

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 21 FEBRUARY 2018 FROM 10.00 AM TO 11.46 AM**

Schools Representatives

Helen Ball	Primary Head - Polehampton Infant
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Sally Hunter	Primary Head - Wescott Infant
Brian Prebble	Primary Head - Rivermead Primary
Elaine Stewart	Primary Head - Aldryngton Primary
Julia Mead	School Business Manager - St Sebastian's CE Primary
Carol Simpson	School Business Manager - Colleton Primary
Ginny Rhodes	Secondary Head - St Crispins
Derren Gray	Academy Headteacher - The Piggott School
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
Ben Godber	Academy Headteacher - Bohunt
Jonathon Peck	Director of Finance and Operations - Maiden Erlegh
Keith McConaghy	School Business Manager - Oakbank
Emma Clarke	Primary Head - Farley Hill
Paul Miller	Governor - St Crispins - Chairman
John Bayes	Governor - Foundry College - Vice-Chair

Non School Representatives

UllaKarin Clark	Wokingham Borough Council
Patricia Davies	Interim Assistant Director for Education
Ian Morgan	Early Years Representative
Mary Parker	Early Years Representative
Gail Prewett	Early Years Representative

Also Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Coral Miller, Interim Senior Finance Specialist, Schools
Emma Slaughter, Early Years Consultant
Katherine Vernon, Case Owner, Finance

46 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Sylvia Allen, Anne Andrews, Ian Head, James Taylor and Lynne Samuel.

47 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following change:

That on page 7 of the agenda the word '*pot*' be changed to 'item'.

Matters arising

The Chairman, Paul Miller stated that the Ethnic Minority Achievement Funding paper that was attached to the minutes had been submitted by Jane Winterbone, former Interim Assistant Director for Education. This paper had been requested by Schools Forum at its last meeting and was for information only.

Service Trade Charges – clarification was sought in relation to charges that were introduced part way through the year when there was no opportunity to react to it. Officers were not able to provide an answer and this item was carried forward to the next meeting. The Chairman pointed out that this was the third time that this item was carried forward.

School Admissions – Coral Miller, Interim Senior Finance Specialist for Schools informed that 98% of the allocation for School Admissions was for salaries and 2% was for running costs. Schools Forum asked for a full activity breakdown to be brought to the next meeting.

48 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

49 REVENUE MONITORING

The Forum considered the Revenue Monitoring report which was set out in agenda pages 17-24.

Coral Miller explained that the forecast as at 31 January 2018 showed an overspend of approximately £1.078m. This represented an increase in expenditure of £39k on that previously reported and reflected a small movement within the High Needs Block (HNB).

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

- It was noted that the majority of the overspend related to the HNB;
- Coral Miller stated that a Task and Finish Group had been set up to consider options for the HNB;
- Paul Miller stated that going forward the Department for Education (DfE) would separate out the funding for schools in four lump sums (Blocks). He was interested to know how the HNB deficit would be carried forward;
- Coral Miller stated that the Task and Finish Group was looking to find a recovery plan and it was hoped that by the end of 2018/19 a balanced budget would be achieved. It would be up to elected Members and WBC senior leadership to make a decision if this was not achieved;
- Members of the Forum were sceptical that it would be possible to balance the budget in one year;
- It was noted that going forward, with four separate budget funding allocations it will be easier to contain deficit in certain areas, but it will be more difficult to recover the overall deficit in the HNB;
- Coral Miller stated that many other Local Authorities had also applied to move money from the Schools Block to the HNB and none had been approved;
- Councillor Clark stated that Wokingham's situation was not unique in the country. She informed Schools Forum that conversations had taken place with the local MP about this, and the government was being urged to take action to help the Local Authority to mitigate the deficit.

RESOLVED That: The report be noted.

50 2018/19 EARLY YEARS BUDGET

The Forum considered the 2018/19 Early Years Budget report that was set out in agenda pages 25-30.

Coral Miller explained that Schools Forum was being asked to agree to the proposal to retain 4% centrally, equating to £421k for 2018/19. This reflected the same % as retained for the current financial year, ensuring that 96% would be available to fund Early Years' providers.

Coral Miller stated that work was still ongoing to finalise the January census, and the hourly rate for providers could not be confirmed until all information was received and verified.

Emma Slaughter, Early Years Consultant stated that a 5% central retention was the maximum allowed by the government, but Wokingham was proposing 4%.

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

- Ian Morgan stated that Jane Winterbone used to be the senior leader for Early Years, and that there was a vacancy in the Early Years senior leadership team. He was interested to know who would be taking up this position now that Jane had left the Local Authority and what the structure was within Early Years;
- Patricia Davies, Interim Assistant Director for Education stated that she was now in post and would take over all the responsibilities that used to be Jane's;
- Emma Slaughter confirmed that she was the interim senior leader for Early Years;
- Members discussed the number of staff in Early Years at the Local Authority, and were interested to know how much of the Early Years budget was taken by the five members of staff, taking into account the vacancy in the team;
- Mary Parker stated that the new system that was brought in by the Local Authority did not give providers access to training, apart from statutory training;
- Emma Slaughter stated that mandatory training was still being provided;
- Kerry Clifford stated that the hourly rate was going up and the lump sum was going down and she worried that this was unsustainable;
- Members asked that a full breakdown of the £421k be submitted for consideration;
- Gail Prewett pointed out that providers did not receive £4.61 per hour as stated in the report and asked that this be changed;
- Coral Miller stated that once the January census was completed and the work was finalised, any money left would be given back to providers;
- Derren Gray questioned the figure of £370k for Early Years centrally retained for statutory Local Authority duties listed on page 23 of the agenda, and in particular why this had increased. Emma Slaughter explained that this related to contingencies, and it was to cover the likely increase in the uptake of the 30 hours free childcare;
- Kerry Clifford was concerned that providers would not have the capacity to meet extra uptake of the 30 hours;
- Mary Parker stated that her setting lost money for every child that took up the 30 hours;
- Ian Morgan stated that the Local Authority had enforced the graded support package to providers without consultation. Emma Slaughter stated that the Local Authority was fulfilling its obligations. She explained that because there had been no options available, it had made no sense to consult with providers;

- Members noted that providers were being penalised for performing well, and that perversely help would only be available to those dropping standards;
- Emma Slaughter affirmed that the Local Authority was delivering over and above its statutory duties, and asked Members to consider that funding was very limited;
- Kerry Clifford pointed out that given the current financial situation, providers would have to work together to achieved the desired outcomes;
- Ian Morgan stated that it was important to improve communication and re-instate the Early Years Forum.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Schools Forum approves the Early Years centrally retained proposal of 4% for 2018/19, provided that the following clarifications are presented to the next meeting of the Forum:
 - I. Financial information on how the £421k is planned to be spent, with a breakdown of the figure;
 - II. Financial information and breakdown of the 2017/18 Budget allocation;
 - III. Clarification of the £4.61 hourly rate and the figure (£4.15) that actually arrives at school level;
 - IV. A review of the use of the Top Slice once salaries and overhead recovery have been accounted for.
- 2) Schools Forum encourages the re-instatement of the Early Years Forum.

51 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

Coral Miller presented the 2018/19 High Needs Block Budget report which was set out in agenda pages 31- 34.

Coral Miller stated that the application to the Secretary of State to approve the application to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the NHB had been rejected. This decision meant that the funds available to the HNB for 2018/19 were reduced by £498k on that previously assumed, and significantly increased the challenge to delivering a balanced budget for the coming year. Coral informed that as far as she was aware the Secretary of State had rejected all such applications from all other Local Authorities.

Coral Miller drew attention to the information in appendix A, which showed that savings of £2.4m were needed to show a balanced budget. Coral informed that Steve Nyakatawa, SEN Consultant was going to be working to achieve the savings that were necessary.

Coral Miller assured Schools Forum that Officers and elected Members were aware of the situation and were looking at the options.

Councillor Clark stated that in turning down the Local Authority's application, the Secretary of State said that they were prepared to talk, and a meeting was being organised to discuss the possibilities.

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

- Emma Clark stated that the number of children needing special education was due to increase. She stated that where primary schools were able to support, with difficulty, some children with special needs, she knew that these children would not be able to cope in mainstream secondary schools, and they would need special provision;
- Sara Attra stated that her school had taken five or six children over its allocated number without base funding, and that other special schools in the Borough were also full to capacity;
- In response to a question Patricia Davies stated that Steve Nyakatawa was the senior leader for SEN and that he would be looking at provisions and how to improve;
- Ginny Rhodes expressed concern that Steve Nyakatawa was holding an interim post and she worried about continuity plans;
- Jay Blundell raised the issue of Foundry College's capacity. She worried that there was no reflection in the Budget of the need to expand Foundry College's provision. She stated that she had 56 children on roll and was funded for 47, and the trend was for the numbers to increase. Also, Foundry College was taking children that should be at special schools without receiving the top slice for these children. There was a lack of physical space and staff to be able to cope with the demand;
- Councillor Clark congratulated Jay Blundell on the outstanding Ofsted report and the work provided by Foundry College. She stated that she had discussed the issue with Paul Senior, Interim Director of People Services and assured Jay that elected Members were aware of the situation and were looking at options;
- Ben Gobbler stated that it was important to involve representatives from schools, such as Jay Blundell in the process of talking to the Secretary of State and senior leaders, as the argument would be more compelling;
- Emma Clarke stated that the governors from her school had written many emails to Piers Brunning, Senior Specialist (People and Place) Strategy Commissioning, but had not received a response. Councillor Clarke asked that this email be sent to her;
- Paul Miller pointed out that a large sum from the HNB went to fund Out of Borough placements;
- Patricia Davies confirmed that there were not enough specialist provisions within the Borough;
- In response to a question Patricia Davies stated that the Resource Space Review had been submitted to the Lead Member and the senior leadership team and was going to go out for consultation. She informed that the schools that had been involved in the review had been positive about the suggestions contained in the report;
- Patricia Davies pointed out that there was only one secondary school within the Borough with specialist provision, and this was going to be full from September, the situation was challenging;
- Members of the Forum believed that the HNB Task and Finish Group would not be able to find a solution for the next financial year. It was believed that it would take two to three years to achieve a solution;
- Members pointed out that children that were in Out of Borough placements were unlikely to come back to provisions within the Borough;
- Emma Clark asked if the Local Authority held data around the number of children currently attending primary schools who were likely to need special provisions when they reached secondary school age. Patricia Davies would raise this question with Steve Nyakatawa;
- Paul Miller asked that this issue be raised at the Task and Finish Group.

Paul Miller asked Coral Miller and Councillor Clark if there was anything that Schools Forum could do to help. Coral stated that firstly she had to wait for the outcome of the meeting with the Secretary of State.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

52 CHANGES TO SCHOOL BLOCK BUDGET

Coral Miller presented the Changes to School Block Budget report which was set out in agenda pages 35-46.

Coral Miller explained that Schools Forum was being consulted on the late adjustment to the Schools Block Budget which was caused due to the late decision made on the Council disapplication request to move money from the Schools Block to the HNB which was rejected by the DfE on 31 January 2018.

Coral Miller stated that due to this change a factor that had previously been agreed had to be changed to accommodate the additional funding added to the Schools Block Budget.

Coral Miller stated that the Local Authority had chosen to go with a positive Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of 0.5%, and this had been allowed for the first time by the DfE.

Coral Miller informed that the DfE's regulations stated that any changes to the funding formula had to be consulted with all schools, academies and the Schools Forum. However, due to the late response from DfE, the Local Authority was consulting with schools and academies via this Schools Forum.

Janet Perry wished it be recorded that the increases presented in the report did not cover the increases in costs to schools. She stated that schools would have to find significant cuts in expenditure in order to be able to balance their budgets.

In response to a question about the progress toward New Funding Formula (NFF) based funding Coral Miller stated that it was not certain if there would be transition protection.

Forum members expressed concern that some schools would receive less money under the NFF. It was recognised that the Schools Block Task and Finish Group was working hard to try and find the best possible model for all the schools in the Borough.

RESOLVED That: Schools Forum agreed to the changes to the Schools Block Budget without any further consultation.

53 DE-DELEGATED ITEM EXPLANATION

The Forum considered the De-delegated update report which was set out in agenda pages 47-53.

Coral Miller presented the report and explained that de-delegated services were for maintained schools only; funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the formula but can be passed back, or 'de-delegated' for maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools with Schools Forum approval.

Coral Miller stated that the staff costs supply cover included funding for the following: maternity leave; paternity leave; trade union cover and public duties. Coral informed that it

was possible to claw back money from staff that did not return after three months, she asked schools to inform the service when this occurs.

Kerrie Clifford asked how this was worked out for staff that worked part-time and it was confirmed that this was pro-rata. Coral Miller stated that the service used a system called Capital One modules to calculate it. Members informed that this system was used by Wokingham Borough Council only and not by schools. Coral agreed to provide clarification as to how this system worked.

Janet Perry asked why the charges to academies were different from the de-delegated charges. Jay Blundell stated that she charged exactly the same to academies as she did to the de-delegated fund.

Schools Forum considered the paper which had been provided by Dan Skinner, Specialist Finance which gave details of the insurance provided to schools. Coral clarified that academies bought indemnity and maintained schools bought insurance. Paul Miller asked Coral Miller to thank Dan for providing this explanation to the Forum.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the report be noted and
- 2) Schools Forum was re-assured that it was getting good value for money in relation to insurance.

54 2018/19 BUDGET SUMMARY

In view of all the changes that had occurred during the year in the preparation of 2018/19 figures, Paul Miller asked that Coral Miller bring to Forum a full summary of the 2018/19 Budget.

Paul Miller stated that with the introduction of the NFF there would be four distinct lump sums (Blocks), he was interested to see the consolidated predicted outturn and the breakdown on income and expenditure by Block.

Coral Miller stated that she was working on a 2019/20 model around the new funding formula, this would be ready towards the end of the summer term. When ready Coral would present this model and the 'levers for change' to Schools Forum.

In response to a question Coral Miller stated that any remaining deficits would be allocated to the Block where they originated. She stated that the Local Authority was not allowed to carry forward a deficit in Schools Block.

RESOLVED That

- 1) the consolidated 2018/19 Budget Summary report will be submitted to Schools Forum at the next meeting;
- 2) the proposed new funding formula model Budget will be presented to Schools Forum at a meeting towards the end of the summer term.

55 FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda page 55.

The following items were added to the programme for the meeting on 28 March:

- Growth Fund update
- School Admissions activity breakdown
- High Needs Block Task and Finish Group – verbal update
- Foundry College – de-delegated behaviour support services
- Wokingham Learning Partnership update
- Review of Schools Forum membership
- Summary of 2018/19 Budget
- Early Years feedback

Paul Miller announced that Mary Parker was standing down from Schools Forum and that Ian Morgan was going to be the new Early Years representative. Paul thanked Mary for her contribution to the work of Schools Forum over the last few years.

It was confirmed that the next meeting on 28 March would be held at the Council Officer in Shute End.