

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 25 September 2014

Present:

Andrew Downes (Chairman)	Secondary Academy Governor
Colin Ashford	Primary Academy Governor
Geoff Boyd	Primary Maintained Governor
Leah Crawley	Primary Non-Academy Head Teacher
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained School Head Teacher
Ruth Griffiths	Non-School Representative (14-19 Partnership)
Neil Proudfoot	Non-School Representative (Joint Teacher Liaison Committee)
Karen Raven	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Alison Regester	Non-School Representative (Early Years)
Keith Seed	Special Head Teacher/Governor
Cheryl Sutton	Primary Academy Head Teacher
David Wilcox	Secondary Academy Governor

Also Present:

Councillor Stephen Wells	Portfolio Holder for Education
Jane Bailey	Education, Care and Health Services
David Bradshaw	Head of Education and Care Services Finance
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support
Graham Walton	Chief Executive's Department

8 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Andrew Downes be appointed Chairman and David Bridger be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2014/15 academic year.

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from David Bridger, Nick Cross and Aydin Onac.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26TH JUNE 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th June 2014 be confirmed.

**12 OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOLS REGARDING
FAIRER FUNDING FOR 2015/16**
Report ED15105

At its last meeting the Forum had considered a report on the proposed allocation of additional funding coming to Bromley as part of the Fairer Funding review. The Forum had agreed to go out to consultation on one of the options recommended in the report plus a further option tabled at the meeting. The consultation documents had been sent to schools on 4th July. On 17th July the DfE had issued updated information including an increase of the funding allocated to Bromley to £19.5m.

The two models that were consulted on originally had both been remodelled using the new figures. However, the underlying principles remained the same for each option –

- Option 1 – All schools funded at the higher level of either current Bromley funding or new DfE Minimum Funding Level – where there was not sufficient additional funding to support this, the lump sum had been adjusted for all schools.
- Option 2 – Following the principles put forward at the last meeting, the additional funding had been split 60:40 between primary and special schools, and the per pupil figure of £471 had been added to the AWPU value for all Key Stages. However, as this did not bring the Primary AWPU up to the DfE Minimum Funding Level, deprivation funding had been adjusted down to the DfE MFL.

The Chairman appealed for the Forum to come to a consensus on which option to recommend to the Education Portfolio Holder. The timetable imposed by the DfE required a decision by the end of October, so there was no scope for further consultation.

Karen Raven reported that the options had been discussed at length at the Secondary Heads Forum. The aim of option 2, which she had presented at the last meeting, was to achieve a fairer distribution of funding across all children rather than pitting the primary and secondary sectors against each other. She argued that option 1 was going beyond DfE requirements and that option 2 represented a more balanced and sensible approach. She asked whether the level of response to the consultation (forty-eight responses had been received) was normal – officers considered that this was a fairly high response.

Other Forum members argued that option 1 was more in line with what the DfE intended, would begin to address historic underfunding in the Primary sector and would not risk undervaluing the deprivation funding element. This line was supported by Primary Head Teachers and governors. Following the DfE lead would place Bromley in a more stable position in the future and would lead to less “turbulence” in the move towards a national funding formula.

RESOLVED that option 1 be supported.

(Karen Raven requested that her vote against option 1 be recorded.)

**13 SPENDING BY PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND SPECIAL
MAINTAINED SCHOOLS 2013/14**
Report ED15104

The Forum received a report providing information on all revenue and capital balances held by Primary, Secondary and Special maintained schools as at 31st March 2014, with a comparison with balances held at the same time in the previous year. Information on Academy school balances was not held by the authority.

It was noted that, in the past the problem had been overspending and deficits, whereas now many schools were able to support a substantial balance. However, much of this funding was held for particular projects and often these needed careful planning across school years.

RESOLVED that the balances reported be noted.

14 CONSTITUTION OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

The constitution and membership of the Schools Forum was reviewed annually. Representation on the schools element of the Forum was derived from pupil numbers; although pupil numbers in each sector had not changed significantly there had been movement with more primary maintained schools converting to academy status. Therefore, it was proposed that there should be an increase of one primary academy member and a decrease of one primary maintained member. A nomination process, and possibly elections, would be needed to appoint the new representative. With the non-schools element, there had never been a Parent Partnership representative on the Forum; with this lack of take-up, and as this was not a statutory requirement, it was proposed that the role be deleted. The terms of reference for the Forum were largely unchanged apart from some minor changes in paragraphs 3 and 4.

Details of the new constitution and membership were set out in the report.

RESOLVED that the revised membership and terms of reference of the Forum be noted and approved.

15 UNSPENT DSG

Bromley Council was currently holding in the region of £9m surplus funds from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This sum had been accrued over the last three years. The report recommended how this money might be used to best effect in the Borough –

- to support key priorities identified as part of the new SEND strategy, the draft of which was due to be ready for consultation early in 2015;

- to purchase and refurbish Beacon House, a large industrial building in the centre of Bromley previously occupied by Springboard, a now defunct national charity, for use by Burwood School;
- to contribute £150k towards the building of a new science block at St Olave's Grammar School (as a maintained secondary school it could not access any academy capital grants.)

Some Forum members argued that DSG was intended for schools, and that therefore in principle the funding should be distributed to all schools across the borough. Officers responded that this was a special opportunity to make investments that would benefit children and schools across the borough.

The Forum acknowledged the purchase of Beacon House using the £1.7m, but that it would register its concern that it had not been consulted as required. It would await the outcome of reports on the refurbishment of Beacon House and the SEND reforms before making a decision.

RESOLVED that

(1) The Bromley Schools' Forum would consider the recommendation to use some of the underspend to support local SEND reforms, after considering the proposed report on the review of mainstream and specialist provision for children with SEND.

(2) The Forum notes the decision to use in the region of £1.7m to purchase Beacon House (previously the Springboard provision.)

(3) The Forum will consider the recommendation to fund the refurbishment of Beacon House from the unspent DSG monies, following a feasibility report that will come to the next Schools Forum meeting on 20 November 2014.

(4) The Forum does not support the proposal to contribute £150k to the building of the new science block at St Olave's.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that he had received a letter from Anna Boshier (non-school representative – Catholic Church) resigning from the Forum. He had asked her not to stand down, but had heard nothing further.

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 20th November 2014. A meeting would also need to be arranged for January 2015.

The Meeting ended at 6.10 pm.

Chairman