

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 25 June 2015

Present:

Andrew Downes (Chairman)	Secondary Academy Governor
David Bridger (Vice-Chairman)	Non-School Representative (Church of England)
Geoff Boyd	Primary Maintained Governor
Leah Crawley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
David Dilling	Primary Academy Governor
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
Neil Miller	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Sam Parrett	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
Aydin Önaç	Secondary Maintained Head Teacher

Also Present:

Jane Bailey	Assistant Director: Education
Robert Bollen	Education, Care & Health Services
James Mullender	Head of Education Finance
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support
Jennifer Stanley	Education, Care & Health Services
Graham Walton	Chief Executive's Department

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from David Wilcox and from Cllr Peter Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Education.

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman, Andrew Downes, declared an interest in minute 42 (Review of Growth and Infant Class Size Funding) as the school where he was a governor was in dispute with the Council about bulge class funding for 2015/16 (although the report concerned future years.)

39 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 15 JANUARY AND 12 FEBRUARY 2015

It was noted that David Wilcox had been added to the list of those present at the meeting on 15th January 2015.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 15th January and 12th January 2015 be confirmed.

40 EDUCATION PORTFOLIO OUTTURN REPORT 2014/15
Report ED15089

The report set out details of the final budget outturn position for the Education Portfolio in 2014/15. There was an overall underspend of £246k for the Non-Schools Budget and an underspend of £940k for the Schools Budget. Officers reported a small correction to the report at paragraph 3.14, where use of the proposed Redundancy Reserve should be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Assistant Director of Education.

It was proposed that provision of £300k be set aside in a new DSG redundancy reserve to meet some of the potential costs of any future reorganisations within DSG funded services. There were no specific reorganisation proposals, but the reserve would enable the most efficient use to be made of DSG funding, which was expected to come under increased pressure.

A number of Forum members expressed concerns regarding the regulations applicable to the proposal to set up a redundancy reserve, and it was suggested that, with only a few exemptions, the regulations required redundancy costs to be met from RSG, not DSG. The Forum suggested that the regulations should be checked and a report be brought to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that

(1) the final outturn position for 2014/15 is noted;

(2) consideration of the proposal to set up a DSG redundancy reserve be deferred to the next meeting.

41 SPENDING BY PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND SPECIAL MAINTAINED SCHOOLS IN 2014/15
Report ED15087

The Forum received a report providing information on all capital and revenue balances held by Primary, Secondary and Special Maintained Schools as at 31st March 2015, with a comparison of balances held at the same time in the previous year. Information from the Department for Education's funding conference the previous week suggested that funding was likely to get tighter in future years; officers would circulate information from the conference.

RESOLVED that the revenue and capital balances held by Primary, Secondary and Special Maintained Schools be noted.

42 REVIEW OF GROWTH AND INFANT CLASS SIZE FUNDING
Report ED15086

The report provided an update on the criteria agreed by the Schools Forum in December 2012 for funding pupil growth covering all points of admission – i.e. Reception, Year 3 and Year 7. Since 2012, the budget for this had increased significantly from £970k in 2012/13 to £1.5m in 2015/16, but despite this there was likely to be an overspend in the current year of £800k, including £200k rental costs for modular buildings. In response to this officers proposed that a working group be established to review the situation and produce proposals for consultation in the autumn, and the report listed the main issues to be considered.

Some members suggested that it would be useful to start with an assumption that bulge class funding should not be needed, and question whether it was an appropriate approach, and others called for more clarity on funding in recent years as well as projections of future need.

It was proposed that the Working Group hold its first meeting at 1pm on 8th July 2015 at Parklands Nursery.

RESOLVED that a Working Group be set up to examine bulge class/expansion funding comprising Andrew Downes, David Dilling, Patrick Foley, Karen Raven, Alison Regester, Mandy Russell and Robert Bollen.

(The Chairman, Andrew Downes, declared at the start of the debate on this item that his school was in dispute with the Council over bulge class funding for 2015/16 – however, the report concerned future years.)

43 CONSULTATION ON CONVERSION FROM MATRIX TO TOP UP FUNDING LEVELS FROM SEPTEMBER 2015
Report ED15059

The report provided information on the consultation feedback from schools on the proposed alignment of the matrix style funding levels for pupils with SEN to new top up rates. A table showing the impact on individual schools was circulated. These changes affected the high needs funding block only, providing a very small saving in the region of £5k which would remain in the DSG.

Of the eight responses received from schools, six were in support with two against. A member commented that this was a low response, but officers confirmed that they had been working with schools on this since 2013.

Alison Regester asked that guidance be sent out to Early Years Providers on this issue

RESOLVED that the proposed changes be noted and approved.

44 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

David Dilling asked whether there was any sign of the DfE publishing its funding formulas for 2016/17, and whether there was any indication of major changes being proposed. Officers responded that there had been no clear answers at the DfE conference the previous week, but there was more expectation of major changes for 2017/18. Government funding for 2016/17 would be announced in December.

45 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The meeting dates for the coming Council year were noted –

- 24th September 2015
- 26th November 2015
- 14th January 2016

It was proposed that the meeting on 24th September might be replaced by meetings early in September and early in October.

The Meeting ended at 6.10 pm

Chairman