

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 7 March 2013

Present:

Andrew Downes (Chairman)	Secondary Academy Governor
David Bridger (Vice-Chairman)	Non-School Representative (Church of England)
Colin Ashford	Primary Academy Governor
Anna Boshier	Non-School Representative (Catholic Church)
Geoff Boyd	Primary Maintained Governor
Angela Chapman	Primary Maintained Governor
Nick Cross	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained School Head Teacher
Matt Rampton	Primary Academy Head Teacher
Karen Raven	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Alison Register	Non-School Representative (Early Years)
Keith Seed	Special Head Teacher/Governor
David Wilcox	Secondary Academy Governor
Aydin Önaç	Secondary maintained Head Teacher

Also Present:

David Bradshaw	Head of Education & Care Services Finance
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support
Graham Walton	Democratic Services Manager

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24th January 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2013 be confirmed.

36 REVISED DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2013/14 Report ED13048

The report set out revised details of the 2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant and how it would be allocated and expended across the High Needs, Early Years and Schools Blocks, summarising changes to proposed expenditure since the meeting on 24th January 2013. It was explained that changes to High Needs funding did not come into effect for Academies until September 2013, requiring the Council to

pay extra to the Academies then recoup the money from the DfE. The Academies would continue to receive funding until September, so the issue should not cause them any problems.

RESOLVED that the changes to the original allocations be noted.

37 REVIEW OF 2013/14 SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS
Report ED13047

The Forum considered the DfE consultation documents on funding arrangements for 2013/14 to contribute to the authority's response. Bromley had been invited to meet with DfE representatives to discuss some of the proposals; this meeting, which had involved at various times the Director, Assistant Director and other officers, Head Teaches and a Schools Forum representative, had taken place across three sessions on 27th February 2013. The DfE representatives had focussed very much on a pre-prepared list of questions, and had given little feedback, but there had been opportunities to make Bromley's case for more equitable funding.

The Forum went through the twenty three questions in the consultation, commenting as follows –

Section 1: Are we moving towards national consistency?

- (1) The Forum agreed that the level should be at least 90%.
- (2) Bromley's approach was to ensure consistency, particularly across the primary/secondary sectors.
- (3) (As above)

Section 2: Areas of concern and possible changes for 2014-15

- (4) The Forum considered that, while the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile was not a good or perfect indicator, they were not aware of a better one.
- (5) No comments.
- (6) The Forum discussed the issue of small schools at length. There were five small schools in Bromley (under 100 pupil places), only three of which were designated rural schools which the Council was obliged to maintain under the 2006 Act. A number of members considered that the issue was not the existence of these schools, but how they were managed, and whether they each needed a dedicated Head Teacher and office staff. The consultation represented an opportunity to question whether retaining these schools drew funding away from other schools. It was suggested that the fixed lump sum was too crude as a mechanism, but there was also a contrary view that it was an essential part of the formula that did work in practice.
- (7) It was felt by some members that there was a better way to address the issue than with a lump sum. It was suggested that the answer should include a statement that any sharp reduction in the secondary lump sum should not involve a change of balance of funding between primary and secondary schools. The

Chairman concluded that there should be a split between primary and secondary, but that the lump sum was too blunt.

(8-12) No comments.

(13) Yes.

(14) It was suggested that this was not an issue for Bromley, therefore there should be no comment.

(15) No comment.

(16) It was concluded that authorities like Bromley should be able to consider targeting funds to traveller children.

(17) This was an issue for secondary schools, with a wave of higher pupil numbers expected in future years, and it would be desirable to set aside funding for this.

(18) No comment.

Section 3: Options for adjusting high needs funding in 2014-15 and beyond

(19) It was proposed that a factor relating to pupils receiving top-up funding should not be needed if funding was properly targeted to pupils with high needs, but it was also suggested that stating that it was not needed might imply that funding could be reduced. The Chairman concluded that the answer should be that it would not be a useful addition and that funding should be at the appropriate level.

(20) The £6,000 threshold had already been adopted by most neighbouring authorities, and was not an issue for Bromley.

(21) No comment.

(22) No comment.

Section 4: Schools Forums

(23) It was felt that the Schools Forum had always been democratic and transparent, especially as papers were now on the Council website.

It was agreed that the draft response would be shared with the Chairman before it was sent.

38 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 23rd May 2013. It was noted that future meetings would probably be held at the Civic Centre.

The meeting ended at 6.08 pm

Chairman