

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 20 November 2014

Present:

Andrew Downes (Chairman)	Secondary Academy Governor
Geoff Boyd	Primary Maintained Governor
Leah Crawley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
Neil Miller	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Aydin Önaç	Secondary Maintained Head Teacher
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

Also Present:

Councillor Stephen Wells	Portfolio Holder for Education
Bev Pennekett	Education Funding Authority
Jane Bailey	Education, Care and Health Services
Rob Bollen	Education, Care and Health Services
David Bradshaw	Head of Education and Care Services Finance
Nina Newell	Education, Care and Health Services
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support
Graham Walton	Democratic Services

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed Neil Miller to his first meeting, and Bev Pennekett of the Education Funding Agency.

Apologies for absence were received from Colin Ashford, David Bridger, Sam Parrett and David Wilcox.

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alison Regester declared an interest in relation to the report on proposed Changes to the Early Years Funding Formula as she ran a nursery which was one of eight providers receiving a supplement.

20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25TH SEPTEMBER 2014

The Forum noted the following matters arising from the last meeting –

- Minute 12: Consultation on Fairer Funding for 2015/16 - The Education Budget Sub-Committee had supported option 1 at its meeting on 16th October 2014.
- Minute 13: Constitution - Recruitment for a second primary academy governor representative and a Pupil Referral Unit representative were underway.
- Minute 15: Unspent DSG – A letter had been received from Karen Raven as chair of the Secondary Head Teachers requesting a one-off payment to schools, or ring-fencing the money to be drawn as needed. This issue could be considered further at the next meeting of the Forum.

The following amendments to the minutes were proposed –

- In the list of those present, Cheryl Sutton should be listed as a Primary Academy Governor.
- In minute 15 (Unspent DSG) it was suggested that the words “in recognition of the school having increased its FTE by 8 pupils” should be deleted as this was not a major part of the reason for the decision.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendments above, the minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2014 be confirmed.

21 PROPOSED CHANGES TO EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA FOR 2015/16
Report ED15119

The report outlined proposals for a full review of the Early Years formula, including consultation with all stakeholders, in the light of changes within the authority and within the remit of Early Years funding. Officers were proposing the following changes –

- The inclusion funding which was allocated as a one-off lump-sum in 2014/15 should be absorbed into the base rate, giving an additional amount of 0.16p.
- Deprivation would remain as a separate element, but may be adjusted to follow the funding methodology to be used for the allocation of the new Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP.)

- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) factor to remain as a separate element, but for Early Years and SEN officers to explore the long term viability of the current methodology of the new EYPP.

In addition, as Early Years settings in Bromley had received no increase to their base rate since it was introduced in 2009, the Forum was asked to consider a growth bid for £500,000 from within the DSG, representing a 3% increase, and options for distributing this money. Reservations were expressed about the need for transitional support for any settings losing money under the revised arrangements.

It was noted that some of the elements in the formula were different for Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings and Maintained settings. In particular, the quality element for PVI settings was dependent on suitably qualified staff and an excellent rating, which with Ofsted changes was likely to be harder to achieve. Maintained schools received a lower base rate to reflect that they did not have the same rent and rate liabilities as PVI settings.

It was recognised that investing in very young children would potentially have an impact throughout their school careers, but it was suggested that the Forum needed more information to understand the broader picture.

RESOLVED that the Forum's comments be taken into account.

22 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2015/16 Report ED15120

The Forum received a report outlining early estimates of how the 2015/16 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be estimated and allocated. The report set out the changes for 2015/16 and the cost pressures, which included a growth bid of £500k for the Early Years Funding Formula (covered in minute 21 above) and a shortfall of £500k for bulge class funding. Various options were set out in the report for funding these, but there was some feeling that consideration should be given to using the underspend on DSG.

Officers would be working on the figures and carrying out detailed modelling to bring to future meetings of the Forum. In view of the current DSG surplus the Forum concluded that no decisions were needed at this stage.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum notes that the Dedicated Schools Grant may overspend by £1m in 2015/16 because of the need to have an additional £500k in the Growth Fund and an additional £500k for Early Years funding, but there is no need at this stage to take any further action because of the DSG surplus built up over the past 3 years.

23 SCHOOL PREMISES HEALTH & SAFETY

The Council had undertaken a document-based health and safety audit of premises used by maintained and voluntary aided education establishments during 2013/14. An officer working group had identified three key actions in response -

- Undertaking site audits including mechanical and electrical, health and safety and fire risk assessments to ascertain outstanding areas of non-compliance and implementing a planned programme of works to address these issues.
- Creating new guidance for schools regarding their responsibilities with regards health and safety and implementing an associated programme of training for governors, head teachers and premises management staff.
- Ensuring an ongoing periodic audit of schools whilst they remained under local authority control.

The work was proposed to be funded from a combination of £1.8m from DSG with a £140k contribution from the Education Planned Maintenance Programme/DfE Capital Maintenance Grant.

The Forum discussed where responsibility lay between the local authority and governing bodies for various aspects of health and safety. Whatever historic deficiencies there were, the proposals were designed to provide a base line of health and safety compliance, but some Forum members were concerned that this was not an appropriate use of DSG funding. It was also questioned why voluntary aided schools had been included, but academies were not and would not therefore benefit.

RESOLVED that the proposals be deferred for further clarification and guidance on the responsibilities involved and the legality of using DSG in this way.

24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was due to be held at 4.30pm on Thursday 15th January 2015.

The Meeting ended at 6.12 pm

Chairman