

EDUCATION BUDGET SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 7 January 2014

Present:

Councillor Neil Reddin FCCA (Chairman)
Councillor Julian Benington (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Kathy Bance MBE, Nicholas Bennett J.P.,
Julian Grainger and David McBride

Councillor Stephen Wells, Portfolio Holder for Education

Also Present:

Jane Bailey, Interim Assistant Director: Education
David Bradshaw, Head of Education, Care and Health Services Finance
James Mullender, Senior Accountant

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received from members of the public.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2ND OCTOBER 2013 AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING

In considering the minutes of the previous meeting, it was noted that Members had requested Clare House, St Peter and St Paul's and Chelsfield Primary Schools be included in the Schedule of Members' visits for the 2013/14 academic year which had not yet been published.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2013 be agreed.

5 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2ND QUARTER 2013/14

Report CSD14012

On 20th November 2013, the Executive received the 2nd quarterly capital monitoring report for 2013/14 and agreed a revised Capital Programme for the four year period 2013/14 to 2016/17. The Sub-Committee considered a report outlining the changes agreed by the Executive in respect of the Capital Programme for the Education Portfolio.

The Chairman was pleased to announce that an additional £300k of Government grant would be made available to the Local Authority in 2015/16 and 2016/17 to fund capital works in schools to meet the growing demand for additional pupil places. A one-off sum of £400k had also been provided for 2014/15 to equip kitchens in Local Authority maintained schools to support the provision of free school meals to all Key Stage 1 pupils from September 2014. No announcement had yet been made regarding how these free school meals would be funded. Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP noted that free school meals for Key Stage 1 pupils might also increase take-up of school meals at Key Stage 2 and above. The Chairman highlighted the link between free school meals and the Pupil Premium and underlined the need for schools to continue to encourage parents to register for Pupil Premium if their children were eligible as this enabled schools to access significant additional funding.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the £297k carry forward of Children's Centre funding from 2012/13 to make essential repairs to Castlecombe and Mottingham Children's Centres, the Head of Education, Care and Health Services Finance confirmed that the Local Authority continued to be in dispute with the project manager and company which had carried out the initial work under the Surestart capital scheme. The Local Authority contribution to the Phoenix Pre-School SEN Service was an historic carry forward of funding, and Members of the Sub-Committee were advised that following disagreement over the terms of the work, the Local Authority had never been billed by the Bromley Primary Care Trust. These funds were being held in abeyance in case they were required but would otherwise be released in due course.

A Member noted the capital work that had been undertaken at Langley Park Boys School as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme, including the enhanced performance space. The Head of Education, Care and Health Service Finance confirmed that the project should be completed on budget, excluding additional funds which had been provided by the Department for Education to fund asbestos removal. The Local Authority had contributed £2m to the enhanced performance space for which a community use agreement was in place, allowing groups such as the Bromley Youth Music Trust to access the facilities. A trading account had been established for the enhanced performance space, and it was hoped that the income generated through the rental of this space would support the maintenance of the facility into the future.

RESOLVED that the revised Capital Programme agreed by the Executive on

20th November 2013 be recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Education for approval.

**6 EDUCATION PORTFOLIO BUDGET MONITORING REPORT
2013/14**

Report ED13140

The Sub-Committee considered a report setting out the budget monitoring position for the Education Portfolio based on expenditure to the end of November 2013. The Schools' Budget, funded from the Dedicated Schools' Grant and specific grants was forecast to be in an underspend position of £2,087,000, which would be carried forward into the next financial year. The controllable part of the Non-Schools' budget, funded from Council Tax, Revenue Support and specific grants, was forecast to be in an overspend position of £35,000.

In considering the budget monitoring position for the Education Portfolio, the Chairman highlighted the overspend of £146k currently projected for the Behaviour Support (Secondary) Sold Service and confirmed that this was due to low take up of the service during 2013/14. Another Member noted the overspend of £155k currently projected for Bromley Adult Education College and queried if Jobcentre Plus would fund the courses being run to support people back into employment. The Head of Education, Care and Health Services Finance confirmed that funding for these courses was included as part of the Skills Funding Agency grant for 2013/14 and that no additional funding would be provided.

A Member underlined that the Education Psychology Service was projected to overspend by £90k on its trading account due to a short fall of anticipated income and a higher than budget level of staff time allocated to it. This would be partly offset by a £40k underspend on the statutory element of the service and staff turnover, but the service was unlikely to break even for the 2013/14 financial year. The Education Psychology service formed part of the market testing exercise being undertaken on a range of Education services, as did the Adult Education Service, and consideration was being given to how the quality of Education services could be best maintained and monitored into the future, whether delivered in-house or by an alternate provider.

A Member noted the list of waivers to financial regulations which had been approved, allowing certain contracts with a value exceeding £50k to be exempted from the normal requirement to obtain competitive quotations. The Head of Education, Care and Health Services Finance confirmed that these waivers had been requested for a range of reasons including enabling immediate action to be taken on specific projects such as urgent capital works. Use of these exemptions were reported to Audit Sub-Committee on a bi-annual basis for Members' consideration.

The Portfolio Holder for Education was pleased to report the significant savings currently being realised in Special Educational Needs (SEN) expenditure. This had been achieved through a wide range of measures including robust officer

action, increased local provision at Bromley Specialist Schools, strong representation at tribunals and increased accessibility of short breaks within the Borough. As more schools converted to academy status, grant funding would continue to decrease and it was important to ensure that grants continued to be utilised in a flexible manner where appropriate. A Member noted the potential to introduce personal budgets for children and young people with special educational needs. The Interim Assistant Director: Education confirmed that the Bromley and Bexley SEND Pathfinder project included the piloting of personal budgets for children and young people with Special Educational Needs as part of the new Education, Health and Care Plan. Approximately 70 Education, Health and Care Plans were currently in place and a Working Group was considering how the personal budget element of these plans might work.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The latest 2013/14 budget projection for the Education Portfolio be noted; and,**
- 2) The Education Portfolio Budget Monitoring Report 2013/14 be recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Education for approval.**

7 DRAFT EDUCATION BUDGET 2014/15

The Head of Education and Care Services Finance outlined the draft Education Portfolio Budget 2014/15, which incorporated future costs pressures and initial draft savings options and would be reported to the Council's Executive on 15th January 2014 and the Education PDS Committee on 30th January 2014. Members were requested to consider the proposed savings and identify any further action to be taken to reduce the cost pressures facing the Council over the next four years.

The Chairman noted that £950k of potential savings had been identified for the Education Portfolio which would offset a reduction of £550k in Education Services Grant. Dedicated Schools Grant for 2014/15 had been set at £231m. No figures had been provided for 2015/16 onwards, but it was hoped that some indication would be provided by Summer 2014. The level of Education Services Grant remained a concern, and Members were advised that the Education Division would receive a total annual grant of £721k if all schools converted to academy status.

In considering Bromley Youth Music Trust, the Portfolio Holder for Education confirmed that the level of Local Authority funding to the Trust had been reduced by £20k for a fourth consecutive year. A new Director had been appointed by the Trust and it was hoped that further work would be undertaken to identify alternate funding sources, such as the Arts Council or sponsorship by private businesses. A Member highlighted the value of music workshops for children and young people which were delivered by the Trust across the Borough. Another Member noted the importance of identifying how many children and young people in the Borough accessed Bromley Youth Music Trust provision.

The Members of the Sub-Committee discussed the way in which children and young people were able to contribute to Council decision-making. It was important to ensure that children and young people continued to have the opportunity for representation in Council decision making processes. The Bromley Youth Council had recently undertaken some excellent work on cyber-bullying and was currently exploring issues around adolescent mental health, however Members were concerned that the current Youth Council model was not representative of all schools across the Borough and that the service was delivered at a relatively high cost. Another Member noted that any consideration given to how children and young people contribute to Council decision making processes should also include the work of the Bromley Youth Advisory Panel.

A Member underlined the high quality of provision at the Duke Youth Centre and requested that it not be included as part of any potential closure programme. The Portfolio Holder for Education also highlighted the excellent work undertaken by the Phoenix Youth Centre, and noted the value of youth provision delivered at a number of other youth centres across the Borough. There was scope to discuss how the Duke of Edinburgh Award might best be administered in future, with the potential for local academy schools or the Scout Association to be licensed to administer the scheme.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The financial forecast for 2014/15 to 2016/7 be noted;**
- 2) Members' comments on the initial draft savings options for 2014/15 be noted and,**
- 3) Members' comments on the initial draft Education Portfolio Budget be provided to the Council's Executive.**

8 EDUCATION PORTFOLIO INFORMATION ITEMS

The Sub-Committee considered an information briefing outlining nursery provision within adult education. Bromley Adult Education College currently operated three Ofsted-registered day nurseries at the Widmore, Kentwood and Poverest Centres which provided child care for adult education staff and students as well as for local residents during term time only.

In discussion, Members were concerned at the level of uptake of the day nursery provision, particularly by adult education staff and students, and noted that the nurseries did not appear to cover the full range of premises costs of their provision, such as rent and utilities. Members queried whether there was sufficient demand to continue to operate the day nurseries and emphasised the wide range of alternate child care provision available across the Borough.

Members requested that a further report be provided to the next meeting of Education Budget Sub-Committee which gave full details of Council-run nursery provision at both the Community Vision and Blenheim Children's Centres and the

three day nurseries at the Widmore, Kentwood and Poverest Centres.

RESOLVED that the information briefing be noted.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Education Budget Sub-Committee would be held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 8th April 2014.

The Meeting ended at 8.36 pm

Chairman