

## **SCHOOLS' FORUM**

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 23 March 2021

### **Present:**

David Dilling (Chairman)	Primary Academy Governor (Charles Darwin Academy Trust)
Claire Bessa	Secondary Academy Head Teacher (E21C)
Rebecca Cottage	Special Head/Governor Maintained
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher (Southborough Primary School)
Clare Grainger	Non-Schools' Representative (Joint Teacher Liaison Committee)(Connect Multi Academy Trust)
Chris Hollands	Primary Academy Head Teacher (Aquinas Trust)
Neil Miller	PRU Head Teacher/Governor Academy (Bromley Trust Academy)
Andrew Rees	Secondary Maintained School Head Teacher (St Olaves Grammar School)
Gareth Walters	Primary Academy Governor (Compass Academy Trust)
Steve Whittle	Secondary Academy Head Teacher (Langley Park Trust)
David Wilcox	Secondary Academy Governor (Darrick Wood School)

### **Also Present:**

Julie Crew	Head of Schools Finance Support
David Bradshaw	Head of CEF Finance
Jared Nehra	Director of Education
Philippa Gibbs	Democratic Services Officer

## **24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chairman welcomed Claire Bessa to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Tracey Davies and Izabela Lecybyl.

Clare Grainger submitted apologies for leaving the meeting at 5pm and following Claire Bessa submitted apologies for leaving the meeting due to technical issues.

Following the meeting Andrew Ferguson extended apologies for absence.

**25 HIGH NEEDS FUNDING CONSULTATION**  
**Report CEF21014**

The report provided details of the High Needs Funding consultation and the Council's proposed response.

The Head of Children, Education and Families (CEF) Finance introduced the report explaining that the ambition was to produce a joint response to the consultation on behalf of the Local Authority and the Schools' Forum.

The Schools' Forum noted that in Bromley there was a high level of funding protection in the formula and Officers had tried to reflect this in the responses that had been drafted.

Question 1

In response to a question concerning the rationale for the use of 2017/18 for the historic spend factor in the high needs national funding formula, the Head of CEF Finance explained that the movement in the high needs block had begun in 2017/18. This financial year was being used as a point in time before some of the major changes were introduced and was the basis for the way in which some of the current high needs funding was driven.

The Schools' Forum agreed the response to Question 1.

Question 2

In response to a question, the Head of CEF Finance confirmed that funding protection was in place and there was currently no indication of a limit being placed on the length of time this protection would be in place.

It was agreed that the response to the question should spell out the assumption that funding protection would continue.

The Schools' Forum agreed the response to Question 2, subject to the amendment outlined above.

Question 3

A Member suggested that, like the previous question, the response to question 3 should reflect the need for the continuation of funding protection based on nationally available data.

It was noted that the use of EHCPs and Alternative Provision was a key factor in the level of need going forward. The issue of the use of historical data was considered and a Member highlighted the significant difference there could be between the spend in 2017/18 and the current spend in 2020/21 and the spend that would be required in 2022/23. The Head of CEF Finance explained that 2017/18 was when the methodology first began and it was therefore being used as a driver for the way in which funding could be distributed to Local Authorities.

The Schools' Forum agreed the response to Question 3, subject to the amendment outlined above.

#### Question 4

The Schools' Forum endorsed the proposed response to Question 4.

#### Question 5

The Schools' Forum supported the suggestion of using "Ever6" as the proxy measure and endorsed the proposed response to question 5.

#### Question 6

The Schools' Forum noted the failure of the consultation to address the fundamental issue of underfunding. Following discussion Members of the Forum supported the expanded response which highlighted the challenges faced by schools across the Borough.

It was also suggested that the equalities issue should be addressed in response to question 6 as a reduction in funding would impact students with disabilities.

The Forum endorsed the response to Question 6, subject to amendments to highlight the equalities aspect and that the use of any proxy would undermine the subtleties of students that may present with a range of disabilities and protected characteristics.

**RESOLVED: That draft response to the High Needs Funding Consultation be endorsed subject to the amendments outlined above.**

## **26 UPDATE ON REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE PROVISION Report CEF21015**

The report provided an update on the actions taken to respond to the findings and recommendations from the Strategic Review of Alternate Provision reported in November 2019.

The Schools' Forum noted that Mr Neil Miller represented the provider cited in the report and would therefore not take part in any vote.

The Director of Education explained that the process commenced in 2019, with the commissioning of a strategic review of alternative provision by an external expert. The key findings of the review were set out in the report which included aspects around the quality of provision and the challenges around maximising funding to ensure that the provision in the Borough was as effective as possible. Going forward there was an expectation that early intervention was implemented to support more children and young people at an earlier stage.

In terms of taking forward the findings and recommendations, working groups for both primary and secondary were established in addition to a separate project around mental health provision. The Primary and Secondary Working Groups were largely school-led and had considered various aspects of the review as well as local information, knowledge and expertise. As well as drawing upon the expert knowledge of the provider, Bromley Trust Academy.

A number of design principals (set out in the report) were agreed and these had now been formally ratified and had informed the subsequent work.

The Director of Education set out the next steps, which included fair access protocols, a five-year commissioning approach, and the principal of 'the money follows the child'.

In conclusion, the Director of Education extended his thanks to all head teachers and colleagues at Bromley Trust Academy for their support throughout the review.

**RESOLVED: That**

- 1. The actions taken to date to implement the recommendations from the Strategic Review including the new Design Principles for Bromley's AP System be noted;**
- 2. The 5 year commissioning plan and its overarching aim to shift provision in line with the Design Principles into earlier intervention be endorsed;**
- 3. The intention to move into a 5 year agreement with London South East Academies Trust to provide relational and financial assurances to support their significant shift in provision (type and volume) in line with the 5 year commissioning plan be noted; and**
- 4. The principle of "money follows the child" as ratified by the Bromley Inclusion Partnership and agrees for the principle to be included in school funding agreements be endorsed.**

**27 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- (a) The Schools' Forum noted that the DfE had recently commenced a consultation around NNDR in relation to schools. Bromley's response to the consultation would be circulated to members of the Schools' Forum in due course for consideration and comment.
- (b) It had been agreed that there would be an annual review of both the Growth Fund and the Falling Rolls Fund to be scheduled for the Autumn meetings.
- (c) The Schools' Forum recognised the importance of electing a Vice-Chairman and volunteers for the role were sought.

**28            DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place at 4.30pm on 24 June 2021.

The Meeting ended at 5.33 pm

Chairman