

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 19 September 2019

Present:

David Dilling (Chairman)	Primary Academy Governor (Charles Darwin Academy Trust)
David Bridger (Vice-Chairman)	Non-School Representative (Church of England)(Aquinas Trust)
Tracey Davies	Non-School Representative (14-19 Partnership)(Bromley Trust Academy)
Richard Edmunds	Primary Academy Head Teacher (Warren Road Primary School)
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher (Southborough Primary School)
Angela Leeves	Non-School Representative (Early Years)
Neil Miller	PRU Head Teacher/Governor Academy (Bromley Trust Academy)
Andrew Rees	Secondary Maintained School Head Teacher (St Olaves Grammar School)

Also Present:

Robert Bollen	Head of Strategic Place Planning
David Bradshaw	Head of Education and Children's Services Finance
Philippa Gibbs	Democratic Services Officer
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Karen Raven, Ms Izabela Lecybyl and Mr David Wilcox.

The Director of Education also sent apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed Tracey Davies to the meeting and introductions took place.

8 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JUNE 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2019 were approved, and signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising:

Place Planning/Falling Rolls Fund:

The Head of Strategic Place Planning reported that the overall position in Bromley with regards school rolls was pupil numbers were increasing and forecasts

demonstrated that school population would continue to increase until 2026. It was projected that school places would increase from approximately 49,000 places in 2017 to 54,000 in 2026, before falling back to 53,441 in 2032. More applicants were getting a school of their choice with Bromley out-performing all its London neighbours in terms of applicants being offered 1 of their top 3 secondary preferences. Over 6,500 school places had been added through school expansion and Free Schools. Bromley remained a net importer of pupils. The focus of the Local Authority (LA) was now moving from mainstream education to SEN places.

In terms of Primary need, growth had stalled with future projections indicated a need for between 3,800 and 4,000 Year R places each year. This was slightly below the peak of 4,050 but significantly above 3,400 in 2010. The LA planned for 5% surplus for contingency and choice, although the current surplus was marginally above this at 7%. The National Audit Office recommend a 0 to 10% surplus. The surplus tended to be concentrated in a small number of schools and there was a particular issue in Biggin Hill where there was a need to provide 5 FE of reception places in Biggin Hill to comply with class size legislation. Demographic issues had a significant influence over demand. Whilst the birth rate remained quite high with over 4,000 live births each year, it had been reported that the Office for National Statistics had over projected the fertility of women. Migration had reduced, although there was still net migration into the Borough. Demographic issues impacted in different Planning Areas in different ways. In North West Bromley rolls fell during primary age, whereas in West Wickham and Shortlands numbers rose. Growth was still a factor in some areas, such as West Wickham and Central Bromley.

The Head of Strategic Place Planning reported that there were no further plans to expand primary schools once the Stewart Fleming expansion had been completed. However there were some options for bulge classes should they be required and the Head of Strategic Place Planning stressed that it was also important not to take capacity out of the system at the moment. The position had to be carefully monitored. The LA had no control over the Admissions Policies of Academies and therefore capacity issues had to be influenced through discussions with individual academies and trusts. In response to a question, the Head of Strategic Place Planning reported that there was churn in the system with a high number of in-year admissions, this impacted different areas.

The Head of Schools' Finance Support Team reported that five schools had met the criteria for the Falling Rolls Fund and these schools had been asked to provide evidence of their funding issues. Payments totalling £55-60k (averaging £8k per school) would be made to those schools in October.

Noting that it was unlikely that schools with falling rolls would fill, a Member of the Schools Forum suggested that it made more economic sense to close small schools and move children to larger schools. In response, the Head of Strategic Place Planning reported that there was no long term reason why the 5 schools currently receiving falling rolls funding would be in the same position next year. It could be a different five schools depending on parental choice and other external factors. It was also noted that smaller schools tended to be located in the more

rural communities, and the loss of the local school could have a significant impact on local communities.

In response to a question, the Head of Schools' Finance Support Team confirmed that falling rolls funding was not ring-fenced so there was no requirement for schools to evidence the impact of the funding.

In terms of Secondary need, this was an area of growth following a dip earlier in decade. The January 2019 (spring) school census identified that there were 3,848 pupils in Year 7 in Bromley schools compared with 3,323 in 2014. An additional 480 places had been added through expansions and Free Schools, and a further two Free Schools were planned. The peak of growth remained uncertain with the projections putting this at between 4,100 and 4,200. Need was concentrated in the Centre and West of Borough and there was still some surplus in the East. Last year there had been some issues with admissions in north west Bromley, and parents has raised concerns about admissions policies. Whilst Bromley remained a net importer at secondary age, the level of the net flow had fallen. The number of pupils from other boroughs at Bromley schools had remained static although an increasing number of Bromley residents were being educated in another borough.

Noting that there were significant issues in the East of the Borough, a Member of the Schools Forum questioned how new schools could be justified when many existing schools had places available. The Head of Strategic Place Planning explained that geographical issues which impacted on travel distances was a factor. The performance of schools in other boroughs had also impacted on cross-borough movements. Members of the Forum highlighted that there was significant migration to Kent schools which had not been as prevalent in the past. The Head of Strategic Place Planning concluded by highlighting that in terms of secondary it was a complex picture and there was an aspiration that local children attended popular local schools.

Turning to SEN, both locally and nationally SEN was now the key place planning focus. The percentage of children with an EHCP in Bromley was higher than the national average and the increase in the number of EHCPs was out running the rate of demographic growth which placed pressure on both the school system and school finance. An additional 225 SEN places had been built in but there remained a need to shift funding from expensive independent provision to more cost effective local provision. In Bromley there had been a move towards a more inclusive model based on supporting children locally and keeping funding in the local system. However, unlike mainstream Bromley remained a net exporter although efforts were being made to address this with the application for a new Free School as a centre of ASD excellence and work at Marjorie McClure.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Strategic Place Planning for his update.

**9 ECF OUTTURN 2018/19
Report CEF19005**

The Schools' Forum considered a report providing the financial information reported to the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee on 9th July 2019.

The Head of Education and Children's Services Finance reported that in 2018/19 Education had been cost neutral and Children's Services had recorded an overspend in the region of £3m. This overspend had been the result of a number of uncontrollable pressures such as placements and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Education and Children's Services Finance confirmed that the budget for bulge classes was not underspent.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**10 FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY
MAINTAINED SCHOOLS AND ACADEMY TRUSTS -
CONSULTATION RESPONSE
Report CEF19006**

The Schools' Forum considered an outline of the Local Authority's draft response to the DfE consultation entitled: Financial Transparency of Local Authority Maintained Schools and Academy Trusts.

The Head of Schools' Finance Support Team provided an overview of the consultation explaining that following a review of the consultation the Schools' Finance Team had concluded that there would be no significant impact to the LA's Maintained School as many of the proposals were already a requirement placed on schools by the LA.

The Primary Maintained Headteacher Representative noted that additional resources should be in place to mitigate against any additional burden. In response, the Head of Schools' Finance Support Team explained that it would be difficult to quantify any additional burden but if schools were able to quantify any additional burdens arising from the proposals they were encouraged to respond to the consultation on an individual basis.

RESOLVED: That the Local Authority Response to the DfE consultation into Financial Transparency of Local Authority Maintained Schools and Academy Trusts be endorsed.

11 FUNDING AND FINANCIAL PLANNING VERBAL UPDATE

The Head of Education and Children's Services Finance provided the Schools' Forum with an update concerning the recent Government announcements around additional funding for schools. The Head of Education and Children's Services

Finance explained that as with all funding announcements, the devil would be in the detail. An additional £14bn funding for schools had been announced but this headline figure had been somewhat misleading as it represented an accumulation of funding, spread over three years and included inflationary increases. Operational guidance had been issued alongside the announcement of additional funding.

The additional funding equated to a minimum of £5k per pupil in the Secondary sector, and a minimum of £4k per pupil in the Primary sector. It was important to emphasise however that this was not AWPU. In any event, all schools in Bromley were already receiving above this figure. The additional funding would have varying degrees of impact on schools across the Borough and this would need to be run through formula before any concrete conclusions could be drawn.

There had also been an announcement of an additional £700m for SEN, this equated to roughly £4m funding for the High Needs Block in Bromley. Whilst this funding was welcome, it was important to recognise that the cost of High Needs in Bromley was increasing and the impact of this announcement would need to be monitored as the High Needs Budget would grow as funding grew.

There were still some issues around funding being taken out of the Schools' Budget to fund new Free Schools and lobbying around this issue continued.

Members of the Schools Forum noted that the Pay Award and Pension Costs would be coming through a grant outside of the funding formula and this would continue for two years. Details of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) were outline in the Operational Guidance and whilst it was hoped that the announced funding amounted to a real time increase in funding the detail would need to be further scrutinised.

The Schools' Forum noted that further information would need to be provided around funding for Special Schools and Alternative Provision as there had been no guidance from the Government to direct a MFG increase for special schools.

The Head of Schools' Finance reported that the Government had also issued a further two consultations:

- [Extending the Academies Risk Protection Arrangement to LA Maintained Schools](#) – closing date 4th November 2019. Prior to submitting its response the LA would be seeking views from its Insurance Manager.
- [Implementing Mandatory Minimum Per Pupil Funding Levels](#) – closing date 22nd October 2019

Links to both the consultations would be included in the circular sent to schools.

The Head of Schools' Finance Support Team reported that a review of the Early Years Block was being undertaken and an update would be provided to the next meeting of the Schools' Forum.

In conclusion, the Head of Education and Children's Services Finance confirmed that benchmarking across London had shown that with no structural deficit, Bromley was in a comparatively good position.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 7th November 2019.

The Meeting ended at 6.15 pm

Chairman