

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 14 January 2016

Present:

Andrew Downes (Chairman)	Secondary Academy Governor
David Bridger (Vice-Chairman)	Non-School Representative (Church of England)
Dr Martin Airey	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Colin Ashford	Primary Academy Governor
Geoff Boyd	Primary Maintained Governor
Leah Crawley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
David Dilling	Primary Academy Governor
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
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:

Philippa Gibbs	Chief Executive's Department
James Mullender	Finance Manager
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support

68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Sam Parrett and Neil Proudfoot. Jane Bailey, Director of Education, and Cllr Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Education also sent apologies for absence.

69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no additional declarations of interest.

70 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26TH NOVEMBER 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 were agreed, and signed as a correct record.

The following issues were raised under matters arising:

Minute 65 (Review of Funding Formula – 2017/18)

Karen Raven reported that there had been a further Secondary Headteachers' meeting where it had been agreed, in light of the strong feelings expressed, that a letter should be sent on behalf of the group to the Secretary of State for Education. The letter would set out that Head Teachers did not feel that there was sufficient funding for schools in Bromley and would outline the consequences of this underfunding.

71 2016-17 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

The Forum considered a report providing information on the 2016-17 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and how it would be allocated. In December 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) released the final DSG for 2016/17 based on the final units of funding that were released in July 2015. The final units of funding increased marginally from 2015/16 (from £4,545.22 to £4,548.24) to include funding for non-recoupment academies/free schools that were previously funded separately. The DSG income was generally in line with what was expected and what had been received in previous years. In 2015/16 a balanced budget was set at the start of the financial year (taking into account planned expenditure to be funded from the unspent DSG carried forwards from previous years) as agreed by the Schools' Forum. Initial calculations indicated that the DSG was likely to be overspent by around £4 million in 2016/17. Additional pressures on the budget included special schools, bulge classes, SEN services and licenses. It had previously been agreed as part of the 2015/16 budget process that £1m per annum of previously unspent DSG would be used to support expenditure in 2015/16 and 2016/17. Further savings had been identified by officers from the Central Spend areas to reduce the overspend with a further £1.25m from the DSG carry forward to balance the budget for 2016/17. The previous DSG underspend was now almost fully spent and as such the Local Authority would no longer have this as a resource on which to draw down. The Local Authority was very concerned about this situation as it demonstrated that the current budget was not sustainable and that further savings would need to be identified in future years. Officers had already begun the task of identifying potential savings within the High Needs and Early Years Blocks and within the central spend in the Schools Block. However, it was anticipated that additional savings may also need to be found within the Schools Block, and the Schools' Forum was asked to consider this as part of the Formula Review in preparation for the introduction of the National Funding Formula which was due to be announced early in 2016 as part of a full consultation process.

Members questioned when the savings from Beacon House, in relation to SEN spending, would be built into the budget. The Finance Manager reported that the anticipated 25 places at Beacon House had already been built into the budget and that the savings from this were containing a further increase in expenditure. The high level of expenditure (£11,954,041) on SEN Outborough fees was noted by the Forum and Members noted that if this issue could be adequately addressed the budget pressures facing other areas would be eased. In response, the Head of Schools Finance Support stressed that this budget was targeted at a small number of pupils (around 200) with high level complex needs and that the Local

Authority had very little discretion surrounding this funding stream. As all of the Special Schools in Bromley were at capacity there was no short-term solution to address the high levels of expenditure.

In terms of the Early Years Block, the Forum considered the funding and expenditure for free nursery provision for 2 year olds. Concern was expressed that the deficit in this area could easily grow as parents were already taking advantage of the full 15 hours per week of free provision that was currently funded and the Government had made it clear that this free entitlement would be increasing to 30 hours per week. This had significant cost implications as staffing levels would need to be increased because of the requirement to have 2 members of staff for each child under 3 years.

The Forum discussed the financial pressures facing all education sectors and Members of the Forum expressed significant concerns surrounding further cuts to already tight budgets. It was noted that the Government continued to introduce provision for additional services and whilst there were no direct cuts to education budgets, there was also no additional funding for the provision that was being introduced.

The Forum agreed to support the balanced DSG budget that was presented for 2016/17 but Members of the Forum expressed serious concerns surrounding the significant unintended consequences on schools and education provision of any future financial pressures placed on the budget.

The Forum noted that at its last meeting it deferred the decision due to be taken by Maintained Primary Representatives to changes of Supply Staff Costs following a request from the Joint Teacher Liaison Committee to exclude facilities time related expenditure from de-delegation and for maintained primaries to make a contribution to a separate "pot" along with academies. Based on current expenditure this would equate to around £3,000 of the £117,000 budget for 2015/16 and would result in a reduction of per pupil de-delegation from £18.50 to £18.19. The Maintained Primary Representatives unanimously agreed to the changes outlined above.

Moving on to the issue of pressures on the DSG in future years, it was suggested that it would be helpful for the Forum to establish a Working Group, consisting of representatives from all three funding blocks, to consider the future pressures on the DSG in detail and identify a fair way of making budget cuts across all blocks in order to balance future budgets. It was agreed that it was important that provisional ideas needed to be discussed at an early stage and that the impact of any changes were fully considered. Officers would provide additional detailed information on the funding streams in order to support discussions, including information on statutory and non statutory services. It was agreed that the following representatives would sit on the Working Group: Andrew Downes, David Bridger, Patrick Foley, Karen Raven, David Dilling, Alison Regester, Keith Seed, Lee Mason-Ellis and Aydin Önaç. The Working Group would be supported by Mandy Russell and David Bradshaw. The first meeting of the Working Group would take place at 2pm on Monday 29 February 2016.

It was also agreed that the Schools' Forum would have a further meeting at 4.30pm on Thursday 14 April 2016 to consider the outcome of deliberations by the Working Group.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Dedicated Schools Grant allocation for 2016/17 be noted; and**
- (2) the 2016/17 Budget be supported, although the Portfolio Holder is asked to note the concern expressed by Members of the Schools' Forum surrounding the significant unintended consequences on schools and education provision of any future financial pressures placed on the budget.**
- (3) the de-delegation amounts for maintained primary schools for 2016/17 of £3,000, as detailed above, be agreed.**

72 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Schools' Forum noted that this was the last meeting that the Finance Manager would attend. Members expressed their thanks for the support that the Finance Manager had given to the Schools' Forum.

73 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Meeting ended at 5.57 pm

Chairman