

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 16 MARCH 2016 FROM 9.30 AM TO 11.00 AM**

Schools Representatives

John Bayes	Governor - Foundry College - Chairman
Paul Miller	Governor - St Crispins - Vice-Chair
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Louisa Gurney	Primary Head - Emmbrook Junior
Brian Prebble	Primary Head - Rivermead Primary
Eileen Rogers	Primary Head - Gorse Ride Junior
Elaine Stewart	Primary Head - Aldryngton Primary
Liz Meek	Special School Head - Addington School
Julia Mead	School Business Manager, St Sebastian's - Primary Rep
Carol Simpson	School Business Manager, Colleton - Primary Rep
Mary Rome	Pupil Referral Unit - Foundry College Headteacher
Janet Perry	Academy Business Manager - The Holt School
Ian Head	Governor - Aldryngton Primary

Non School Representatives

Anne Andrews	Oxford Diocese
James Taylor	Wokingham and Bracknell College

Also Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic Services Officer
Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director Learning and Achievement
Rob Stubbs, Head of Finance
Linda Orr, SEN Team Manager

62 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Phil Armstrong, Helen Ball, Amanda Turner, Ginny Rhodes, Sylvia Allen, Ian Pittock and Charlotte Wilkinson.

63 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

65 REVENUE MONITORING

Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager presented the Revenue Monitoring report which was set out on Agenda pages 11-14. Donna explained that the report contained information relating to the last two months, since the last meeting of the Forum in January. The forecast as at the end of February was (£1,139k) having seen a £331k improvement since last Forum. Donna noted that although there was an improvement, there was still movement expected in March.

Donna stated that this improvement had removed the expected in year deficit. The budget agreed by Forum had anticipated an overspend of £659k, this was now predicted to be a £157k underspend during the financial year 2015/16.

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

- In response to a question Donna explained that £283k was refunded to the DSG due to the 80% tax relief granted to Waingels College upon its conversion to charitable status;
- Members questioned the £105k budgeted deficit relating to '*pupil growth/ infant class sizes*' Donna agreed to revise the figure and explained that this was in association with the setting up costs of expanding places in some schools in the Borough (this referred to the Primary Strategy as agreed by Executive and would be discussed later in the Agenda);
- It was noted that insurance was de-delegated, at the moment this was an estimate, the carry forward had not been amended;
- It was noted that licences and subscriptions were bought up centrally. They had been gradually expanding and increasing. A purchase order of £77k had been raised for a licence that was not due for payment until 1 April 2016, therefore this amount had been pushed into next year;
- Donna stated that notification not always was given for fund distribution. For example, a £31k grant had been received on the 19 February 2016 for two year old funding following the January census. A further amendment was expected in July for this financial year following the May census;
- In response to a question Donna confirmed that any underspend was automatically allocated to the following year.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

66 DRAFT 2016/17 BUDGET

Donna Munday presented the Fourth Draft Schools Budget 2016/17 report which was set out on Agenda pages 15-18. Donna informed that the draft had not changed since February.

Donna drew attention to an early alert to placement of pupils out of the borough. It was anticipated that these pupils would be placed in the summer term of 2016/17. Donna flagged up that the £546k underspend in fees for pupils at independent special schools and abroad this year would probably be used for these placements next year. It was advisable to make a provision for the likely placements next year.

Linda Orr, Special Educational Needs (SEN) Manager explained that there were potentially 6 children who may need specialist placements next year. Linda stated that the assessment process could take 20 weeks or longer and although it was useful to have the early alert in place, it was difficult to know for certain what level of support each child would require and when.

The Forum was informed that the needs of each individual child varied, and depending on the needs, it could cost anything from £50k to £250k. Most members agreed that it was wise to be prepared for the worst case scenario.

The Forum questioned what measures/ discussions were taking place to help the secondary schools in the borough that had seen a decrease in their pupils' numbers from September. The following points were made in relation to this issue:

- The opening of new schools had had an impact in the admission numbers of the already established schools. There had been a significant shift in pupil numbers;
- It was reported that there were currently 9.4% surplus places in the borough and it was not certain if and when those places would be filled;
- The vacant places meant a significant reduction in the affected schools' budgets;
- Members of the Forum were concerned about the financial situation some schools would be in and thought it may be appropriate to discuss ways to help those schools;
- It was noted that the concerned schools were already making cuts and taking measures to deal with the situation;
- Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement stated that he was already having discussions with the schools in question;
- Alan pointed out that there was no protection for schools and that decision had been made by Schools Forum. This could be reviewed by the Forum;
- Forum members pointed out that they had not been involved in setting up the admissions policy;
- It was mentioned that the number of pupils on roll would still change and the national funding formula would ease the situation for the schools concerned;
- Forum was reminded that schools were protected for this financial year, so Forum might decide to consider the 2017/18 budget arrangements in order to help the affected schools;
- Members felt it would be appropriate to look at the situation in mid-September when the numbers of pupils on roll would be more accurate;
- Donna explained that the budget had been submitted in January and it was not possible to amend it now.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Forum will review the situation relating to the reduced funding faced by schools with falling numbers on roll in mid-September;
- 2) the Forum will consider the financial situation of schools affected by a reduction in pupil numbers when discussing the 2017/18 budget arrangements;
- 3) Forum agreed that underspend circa £546k relating to out of borough placements which had slipped from the Spring term to the Summer term be rolled forward into the next financial year;
- 4) the Fourth Draft Schools Budget 2016/17 report be noted.

67 SEN ALERT

Linda Orr, Special Educational Needs Manager presented the report containing an update on the SEN provision in the borough. The report was set out on Agenda pages 19-20.

Linda informed the Forum that placements were taking longer to fill as there seemed to be fewer schools that were able to provide for the needs of the children. It was noted that specialist schools may have spaces in years 7 or 8, but it was very difficult to find spaces in year 9 and onwards. It would be helpful if these children could be placed locally.

Mary Rome stated that more and more young people were not being able to cope with the new curriculum and mainstream schools were struggling to meet their complex needs. It was noted that Wokingham did not have schools that were half way between mainstream and specialist schools. It was felt this should be considered for the future.

Linda stated that the moderation panel was due to meet later on in the day and its budget remained at £150k. In response to a question Linda said that not many requests had been

refused by the panel last year. Forum members expressed frustration with the amount of work involved to access a relatively small amount of funding through moderation panels; however they wished to discuss this issue outside of Schools Forum.

Linda pointed to the figures in the report which contained the numbers for starters and leavers in September 2016 and reported that they showed a balanced amount.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

68 BENCHMARKING

The Forum considered the benchmarking report which was set out on Agenda pages 21-25. The information contained in the report related to 2015/16 budgets unless stated otherwise. The data could be helpful in terms of informing future decisions being made by Schools Forum and in understanding the local context in relation to other Local Authorities.

Donna Munday stated that neighbouring Local Authorities had been invited to a benchmarking exercise due to take place on 26 May 2016 at WBC. Donna asked members to let her know what items they would like to be discussed in that session.

Alan Stubbersfield congratulated Donna and her team on their work which reflected the positive picture presented in the report.

Members noted the high cost of both day pupils and boarding pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Donna explained that this was because these pupils had to be placed out of the borough; however, an ASD Unit was due to open up in St Crispins School shortly which would bring the costs down.

RESOLVED That: the report be noted.

69 PRIMARY STRATEGY

John Bayes, Schools Forum Chairman introduced the Primary School Planning Strategy 2016-2018 which was set out in Agenda pages 27-74. John informed that the report had already been agreed by Members and was presented to Forum for information only.

Alan Stubbersfield explained that the report illustrated the thinking and planning process behind the recommendations contained in the report.

The following comments were made during the discussion of the item:

- In response to a question Alan stated that the plan included a mixture of new permanent and temporary classes;
- Regarding funding, there would be a lagged period before funding was received for the extra pupils. A growth fund from Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be used;
- Members were anxious about the impact of these extra places on the existing schools;
- Members expressed concern with the lack of communication with the schools that would potentially face a reduction in pupil numbers as a result of the expansion planned by the Primary Strategy.

RESOLVED That: the report be noted.

70 FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda page 75.

It was agreed that the item '*Education out of school*' be amended to '*Independent Special School Education and Education Out of the Borough in Maintained Schools*'.

Alan Stubbersfield indicated that the Foundry College report was being worked on and would come to Schools Forum at a later stage.

71 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Donna Munday informed the Forum about the two government consultations on:

- National Funding Formula
- High Needs Funding Reform

Donna stated that she would be holding a briefing on the two DfE consultations on Monday 21 March 2016 at 9.30-11.30 in the Council Chamber at Shute End. All were welcomed to attend the briefing. Donna offered to talk on the phone or via emails to anyone who was unable to attend the briefing.

Donna urged members to respond to the consultation which would be opened until Sunday 17 April 2016.

Alan Stubbersfield stated that he was preparing a report to be submitted to the Executive about the consultation on funding and the government's proposals to convert all schools to academies.