to decide whether it was cost-effective to deliver these services at a central level for schools, and the move of further schools to academy status might impact the viability of providing a range of services centrally.

The Chairman highlighted that representatives of small schools were particularly interested in de-delegation of services and had asked that this be noted by members of the Forum. It was also noted that a revision had been made by the Department for Education regarding contingency funding and that the Local Authority would now have the option to top-slice the funds allocated to primary or secondary schools to create a 'growth fund' to support schools asked to take additional pupils. Any remaining funds held by the Local Authority in this capacity would be re-allocated to primary or secondary schools at the end of each academic year.

Members of the Forum noted that the Schools' Forum Working Group comprising Andrew Downes, David Bridger, Keith Seed, Patrick Foley, David Bradshaw and Mandy Russell would be meeting shortly to review the comments of the Schools' Forum with regard to the consultation responses and to consider more detailed modelling of proposed funding reform. A number of alternate funding models would be developed during summer 2012 with the aim of providing 2 or 3 funding models to schools in early September 2012. The response of schools to these proposed funding models would be considered at the next meeting of Schools' Forum on 20th September 2012.

RESOLVED that comments of Members of the Forum with regard to the consultation responses be noted.

4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to an e-mailed request from Karen Raven, Secondary Academy Head Teacher, the Chairman confirmed the dates of all meetings of Schools' Forum currently planned for the 2012/13 academic year and noted that these would be circulated to all members of the Forum shortly.

Members of the Forum highlighted the need for Schools' Forum information, including the membership, agendas and minutes to be published on the Bromley Council website, and noted that this had been agreed at a previous meeting of the Schools' Forum.

A member of the Forum also underlined the need to clarify the role of Schools' Forum representatives, including voting rights, and the responsibility of members of the Forum to report progress back to those they represented. The Head of CYP Finance agreed to circulate guidance to all members of the Forum providing information on the constitution of the Schools' Forum and the role of its representatives.

5 DATES OF NEXT MEETING

All meetings will be at the EDC unless highlighted below:

Thursday, 20th September 2012
Thursday, 22nd November 2012
Thursday, 13th December 2012
Thursday, 10th January 2013
Thursday, 7th February 2013
Thursday, 14th March 2013

The Meeting ended at 6.07 pm

Chairman