

## **EDUCATION BUDGET SUB-COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 1 November 2016

### **Present:**

Councillor Neil Reddin FCCA (Chairman)  
Councillor Julian Benington (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Kathy Bance MBE, Nicholas Bennett J.P.,  
Alan Collins and Judi Ellis

### **Also Present:**

Councillor Peter Fortune, Education Portfolio Holder

### **29 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Neil Reddin was appointed Chairman and Councillor Julian Benington Vice-Chairman for the Council year 2016/17.

### **30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Julian Benington declared an interest as a governor at Charles Darwin School.

### **32 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

No questions had been received from members of the public.

### **33 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 January 2016 AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

### **34 EDUCATION PORTFOLIO BUDGET MONITORING 2016/17** Report ED17020

The Sub-Committee considered a report detailing the second quarter budget monitoring position for 2016/17 for the Education Portfolio based on activity levels up to the end of August 2016. The report also highlighted significant variations which would impact on future years.

An element of the Education budget within Education Care and Health Services

(ECHS) department, classed as Schools' budget, was funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Grant conditions required that any over or under-spend should be carried forward to the next financial year. The Schools Budget was predicted to underspend by £104,000 during 2016/17. This would be added to the £3.7m carried forward in 2015/16. Much of this carry forward was being used to fund the costs of the refurbishment of Beacon House and to contain growth. The rest of the Education budget within ECHS was classed as Non Schools' budget. This was projected to overspend by £1,087,000.

SEN transport was the main area of concern. The number of children receiving transport services was over 800, with around 300 travelling to provision outside the borough. The overspend had increased from £600,000 when the monitoring was last reported to £1,233,000. The increase was due to a number of factors including:-

- (i) The new route schedule for September not realising any further efficiencies.
- (ii) There had been further increases in numbers as the financial year progressed especially in primary age children.
- (iii) A shift from placing children at independent boarding placements to independent day placements. Whilst this generally helped ease pressures in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), it resulted in an increased number of journeys which had an impact on the Council's core funding.
- (iv) Increased levels of need of children using the SEN transport service especially at the early age groups.

Action was being taken by the department including: continuing travel training, route review and rationalisation, sharing routes with other boroughs and supporting parents to take up reimbursement of parental mileage. If there were further opportunities to rationalise routes in-year these would be investigated. However, these actions were unlikely to mitigate the issue in the short term and further action would need to be taken to bring the budget back into balance. Members recommended considering raising the parental mileage allowance to make this more attractive – this would be a simple and cost-effective measure - and mustering was another possibility for savings.

The buses used for SEN transport and for social services transport for adults were now under one contract, but one Member commented that there should still be opportunities to improve the utilisation of vehicles through better timing of journeys. He added that there should also be more sharing of resources with other authorities. However, another Member commented that it was not always possible to expect older people to travel later to fit in with school times. Officers confirmed that these complex issues were being dealt with in great detail. The Education Portfolio Holder also commented that there was a need to look at the overall service and budget, educate parents early and provide better in-borough facilities.

A Member reported that the Governors at Riverside School were lobbying TfL for an app that would assist SEND children with using public transport, and give them and their parents more reassurance than the existing facilities and apps.

Members requested a report on the SEN transport budget at the next meeting, including more information on children travelling independently.

Members asked about the situation with Phoenix Pre-School services. An above inflation increase in rent was expected for the Phoenix Centre, and a move to Hawes Down had been proposed. However, an agreement had been reached with the EFA that they would use the space at Hawes Down and pay the full rental costs of the Phoenix Centre for two years in return. However, officers accepted that the cost of the Phoenix Centre was unsustainable and needed to be part of an overall review.

It was noted that some parents were still not taking up their entitlement to Free Education for 2 year olds, with an underspend of £111k predicted. It was suggested that the nurseries might be contributing to low take-up, and an element of up-front payment was being used to assist them. Bromley's performance on this was actually good compared to many other authorities, but there was scope for improvement.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- (1) The latest 2016/17 budget projection for the Education Portfolio be noted.**
- (2) The Portfolio Holder be recommended to endorse the 2016/17 budget projection for the Education Portfolio.**
- (3) A more detailed report on the SEN transport budget be made to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.**

**35 UPDATE ON EDUCATION FUNDING**  
Report ED17021

The Sub-Committee received an update on education funding streams and the move towards the National Funding Formula, which would lead to the role of the Schools Forum becoming redundant. It was noted that the position on Early Years funding was fairly positive for Bromley, but there were concerns about High Needs funding. The Education Portfolio Holder confirmed that managing a smooth transition to the new system would be a priority.

**RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.**

**36 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 1ST QUARTER 2016/17**  
Report FSD16060

A revised Capital Programme was approved by the Executive in July, following final outturn figures for 2015/16 and a detailed monitoring exercise carried out after the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2016/17. The base position was the revised programme approved by the Executive on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016, as amended by variations approved at subsequent Executive meetings. The revised Programme for the Education Portfolio was attached as Appendix A to the report. Appendix B to the

report set out actual spend against budget in the first quarter of 2016/17, together with detailed comments on individual schemes with Appendix C including details of the final outturn for 2015/16.

As part of the savings required to balance the 2016/17 Schools Budget (DSG), agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Education, the Direct Revenue Financing for Schools Access Initiative had been ceased with the Executive approving a net reduction of £600,000 in the capital programme. In July 2015, the Executive agreed that the Capital Programme budget should reflect the total of Section 106 receipts available to fund expenditure. In July 2016 the Executive agreed an increase of £215,000 in the Capital Programme budget for Section 106 to match the total funding available. The approved Section 106 budgets for the Education Capital Programme totalled £2,801,000 for the 2016/17 financial year.

The 2015/16 Capital Outturn was reported to the Executive on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016. The final capital outturn for the year for Education Portfolio schemes was £29,727,000 compared to a revised budget of £31,925,000 approved by the Executive in February, an underspend of £2,198,000. This was mainly due to a £1,234,000 underspend on Glebe expansion works. After allowing for minor adjustments, a total of £2,188,000 had been re-phased into 2016/17. Details of the 2015/16 outturn for this Portfolio were set out in Appendix C to the report. As part of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter monitoring exercise, £18,169,000 had been re-phased from 2016/17 into 2017/18 to reflect revised estimates of when expenditure on the Education schemes was likely to be incurred.

**RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to note and confirm the changes agreed by the Executive on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2016.**

**37 EXPENDITURE ON CONSULTANTS 2015/16 AND 2016/17**  
Report CSD16147

At its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016, the Executive and Resources PDS Committee had considered a report on expenditure on consultants across all Council departments for both revenue and capital budgets. The Committee had requested that the report be considered by all other PDS Committees.

Revenue expenditure on consultants in the Education Portfolio was set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and was focussed on (i) one-off specialist advice, no-one with specialist skills; (ii) insufficient in-house skills/resources; and (iii) training. Capital expenditure on consultants in the Education Portfolio was set out in Appendix 3, broken down into expenditure on architects, surveyors and multi-disciplinary/other consultants. Appendix 3A covered expenditure in 2015/16 (£1,788,701), and Appendix 3B covered the first quarter of 2016/17 (£162,455).

Members commented on the following consultants –

- National Development Team for Inclusion - This involved work on the transition to adult services for young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

- Osborne Thomas Ltd - Councillor Ellis requested further information about this specialist post.
- L.B. (support for SEND Tribunals) – It was confirmed that a consultant was no longer used for this work.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

**38 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business to be considered.

**39 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of Education Budget Sub-Committee would be held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017.

The Meeting ended at 8.03 pm

Chairman