

Please note: amendments were made to these minutes at the meeting on 18 July 2018

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 28 MARCH 2018 FROM 10.00 AM TO 11.47 AM**

Schools Representatives

Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Elaine Stewart	Primary Head - Aldryngton Primary
Sylvia Allen	School Business Manager - Hawkedon Primary
Carol Simpson	School Business Manager - Colleton Primary
Ginny Rhodes	Secondary Head - St Crispins
Janet Perry	Academy Business Manager - The Holt School
Corrina Gillard	Headteacher - Emmbrook Infant School
Kerrie Clifford	Maintained Nursery Acting Headteacher
Jay Blundell	Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher - Foundry College
Sara Attra	Special School Head - Addington School
Keith McConaghy	School Business Manager - Oakbank
Paul Miller	Governor - St Crispins - Chairman
John Bayes	Governor - Foundry College - Vice-Chair

Non School Representatives

Anne Andrews	Oxford Diocese
UllaKarin Clark	Wokingham Borough Council
Patricia Davies	Interim Assistant Director for Education
Ian Morgan	Early Years Representative
Gail Prewett	Early Years Representative

Also Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Coral Miller, Interim Senior Finance Specialist, Schools
Lynne Samuel, Senior Finance Specialist, People Services
Paul Senior, Interim Director of People Services

56 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Emma Clarke, Ben Godber, Derren Gray, Ian Head, Julia Mead, Jonathan Peck, Brian Prebble and James Taylor.

57 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 February 2018 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the changes below, and signed by the Chairman.

On page 11 where it says '*Ben Gobbler*' this be changed to Ben Godber.

On page 13 where it says '*Capital one*' this be changed to Capita One.

Matters arising

Service charges and academy charges

Janet Perry asked for clarification in relation to mid-year service charges and about the fact that academies were being charged more than maintained schools for psychological services.

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Lynne Samuel, Senior Finance Specialist, People Services stated that these charges were levied for any schools that had not bought into the services but who required access to services. These charges had not been implemented in the past. However, due to reduced resources a decision had been made that this charge had to be applied to schools that had not bought into the service but still wanted to access services. She appreciated that the communication of this decision could have been better. Going forward it would be made clear to schools that had not bought into the service how much it would cost them to access services before they actually bought it.

Lynne Samuel announced that John Ogden, Finance Lead Specialist had now left the Local Authority and that his replacement, Bob Watson had been recruited on a permanent basis.

Farley Hill Governors' email

Councillor Clark was still awaiting to receive the email from Emma Clarke.

Data around the number of children currently attending primary schools who were likely to need special provision at secondary school

Patricia Davies stated that there were currently 118 children in Out of Borough provision. Corrina Gillard explained that the question was how many children that were currently in primary schools were likely to need specialist provision at secondary school. Patricia agreed to find out and report back.

58 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

59 EARLY YEARS 2018-19 BUDGET

The Forum received the Early Years 2018/19 Budget report which was set out in agenda pages 15-22.

Coral Miller stated that the Early Years allocation had increased for two and three and four year olds by 24p per hour to £5.54 and £4.39 respectively.

Coral Miller explained that local authorities were required, from 2018/19 onwards, to pass 95% of their three and four year old funding from government onto Early Years' providers. This pass-through requirement ensured that the vast majority of government funding reached providers so that they could deliver free entitlements. Coral stated that Wokingham had decided to passport 96% to providers.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made;

- Ian Morgan asked what was the recoupment charge in the previous year;
- Coral Miller explained that the numbers were calculated based on three in-year censuses, with adjustments being made after each census; any recoupment was based on these numbers;
- Ian Morgan believed that the two year old funding was outside the funding formula and therefore should not be top sliced and £5.74 should be paid to providers;
- Coral Miller explained that the two year old funding was outside of the 5% top slice rule, so it was possible to top slice it at a different rate, for example at 10%;
- Gail Prewett was surprised with this information and stated that it was difficult to breakdown the figures and to fully understand the Early Years funding;

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- Coral Miller explained that Wokingham had decided not to exercise the right to top slice two year olds at a higher rate, 96% of funding for two year olds was still passported to providers;
- In response to a question Lynne Samuel, stated that the 4% was based on the January census;
- Ian Morgan pointed out that providers were receiving their 96% funding from a total of nearly £10 million, whereas the Local Authority was taking its 4% top slice from a calculated total of £11 million;
- Coral Miller explained that this calculation was based on a budget and not on an estimate, and that Section 251 had to be finalised by the end of April, any recoupment would take place in July;
- Ian Morgan noted that the item '*maximum amount to providers after providers reserves*' of £187K listed in Table B used to be referred as the contingencies fund in previous reports. He stated that the contingencies last year was £229K, and that he could not see the difference passed back to providers, he wished to see a breakdown of that item;
- Coral Miller confirmed that she had changed the name of the item to make it clearer;
- Coral Miller stated that the contingencies money/providers reserve was used to manage growth. If this reserve was not used within the year, this would be passed back to providers;
- Coral Miller expected that there would be growth as a result of the free 30 hours entitlement;
- In response to a question Lynne Samuel stated that the methodology to calculate the internal recharges for Early Years was standard and it was the same that was used across the Council;
- Schools Forum Members felt that it seemed a very high charge;
- Paul Miller stated that it should be 4% of the net amount of the worst case scenario and not £421K as listed in the report; rather than have to recoup the money, which incurred a cost/loss of income to the Early Years Team budget;
- Coral Miller agreed to look into this in more detail once the actual recoupment amount was received from the DfE in July;
- Members asked if there was a vacancy in the Early Years Team, Patricia Davies stated that Emma Slaughter was the Interim Manager;
- Patricia Davies stated that she had recently had a conversation with Ofsted in relation to Early Years and the feedback had been positive for Wokingham's provision;
- Members asked for clarification on the *Services – Specialist* listed in Table C and also on how many posts there were in the Early Years Team and whether there was a vacancy. Patricia Davies agreed to report back;
- Ian Morgan stated that Wokingham had recently been granted a £17K allocation fund, he would like to know where this was listed in the report. Lynne Samuel agreed to investigate and report back;
- Councillor Clark asked if providers were able to opt out of the services provided by the Council. Gail Prewett stated that the services provided by the Council were invaluable, however when funding was so limited providers wished to fully understand the breakdown of the funding allocations;
- Coral Miller explained that this was a statutory function;
- Ian Morgan believed that there was legislation in place preventing pre-schools from becoming academies;
- Paul Miller stated that there was concern that the overhead surcharge for services was a large amount; but there was recognition that the Local Authority was moving towards a centralised support system;

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- Ian Morgan stated that providers were concerned that going forward only statutory duties were going to be provided; and that only settings that required improvement would receive extra help;
- Ian Morgan stated that the Early Years Team was as large as it had been for a number of years, however the services being provided were diminishing;
- Patricia Davies stated that support was going to be targeted to where this was needed, it was being prioritised;
- Elaine Stewart stated that her school had not received support from the Early Years Team, and she would be interested to know where the support was being delivered; and
- Patricia Davies stated that when the Schools Improvement Team visited schools they would speak about the Early Years offer and offered support if required.

After a robust discussion it was agreed that Schools Forum would like to receive a report containing information in relation to the support offered to Early Years, as there seemed to be a disparity in the perception of the extent of the provision between schools and the Local Authority. Patricia Davies stated that she would ask Emma Slaughter to prepare a report and attend the next meeting of Schools Forum to discuss this further. Paul Senior stated that that this report should include details of the system for the allocation of resources.

It was acknowledged that there was a lack of engagement between the Early Year's sector and the Local Authority. An Early Years Forum was being re-established in an effort to improve communication.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report be noted;
- 2) Emma Slaughter, Interim Early Years Manager would be invited to attend the next meeting and provide clarification to the various points raised during discussion.

60 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS BREAKDOWN

Coral Miller explained that Schools Forum had previously discussed the use of the £289,000 DSG contribution to the School Admissions Service planned for 2018/19 and asked for a breakdown of the budget costs.

Coral Miller drew attention to Appendix A of the report which contained the figures. She informed that the Senior School Admissions Officers were on a lower pay than stated in the report, she would update this with the minutes.

John Bayes pointed out that the percentage of internal recharge seemed very large.

Members noted that the report did not include benchmarking as requested by Schools Forum. Coral Miller agreed to chase the School Admissions service to provide information for the June Schools Forum.

Elaine Stewart was interested to know more about the refreshments costs. Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist explained that this related to refreshments that were offered throughout the year to independent school appeals panel members. She stated that there were approximately 300 appeals during the year and that

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the panel members were volunteers. She pointed out that it would cost more if they were to be paid to sit in appeal panels.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

61 2018-19 SCHOOLS BUDGET

The Forum received the 2018/19 School Budget report which was set out in agenda pages 27-32.

Coral Miller stated that the report contained the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the financial year 2018/19, allocated in accordance with the Department of Education (DfE) Schools Guidance. This report presented a new format which included the four blocks of the Schools Budget, it was hoped this new format would make the report easier to understand and check against the DfE website.

Coral Miller went through the report and pointed out the deficit in the HNB, this was due to a predicted overspend and a carry forward deficit. Coral informed that it was therefore possible that the HNB deficit may turn out to be £2.4 million by 31 March 2019.

Coral explained that Grants were passed straight through to schools. She also pointed out that the sixth form funding had been reduced because there were less maintained secondary schools in the Borough.

Coral Miller stated that any adjustments for the HNB and Early Years Block figures would be known in July, a paper on the effect of that would be brought to Schools Forum in September.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Members liked the new format and asked that the income against each Block showing the net position be included in future reports;
- Members expressed concern over the predicted deficit in the HNB;
- Coral Miller stated that Katherine Vernon, Schools Finance Specialist had attended a meeting in March with the DfE HNB Lead and that he had agreed to meet with the Local Authority to discuss the HNB deficit, the date had not yet been confirmed. Coral stated that all the Local Authorities that were present at the meeting reported difficulties with the HNB;
- Kerry Clifford stated that the main issue with the HNB deficit was the number of Out of Borough placements, she was interested to know if other Local Authorities had the same problem;
- Coral Miller stated that there were not enough specialist spaces within Local Authorities and that there was an increase in the demand for complex needs provision; and building provision would take time and investment;
- Paul Senior stated that Wokingham had a too high proportion of Out of Borough placements per capita compared to other Local Authorities he had worked at; and this needed to change;
- Janet Perry was concerned with the lack of increase in funding for schools in view of the increase in costs such as the increase in salaries and pensions; and
- Paul Miller asked that WLP is informed of the concerns raised in this meeting.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

62 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE

Patricia Davies informed the Forum that the High Needs Block (HNB) Task and Finish Group had held its first meeting. This meeting had set out the objectives of the group. The group aimed to put together a recovery plan for the HNB.

Patricia Davies stated that the current system was not reflective of schools' needs, at the moment not all schools received the same amount of funding. The implementation of a revised banding system was being considered in order to address this issue. It was believed that this new system would be fairer and more transparent, enabling resource spaces and special schools to receive more equitable levels of funding.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Members were surprised to find out that not all schools received the same amount of funding;
- In response to a question Patricia Davies explained that resource spaces received a similar amount of funding, but this was different from the amount received by special schools;
- Paul Miller stated that part of the work of the Task and Finish Group was to establish the current situation and to propose different, better ways of working;
- Paul Senior, Interim Director of People Services stated that the current model was not sustainable and not transparent, it needed reviewing and reforming;
- Paul Senior stated that there needed to be more discipline and an understanding that for every pound overspent, this had to be *'found'* somewhere else; there were implications on the overspend;
- Paul Miller stated that Schools Forum had challenged the finance team over this issue for a number of years and asked for a realistic recovery programme to tackle the HNB overspend;
- Steve Nyakatawa, SEND Consultant had been tasked to carry out a review of HNB and draw up a recovery plan;
- Councillor Clark stated that she had attended a meeting with the Equality Advisor for the National Education Union, he informed her that the government was going to be lobbied to release more money to cover the HNB overspend. She stated that out of the 45 Local Authorities that had applied to move money from the Schools Budget into the HNB, 27 were denied, 15 were allowed and some were partially allowed. It was recognised that the situation was unsustainable;
- Councillor Clark pointed out that Wokingham was the worse funded unitary authority in the country;
- Paul Senior stated that being the worse funded authority was not an excuse and it was necessary to ensure the best use of resources;
- Ginny Rhodes was interested to know more about the resource spaces consultation. Patricia Davies stated that this consultation had been set up by her predecessor and she recognised that there had been issues with the consultation. However, she assured the Forum that no decisions would be made until all the information had been gathered;
- In response to a question Paul Senior explained that the funding was not going to be reduced, it was going to be better allocated;
- Janet Perry believed that this review was long overdue and wondered if this had only happened as a result of the fact that Schools Forum had not agreed to top slice schools budget;

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- Patricia Davies stated that it was hoped that a recovery plan would be in place for the winter;
- Paul Miller reminded Members that the New Funding Formula would not allow for money to be transferred from one Block Budget to another; and
- The next meeting of the HNB Task and Finish Group was due to take place after Easter.

RESOLVED That the verbal update report of the High Needs Block Task and Finish Group be noted.

63 WOKINGHAM LEARNING PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Patricia Davies stated that a meeting with headteachers had taken place, however the communication had not fulfilled the expectations of the group, therefore she was reviewing the best way to move forward. Another meeting was being set up, it was important to understand what schools wanted to achieve and to work in partnership. She informed that an independent chair was in the process of being found.

Paul Senior stated that he had chaired the first meeting of the Wokingham Learning Partnership (WLP) and he agreed that the meeting had not been as positive as expected. He stated that it was now important to reflect and find a way to engage schools.

Patricia envisaged a small board with members of schools in partnership with the Local Authority.

Schools Forum asked how members of the WLP had been selected. Patricia Davies stated that volunteers had been sought by her predecessor.

RESOLVED That the Wokingham Learning Partnership verbal update be noted.

64 REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The Forum considered the membership report which was set out in agenda pages 33-38.

Paul Miller explained that the Schools Forum membership used to be reviewed yearly to ensure it was still appropriate and that it reflected the schools' structure in the Borough. However, in anticipation of the New Funding Formula and the potential changes to the format of Schools Forum, it had been decided in 2016 to keep the membership as it was and use the time at meetings to discuss more pressing issues.

Patricia Davies explained that the report contained an update on the previous membership report to reflect the number of pupils on roll. The report contained possible options for the Forum to consider.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Paul Miller stated that alternatively the Forum may decide to continue with its current format or consider a transition period;
- Members pointed out that it was important to include representation from maintained secondary schools;
- Ginny Rhodes stated that she had spoken to maintained secondary heads and that they would be prepared to join Schools Forum. Patricia Davies agreed to contact maintained secondary headteachers about joining the Forum;

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- Paul Miller read out an email from Derren Gray with his comments. Derren indicated that primary heads were unlikely to agree to reduce their representation at the Forum. He believed the Forum worked well in its current format and he would prefer it to remain with the same structure;
- Corrina Gillard stated that primary representation had historically been based on geographical areas;
- Paul Senior believed that Wokingham Borough was too small to consider geographical areas;
- Caroline Norries stated that it was important to ensure that there was good communication with the primary phase. She felt that with the current format primary heads were being kept informed satisfactorily, there were clear lines of communication;
- Members discussed the voting rights and concluded that it was very rare for Schools Forum to have to vote on decisions, therefore if and when it came to a vote, this was unlikely to become an issue;
- Jane Perry believed that the current membership provided a lot of expertise to the Forum, therefore she was in favour of keeping the membership as it was and if necessary reduce the number of votes;
- Paul Miller pointed out that having a large number of Members had enabled the creation of Task and Finish Groups, which had been very useful;
- Carol Simpson asked when the NFF was going to be fully implemented and who would be responsible for monitoring the HNB Budget. Paul Miller believed that a new structure would be put in place to replace Schools Forum, but this was not yet known;
- Paul Senior stated that a local decision may be taken in order to put in place a mechanism to monitor the HNB; and
- In response to a question Paul Miller stated that decisions in relation to the De-delegated Fund could only be taken by maintained school representatives.

Anne Andrews announced that this was her last attendance to Schools Forum meetings, Marion Standing would be taking her place representing the Oxford Diocese at future meetings. Paul Miller thanked Anne Andrews for her contribution to Schools Forum.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Schools Forum membership would continue in its current format;
- 2) A maintained secondary head would be invited to join the Forum.

65 FOUNDRY COLLEGE UPDATE

Jay Blundell, Foundry College Headteacher presented the update report which was set out in Agenda pages 39-40.

Jay Bundell stated that Schools Forum had received a Foundry College report last May. One of the issues raised in that report had been in relation to the college's premises, she wished to thank colleagues in anticipation for embracing the issues and supporting the cause for Foundry College.

Jay Blundell stated that this update focused on the primary behaviour support provided by the college. Jay informed that she had presented this report to Wokingham primary heads, explaining in detail the support being delivered to primary schools over the last 12 months.

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Jay Blundell stated that there was an ongoing issue in relation to the de-delegated funding to Foundry College. She explained that as a result of some primary schools becoming academies, there had been a reduction in the funding the college received from the de-delegated budget. Some primary academies had different agreements through the trust they joined and some primary academies bought the college's support on a case by case basis. Consequently, it had become very difficult to set a budget and plan staffing without having a known level of secure budget income.

Jay Blundell stated that the current situation was unsustainable, and that it was necessary to secure a centralised fund to ensure Foundry College's future.

Jay Blundell informed that the demand for primary school age behaviour support had been increasing, and she needed to secure a certain number of staff to be able to provide the service. Jay stated that providing behaviour support to primary school children enabled them to go back into mainstream secondary education, therefore saving future costs in secondary school specialist education.

Paul Senior stated that this was an important discussion, however he believed that the HNB Task and Finish Group was the best place to undertake this conversation.

In response to a question Jay Blundell confirmed that she was taking part in the HNB Task and Finish Group.

In response to a question Paul Senior stated that if the service provided by Foundry College was found to add value, a political decision would have to be made to ensure its sustainability.

Members were in agreement that the service provided by Foundry College was much valued and they wished it to continue. Members were asked to keep primary heads informed of the discussion that took place at the meeting.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The discussions in relation to securing Foundry College's funding would take place at the High Needs Block Task and Finish Group;
- 2) Primary Heads would be informed of the update received at this meeting;
- 3) The report be noted.

66 GROWTH FUND UPDATE

The Growth Fund Update report had not been available for distribution to Schools Forum ahead of the meeting. The agenda item was therefore deferred to the next meeting.

67 SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda page 41.

The following items were added to the next meeting:

- Growth Fund Update and
- Early Years (update by Emma Slaughter)

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Elaine Stewart stated that the date of the next meeting which was 16 May, was also the Year 6 SATs day. She pointed out that it may be difficult for some primary heads to attend.

Paul Miller asked Luciane Bowker to look into alternative dates and communicate with the Forum about possibly changing the date of the next meeting.