

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 13 September 2016

Present:

Andrew Downes (Chairman)	Secondary Academy Governor
David Bridger (Vice-Chairman)	Non-School Representative (Church of England)
Colin Ashford	Primary Academy Governor
Janice Box	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
David Dilling	Primary Academy Governor
Richard Edmonds	Primary Academy Head Teacher (Substitute for Lee Mason-Ellis)
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
Karen Raven	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Alison Regester	Non-School Representative (Early Years)
David Wilcox	Secondary Academy Governor

Also Present:

Jane Bailey	Director: Education
David Bradshaw	Head of ECHS Finance
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support
Philippa Gibbs	Democratic Services Officer

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Dr Martin Airey, Keith Seed, Neil Miller, and Aydin Önaç.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no additional declarations of interest.

11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 were approved, and signed as a correct record.

Members of the Schools' Forum noted that the Part 2 (not for publication) minutes from the meeting held on 30th June 2016 would need to be considered and approved at the next meeting.

12 ADJUSTMENTS TO LOCAL AUTHORITY FUNDING RELATED TO FREE SCHOOLS - CONSULTATION RESPONSE Report ED17012

The Schools' Forum considered a report outlining the DfE consultation on proposed changes to Free School funding along with the suggested response

from the Local Authority (LA) indicating that the LA did not support the proposals. On 21st July, the DfE launched a consultation seeking views on proposals to change the local authority recoupment arrangements for mainstream Free Schools. The closing date for the consultation was 21st September 2016. The DfE proposals, if implemented, would have a financial implication for the LA with early financial modelling indicating that the cost to the Council for the financial year 2017/18 would be around £1.3 million.

In relation to Question 1, the Forum considered the implication within the consultation that savings could be utilised as a result of minimising 'double funding'. The Forum categorically stated that they believed that the DfE had made a mistake and that there was no 'double funding' of pupils. This indicated that there would be very few savings if the proposals were approved. Indeed, the Director of Education noted that there would be a large funding gap if the Government implemented the proposals. One Member questioned whether the implementation of the proposals would amount to a breach of the previous Conservative Government's pledge to maintain levels of school funding. The Head of Schools' Finance Support suggested that the DfE would argue that funding to schools was not being cut. It was agreed that the response of the LA should be strengthened to stress that the Schools' Forum and the LA did not consider there to be any double funding.

The Schools' Forum was dismayed to discover that financial planning tools had been sent out with the presumption that the proposals would be approved. This suggested that the DfE were merely paying lip service to the consultation process and that the proposals would be implemented regardless of the consultation responses received by the DfE.

It was suggested that the LA's final bullet point in response to the first question should be a statement not a question and should therefore be amended to read:

"It is unrealistic and unreasonable to introduce this change in advance of the NFF system as it will create additional work for LAs – it would be better to introduce this in line with the "hard formula" when LAs will no longer have a role in the formula process and the DfE will have the pupil number data to directly inform this process."

In relation to Question 2, it was suggested that the Head of Strategic Place Planning should review the wording of the LAs response. It was agreed that any revisions that were made needed no further consideration by the Forum.

RESOLVED: That the draft Local Authority response to the DfE Consultation relating to Adjustments in Local Authority Funding relating to Free Schools be supported.

**13 AN EARLY YEARS NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA -
CONSULTATION RESPONSE
Report ED17011**

The Schools' Forum considered a report outlining the DfE proposals for an Early Years National funding Formula and changes to the way three and four year old entitlements to childcare are funded along with the Local Authority's (LA) draft response. On 11th August 2016, the DfE launched a consultation document on proposals for an early years' national funding formula and changes to the way three and four year old entitlements to childcare are funded. The closing date for the consultation was Thursday 22nd September 2016. Alongside the consultation document the DfE published illustrative funding allocations which demonstrated that the funding rates for Bromley would increase from £4.19 (compared to a national average of £4.43) to £4.91 (compared to the national average of £4.71). It was anticipated that this increase would be passed onto providers and would mean that potentially there may not be the need to find savings in this block as part of the overall DSG budget exercise, and that settings could see a real increase in funding.

The Early Years Representative reported that the consultation would be considered at the Providers meeting on 14th September 2016 and a response would be submitted on behalf of the providers. On the face of it, it appeared that overall Bromley would receive increased funding which was good news however, there did appear to be some anomalies in the consultation document which was slightly concerning. The Head of Schools Finance Support provided reassurance to the Forum that, having undertaken some additional work, it did appear that Bromley would be getting the full increase in funding in the first year.

The Head of Schools' Finance Support reported that there did appear some logic behind a number of the proposals. Members of the Forum noted that the proposed formula appeared to be transparent and stressed that it was important that the National Funding Formula for schools maintained the same level of transparency.

In response to Forum Members concerns surrounding the absence of a response from LA Officers at the Phoenix Centre, the Head of Schools' Finance Support reported that some draft responses had been received and these were supportive of the proposals.

Members of the Schools' Forum were happy to support the draft responses that had been provided but suggested however that more direct answers to the questions should be provided with qualification following the direct answer.

RESOLVED: That the draft response provided by the Local Authority be supported.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A PROPOSED CHANGES TO LA SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA FOR 2017/18 - UPDATE Report ED17013

The Schools' Forum considered a report which provided an update on the findings of the Schools' Forum Working Group relating to proposed changes to the LA

funding Formula for 2017/18, specifically relating to identifying savings within the Schools Block.

At the last Schools Forum Meeting on 30 June 2016 the Schools' Forum considered the consultation responses but did not make any final decisions as it felt that the consultation was inconclusive. Members also hoped that the second consultation on the National Funding Formula (NFF) would be issued before a final decision needed to be made. However, over the summer there was a number of unexpected changes to the NFF timetable with implementation being delayed until 2018/19 meaning that further details have yet to be published. In addition to this, unlike previous years, the APT which is provided to schools to model the funding formula did not have to be returned to the DfE in October this year. This meant that the final decision on any changes to the funding formula did not need to be agreed until January 2017. This issue was discussed with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Schools Forum and it was proposed that at the Working Group meeting on the 7th September 2016, that the group would look at further modelling data with a view to going out for a further consultation with all schools during the Autumn term.

The Schools' Forum considered the modelling data as follows:

Model One: Comparison of Attainment/ Lump sum to AWPU across primary schools only.

As part of the original review, only the impact of reductions to the lump sum and attainment factors was shared with schools. A number of schools indicated that they felt that AWPU would be a fairer option to use. This model showed the impact of both methods and provided a comparison between the actual reductions and also provided an indication of the types of schools where the variation between the two methods was greatest.

Model Two: Reduction of AWPU across primary and secondary schools.

In response to the initial consultation, a number of primary schools expressed concern that the savings were only being found from the primary sector. As the Schools' Forum had not actually been asked to make this a formal recommendation, it was proposed that the Working Group should have the opportunity to see what the impact would be across all schools. The disadvantage of this proposal was that there would be no change to the ratio between primary and secondary schools, however as the NFF consultation had not been released there was no further evidence to support what the correct ratio should be.

The Schools' Forum was being asked to consider whether there should be further consultation with all schools and on what basis.

Members of the Schools' Forum acknowledged that a number of Primary Head Teachers did not support the proposals to exclude Secondary Schools from the reductions. However, it was noted that model one would place schools in the position they were likely to be in once the NFF was implemented. Members of the Forum expressed disappointment that the Government had delayed

implementation of the NFF as this could have mitigated some of the impact of the proposals under consideration on primary schools.

The Head of Schools' Finance Support reported that it was likely that the NFF would increase funding for the traditionally underfunded Boroughs like Bromley to the average, rather the reducing funding for those Borough that had traditionally been better funded.

The Chairman stressed that the bottom line was that the funding received by the LA had to be distributed in a way which was fair. For the past two years the primary sector had received additional funding at the expense of the secondary sector in an attempt to rectify historic underfunding of the primary sector. However, there had clearly been some unforeseen and unintended consequences of the decision to give the primary sector additional funding and the funding ratio had been distorted.

Some Members of the Forum expressed the view that the Working Group had given in depth consideration to the detailed information that was available and had formed its recommendations based on that information. In light of this it was suggested that the informed recommendations of the Working Group should be respected. It was important for schools to have financial stability and looking at the available evidence it did not appear that the Government had much choice but to conclude that the ratio would be around 1.23:1.22. It was important that the Schools' Forum reached decisions based on the ratio that would be likely to result from the NFF.

The Chairman proposed that secondary schools be excluded from the reductions in funding. This was seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

Immediately prior to the vote being taken the Secondary Academy Head Teacher present at the meeting objected to the vote stressing that it should have been made clear to the Members of the Schools' Forum that this vote would be taking place at the meeting. The Head Teacher indicated that she had not received the supplementary paper that had been circulated on Friday 9th September and which set out the proposals currently under consideration. Another Member suggested that these points of objection could not prevent the vote from taking place and any concerns surrounding the vote and non-delivery of papers should be dealt with at the next meeting under matters arising.

The Chairman's proposals that secondary schools be excluded from the reductions in funding was put to the vote:

6 in favour
2 against.

The motion was CARRIED.

Turning to the second issue of the way in which the reductions should be made, the Chairman reported that the conclusion of the Working Group had been that reductions to the lump sum and attainment factors should be made.

The Chairman proposed that reductions to the lump sum and attainment factors should be made and this was seconded by the Vice-Chairman. On putting the motion to the vote:

6 in favour
2 abstentions

The motion was CARRIED.

It was therefore

RESOLVED: That secondary schools within the borough should be excluded from the reductions in funding and that reductions to the lump sum and attainment factors should be made.

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 24 November 2016. If there was insufficient business for the meeting it could be cancelled. Further details for the meeting would be provided nearer the time.

The Meeting ended at 6.10 pm

Chairman