

Please note: amendments were made to these minutes at the meeting held on 16 December 2015

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2015 FROM 9.00 AM TO 12.15 PM**

Schools Representatives

Helen Ball	Primary Head - Polehampton Infant
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Louisa Gurney	Primary Head - Emmbrook Junior
Brian Prebble	Primary Head - Rivermead Primary
Elaine Stewart	Primary Head - Aldryngton Primary
Ginny Rhodes	Secondary Head - St Crispins
Liz Meek	Special School Head - Addington School
Mary Rome	Pupil Referral Unit - Foundry College Headteacher
Derren Gray	Academy Headteacher - The Piggott School
Janet Perry	Academy Business Manager - The Holt School
John Bayes	Governor, Chairman
Ian Head	Governor

Non School Representatives

Anne Andrews	Oxford Diocese
Ian Pittock	Wokingham Borough Council

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

29 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Dominic Geraghty, Paul Miller, Linda Orr and Clare Sheppard.

30 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 October 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

32 SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

The Forum considered the membership report which had been circulated via email earlier in the week, and also a tabled paper containing comments and feedback on the report.

Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director Learning and Achievement explained the options listed in the report and proposed the adoption of table 1 which consisted of:

- 10 primary school members
- 2 secondary school members
- 5 academy school members
- 1 special school member
- 1 pupil referral unit member

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- 1 nursery member

In Alan recommended the adoption of table 1 in the short term with a view to move to table 3 in the future.

A robust discussion was had with the following comments being made:

- It was generally agreed to include 6th form numbers in the calculations;
- Governor representatives were not attached to phases at the moment, but it was recommended that they should be included going forward;
- The calculations had taken into account the pupil numbers in each phase;
- There was controversy over the number of members and the number of votes allocated to Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units;
- It was clarified that maintained schools could have either headteachers or governors representatives, academies could have whoever their proprietors appointed which could be a finance manager or a bursar;
- Councillor Ian Pittock felt that a smaller Forum would be more efficient;
- It was important to ensure that there was enough expertise in the Forum to make informed decisions;
- A three year term of office with the option of re-election was suggested and most members were in favour;
- Some members stated that they reported back to fellow headteachers on Schools Forum decisions and discussions. If their membership was reduced the communication may be compromised;
- Some members were of the opinion that having a membership of 20 members was ideal;
- The chair pointed out that Schools Forum was a public meeting and headteachers could attend if they wished to;
- It was mentioned that governors often made a positive contribution to the Forum, especially when they had a financial background;
- It was noted that it was time to update the Forum's constitution as the current version had been adopted in 2010.

After much consideration it was decided that table 1 would be adopted and the actions needed to implement it listed on the tabled report would be carried out. Regarding the discrepancy with voting for Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units, it was agreed that the members concerned would have one vote for the special schools and one vote for the PRU.

RESOLVED That: the membership option described in table 1 be adopted.

33 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ALERT

The Forum noted the update on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision on page 11 of the Agenda.

The Forum was informed that the Council had recently been successful at two tribunals and that had had a positive impact on the finances.

RESOLVED That: the report be noted.

34 REVENUE MONITORING

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The Forum considered the revenue monitoring report which was set out on agenda pages 15-20.

Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager explained that the final budget report presented at the March 2015 Forum showed an outturn position of £807k as at the end of March 2016. The forecast as at the end of October was £687k which meant a £168k improvement since the last Forum. This was due to a tribunal victory.

It was pointed out that although there had been an improvement, there was still an in year deficit. This year the budget was set at £649 more than the allocation from DfE, the current position was now forecasted to spend £295k more than allocated.

The Forum debated over the format of the report and a consensus was not reached. Some members preferred the old style whilst others preferred the new format. Some members suggested that more information should be included. It was agreed that it would be best to discuss this issue at another meeting when Paul Miller was present as he had spent some time working with Donna in producing the new report.

In response to a request for clarification Donna stated that support for inclusion included: support for travellers, psychologists and learning support team.

Donna clarified that Academies and Free Schools didn't de-delegate. Also Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units didn't de-delegate as they were funded by the High Needs Block. Members were reminded that only maintained schools could vote on de-delegated funds.

The Forum considered the copyright licensing set out in Appendix B of the report. Members were informed that the Christian Copyright Licensing International referred to Christian hymns played in schools. Anne Andrews from the Oxford Diocese explained that schools were supposed to keep a record of which hymns were being used.

RESOLVED That: the report be noted.

35 CONSULTATION RESULTS

At its last meeting the Forum had requested to review in more detail questions 9, 15, 20 and 24 of the 2015 school's funding consultation. The report on pages 21-32 of the Agenda provided details of the responses.

Donna Munday pointed out that the final Proforma submission would be sent on 20 January 2016, therefore members still had the opportunity to discuss and make any changes if they wished to.

Members discussed the introduction of a cap to contribute towards Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG). Donna stated that the average MFG per pupil value was higher than it was four years ago; however costs had increased at a greater rate. The decision as to where the cap would be would be taken would be made at the January meeting.

Members debated Question 9 which related to the Looked After Children's (LAC) rate of funding. The consultation response was tied with 50% voting for £900 and 50% voting for £1,900. The draft Proforma was based upon a rate of £900. To have increased the rate

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would have meant “finding” a new £1,000 per pupil. As there was no appetite to reduce funding in any other area the draft Proforma had remained at £900.

Donna explained that Schools Forum was not bound by the Consultation responses and could decide on different figures from the results.

Members felt that there was no evidence that increasing the LAC funding would achieve better results but there was consensus that the funding should remain at £900.

Donna confirmed that it was expected that MFG would continue at 1.5% for next year.

There was much debate over the increased costs and the fact that most schools would face difficulties in balancing their books in the future. It was recognised that the High Needs Funding was out of date and members felt this would have a negative impact in schools with potentially more children being excluded as their needs would not be addressed.

In response to a question Donna stated that the redundancy pot available from the Local Authority was £37K and it did not come out of DSG. This was only available to maintained schools.

A member asked what help was available to schools facing financial difficulties. Donna responded that the Local Authority offered advice on contracts, placements, budgeting and HR. There were regular meetings with schools where there was an opportunity to talk to Officers.

Rob Stubbs, Head of Finance suggested that schools worked together as much as possible to generate savings.

Some members of the Forum questioned the cost of running the Virtual School for Children In Care (CIC). They were informed that there was no extra costs as the professionals involved had taken this as an extra responsibility, Alan Stubbersfield pointed out that the Local Authority was required to have a Virtual School and this provided a valuable service.

The Forum went on to discuss Question 15 – Introduction of a split site factor. Derren Gray, Headteacher of Charvil Piggott and Piggot explained that the two schools were located two miles apart but because it was an “all through school” he received one lump sum for both schools. Derren stated that when it was full the Charvil part of the school received 23% less than if it was a separate school. Derren declared that this was unsustainable and he would not be able to run Charvil Piggott beyond next year if funding remained the same. Derren requested the introduction of a split site factor to help to solve this problem. Derren drew attention to the fact that there were greater costs in running the schools in two different sites.

It was noted that to introduce a split site factor would incur in a reduction of other factors funding as the overall funding available was fixed. There would be only one school in the Borough that would attract the funding.

Members discussed the implications of introducing the split site factor, how other schools may fall into this situation in the future and how this would affect the budget. The Forum

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felt that before a decision was made it would be useful to do some benchmarking to find out how other schools in different areas dealt with this situation.

The Forum decided to defer the discussion on Questions 20 and 24 to the next meeting.

RESOLVED That: the report be noted and that information on split site factor benchmarking be brought back to the Forum for consideration.

36 INDICATIVE BUDGETS FOR SCHOOLS

Donna Munday informed the Forum that the indicative budgets had been sent to schools at the end of October. Donna explained that there would be further updates including the school preferences to be sent to schools for further clarity on budget planning.

RESOLVED That: the verbal update be noted and that schools be sent the preferences by the end of the week.

37 EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE SURVEY AND OPTIONS

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) report provided information on the various levels of delivery options. The Forum was asked to consider the analysis of support required and requests for additional EWS.

RESOLVED That: the report be noted.

38 FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forum considered its work programme for the remaining of the municipal year.

It was agreed that:

- The Primary Strategy be deferred to the January meeting;
- Virtual School and Split Site funding benchmarking be added to December's meeting.

The Forum expressed concern over the Primary School Strategy and felt that headteachers should be kept informed of its findings. Councillor Pittock stated that the Strategy was going to be submitted to Executive in January. Councillor Pittock also confirmed that a solution had been found to alleviate the pressure for school places in the Woodley and Earley areas.

Donna informed the Forum of the proposed dates for next year: 13 July 2016, 19 October 2016, 14 December 2016, 18 January 2017, 22 February 2017, 29 March 2017 and 24 May 2017.

The next meeting of the Schools Forum would be on 16 December at Rivemead Primary School starting at 9.15am.