

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 18 JULY 2018 FROM 10.00 AM TO 12.07 PM**

Schools Representatives

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
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

Patricia Davies	Interim Assistant Director for Education
Gail Prewett	Early Years Representative
Karen Edwards	Early Years Representative

Also Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Piers Brunning, Strategy and Commissioning (People and Place) Senior Specialist
Coral Miller, Interim Senior Finance Specialist, Schools
Lynne Samuel, Senior Finance Specialist, People Services
Emma Slaughter, Early Years Consultant
Katherine Vernon, Case Owner, Schools Finance

68 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Ali Brown, Emma Clarke, Ben Godber, Ian Morgan, Amanda Woodfin, Marion Standing, James Taylor, Derren Gray and Councillor Shahid Younis.

The Chairman, Paul Miller explained that the decision to cancel the previous scheduled meeting was due to the fact that some of the reports had not been ready in time for the agenda dispatch. As no decisions were required, a decision was taken to cancel that meeting. He asked the Forum's approval to continue with this approach as it was not conducive to good governance to receive reports at or just ahead of meetings.

69 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 28 March 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

That on page 14 where it says 'Jane Perry' this be amended to say Janet Perry.

Janet Perry stated that on page 7 under matters arising, service charges and academy charges, her query had related to new service charges and not mid-year service charges. Paul Miller stated that this would be covered during the meeting.

70 MATTERS ARISING

Paul Miller stated that as Councillor Clark was no longer a member of Schools Forum it was appropriate to close the action in relation to the Farley Hill Governors' email.

Lynne Samuel, Senior Finance Specialist, People Services gave an explanation in respect to Early Years issues that had been raised by Ian Morgan at the previous meeting. It was agreed that the email correspondence between Paul Miller and Lynne Samuel, containing the explanation and a revised breakdown of the 2018/19 Early Years Budget would be attached to the minutes.

Paul Miller stated that the various matters arising from the minutes would be discussed during the meeting under the items they related to.

71 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

72 REVENUE MONITORING

The Forum received the Revenue Monitoring report which was set out in agenda pages 17-23.

Coral Miller, Interim Senior Finance Specialist, Schools presented the report and explained that the 2018/19 forecast on the school budget as at 31 May 2018 anticipated an overspend of £1.59m.

Coral Miller stated that at this stage of the financial year the forecast was largely informed by the 2017/18 outturn position and the 2018/19 Budget, and would continue to be updated by changes brought about by the new academic year. The report reflected the assumption that centrally retained funds and contingencies would be fully spent.

Coral Miller stated that the de-delegated items funding within the main schools block came from the contribution made by maintained schools and subsequently any underspend 'belonged' to them, and would be held on their behalf.

Coral Miller explained that pressures on the High Needs Block (HNB) continued to provide the most significant challenge to the schools budget. In-year pressure, alongside the deficit brought forward from 2017/18 represented a £1.593m forecast overspend for 2018/19.

Coral Miller informed that a Special Educational Needs Strategy Group had been established, this was chaired by the Interim Assistant Director for Education with input from Finance, Strategic Commissioning and a number of schools. The group was considering service planning in light of pressure on resources and would identify all possible actions for delivering a balanced budget position and a reduction in the brought forward deficit.

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

- Carol Simpson stated that it would be useful to see both the income and expenditure for each Block presented together. Coral Miller stated that this would be included in the next report;
- Janet Perry noticed that the 2018/19 Budgets did not include the 2017/18 Schools Block in year shortfall of £160k. Paul Miller explained that apart from the HNB, any in year surpluses or shortfalls in the other blocks were written off (absorbed by the Local Authority); this was a change that had been introduced by the DfE with the New Funding Formula (NFF);
- Lynne Samuel stated that the figure of 644 at the bottom of page 20 was incorrect and it should say 834;
- Ginny Rhodes was interested to know the narrative behind the significant variance in the 'support for inclusion – HNB' line on page 22. Coral Miller explained that some of the support for inclusion in the HNB had included the funding for 0-5 year olds. The Local Authority had now made a decision to support the 0-5 year olds from the Early Years Block instead, the DfE was informed of this decision and was in agreement;
- Paul Miller stated that the expected outturn for the year was based on the 'actual' figures from April and May and the monthly Budget figures for the remainder of the year.

RESOLVED that the Revenue Monitoring report be noted.

73 OUTTURN REPORT 2017/18

The Forum considered the Schools Outturn Report 2017/18 which was set out in agenda pages 25-29.

Coral Miller stated that the report showed the final outturn for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and any additional schools funding provided by the Council for the financial year 2017/18.

Coral Miller stated that the final outturn for the year showed an overspend of £762k, which was an improved position on the projected overspend previously reported to Forum of £1.078m.

Coral Miller explained that a reduction in expenditure of £316k was delivered largely in relation to the HNB with a reduction experienced against the Independent Special Schools Budget. She stated that the HNB was allowed to carry forward a deficit.

Coral Miller pointed out that the de-delegated fund showed an underspend of £7k, and that there was an overspend of £160k from the centrally retained fund which was not picked up from the DSG, this would be funded from elsewhere within the Local Authority's finances.

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

- Paul Miller stated that the Local Authority had the responsibility to absorb any in year shortfalls from each of the blocks, except the HNB which was allowed to carry forward a deficit;
- Janet Perry asked for clarification in relation to the contingencies. Coral Miller stated that for 2018/19 maintained schools had given money to cover maternity and supply cover, so the £7k would be added back to the contingencies item. She stated that the service would look into the 2019/20 Budget and take into account the fact that supply cover cost more than was allocated for it in the de-delegated fund;

- Janet Perry asked, in view of the expected overspend, where else within the Local Authority was this report presented. Lynne Samuel stated that this was reported to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT);
- Janet Perry stated that there had been some criticism of Schools Forum for not managing the Budget more strongly, by Paul Senior, former Interim Director of People Services. Paul Miller agreed and stated that this comment had been noted and it had been recorded in previous minutes that Schools Forum exerted its maximum influence to ensure annual spend remained within Budget. Schools Forum has not executive authority or responsibility over the HNB Budget lines that have in previous years overspent.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

74 DE-DELEGATED LICENCE CHARGES

The Forum considered the De-delegated Licence Charges report which was set out in agenda pages 31-36.

Coral Miller stated that the Council, through the de-delegation process, had charged maintained schools for various licences (as per list in the report) in 2017/18 and 2018/19. It had been clarified that these licences costs had been paid for by the DfE and had been 'top sliced' from the DSG before it was allocated to Local Authorities.

Coral Miller stated that the total amount available for consideration was £155,904. She explained that the Council had identified two proposals for consideration by maintained schools:

Proposal one – to re-direct the funds available to three areas that had been identified where support to maintained schools was limited by existing budget restrictions:

- a) Support for underperforming Ethnic Minority Groups and bilingual learners
- b) Increase the staff cover Budget
- c) Support small maintained schools regarding lump sum adjustment

Proposal two – to return the funding to all maintained schools and academies that had paid into the licences fund.

Brian Prebble stated that all schools were suffering as a result of the drop in the lump sum, and that small schools paid the same amount as larger schools. Members agreed with Brian Prebble's statement and agreed that this disadvantage should be addressed. This was acknowledged by Officers, who stated that in the future there was likely to be a banded structure to deal with the disparity between small schools and larger schools.

Upon being put to the vote the majority (of maintained school members) voted for proposal two.

RESOLVED That the proposal two as listed in the report be actioned.

75 UPDATE ON FUNDING FORMULA CHANGES FOR 2019/20

Coral Miller stated that the National Funding Formula (NFF) for 2019/20 was going to be broadly the same as the one for 2018/19, with the proposal of a minimum funding per pupil. She stated that the funding for Key Stage 1 and 2 was likely to be £3,500k per pupil and the amount for Key Stage 3 and 4 was likely to be £4,800k per pupil.

Coral Miller informed that the funding floor was likely to increase by 1% against the 2017/18 level, which meant 0.5% for the 2019/20 year. Changes were likely around growth fund calculations, this would be modelled during the summer once the details were confirmed.

Coral Miller stated that the proposed changes had not yet been agreed by ministers. She anticipated that the guides, models and tools would be received by the end of July, this would be discussed with the Schools Forum NFF/DSG Task and Finish Group in September.

In response to a question Coral Miller stated that the final figure for the 2017/18 grant had been confirmed two days ago and the Finance team had not yet been able to put it in the model. Once this was worked out it would be reported to Schools Forum. In response to a question Coral Miller stated that the final figure was broadly in line with what had been expected.

Paul Miller asked the Finance team to inform Schools Forum before its next meeting in October if they found a significant difference (£100k was used as reference) between the final grant and what was expected.

RESOLVED That Schools Forum would be informed, if needed, of the breakdown of the final grant for 2017/18, before its next meeting.

76 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK UPDATE

Patricia Davies stated that the High Needs Block paper which was set out in agenda pages 37-48 had already been presented to Executive and CLT, and it also formed the basis of a presentation to the DfE.

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

- Ginny Rhodes questioned the 'academies top slice 7%' which showed in the pie chart on page 39 of the agenda. Coral Miller explained that this meant that place funding was given directly to academies. Paul Miller suggested that the terminology could be changed to 'passport' to make it more accurate;
- John Bayes was interested to know more about the Out of Borough Placements, in particular in relation to maintained special schools. Lynne Samuel explained that the Out of Borough Placements, including independent and maintained schools had been grouped together for presentation purposes, but could be broken down;
- Ginny Rhodes noted that there was no data on page 41 for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) at secondary schools. Patricia Davies agreed to investigate the reason for this;
- Janet Perry asked about the disparity in the proportion of pupils with SEN in Wokingham, the South East and the national statistics. Patricia Davies stated that there were a number of reasons for this, such as the fact that a lot of Wokingham parents applied for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP), there were a lot of new families moving into the area and there was a national increasing trend;
- Jay Blundell stated that a lot of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and SEMH did not stay in mainstream secondary schools and that may be the reason why this was not accounted for in the chart in the secondary schools line; primary schools were usually able to accommodate children with ASD and SEMH;
- Ginny Rhodes asked for more information about the clawback which was mentioned on page 42. Coral Miller explained that in 2016/17 when setting the budget for

2017/18, £700k was moved from the HNB to the Schools Block to distribute more money to the schools. It was believed that this was the wrong way round given the pressures in HNB and she had spoken to DfE about it. She explained that this affected the setting of the 2019/20 budget as Local Authorities would no longer be able to move money from one block to the other as they used to;

- Jay Blundell explored the idea that given that the Schools Block would not carry forward deficit in the same way that the HNB would, maybe there was a case to be made to give back the money to the HNB;
- Paul Miller reminded the Forum that a decision had been made by Schools Forum not to give 0.5% of its budget to the HNB. Had the Schools Forum decided to give the 0.5% to the HNB, the Schools Block would have helped HNB and would have been able to write off any in year deficit;
- Patricia Davies stated that the DfE had been sympathetic to the difficulties faced by Wokingham's HNB. Patricia noted that Wokingham was not the worse Local Authority in terms of HNB overspend;
- Patricia Davies stated that there were some Local Authorities that were able to manage their HNB budgets, the DfE would be looking to see how they were managing and share good practice with other Local Authorities;
- Members pointed out that schools had probably already spent the money allocated to them in 2016/17 and stated that this should not be re-visited;
- John Bayes asked if this diversion from the Schools Block had happened only once or whether this was repeated in other years. Paul Miller explained that the DfE had used the HNB allocation of 2016/17 to base the future HNB allocation. However Officers were now arguing that this 'baselining' was erroneous because the 2016/17 budget was in fact short of £700k in that year;
- John Bayes asked for more clarification in relation to the Out of Borough maintained special school allocation in the pie chart and which line this related to in the revenue monitoring spreadsheet. Coral Miller explained that there was not a separate line, this was within the special schools line;
- In response to a question Coral Miller stated, after checking the Schools Outturn report, that this was within line 1.2.1 – provision for pupils with SEN;
- Paul Miller was pleased to see that there was a clear action plan;
- In response to a question raised in the previous meeting, Patricia Davies stated that there were seven children with EHCP's moving into secondary schools who would be funded from the HNB;
- Kerry Clifford asked if there was any funding available for Ambleside Centre given that it had been marked as a resource space. Patricia Davies stated that funding was linked to EHCPs only.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

77 EARLY YEARS UPDATE

The Forum considered the Early Years update report which was set out in agenda pages 49-53. Emma Slaughter, Early Years Consultant stated that the report contained a breakdown of Early Years funding.

Karen Edwards questioned the staffing structure and whether another member of staff would be recruited. Emma Slaughter stated that the recruitment was likely to take place in September.

Gail Prewett stated that the funding for two year olds could not be top sliced and asked the reason for the top slice. Coral Miller explained the Local Authority top slice ceiling (as

approved by DfE) was 5% of funds for 3-4 year olds. There was no ceiling on the top slice that could be taken from 2 year olds funding. Schools Forum had previously reviewed and approved a 4% top slice from across the full age range funding.

Gail Prewett stated that the Early Years' providers were seeking more clarity on the breakdown. It was accepted that things had changed, however it was noted that there was now less support from the Local Authority and the introduction of top slicing. Emma Slaughter explained that there had always been top slicing, the difference was that now there was more transparency.

Karen Edwards pointed out that 95% of providers in Wokingham were good or outstanding, therefore they were effectively being top sliced for a service that they were not going to receive.

Paul Miller suggested that providers and Early Years Officers work together to achieve a better understanding of the Early Years funding. Gail Prewett, Karen Edwards and Emma Slaughter agreed to arrange meetings to work together.

RESOLVED That the report be noted and that an effort would be made towards more collaborative work between the Local Authority and Early Years providers.

78 GROWTH FUND REPORT

The Forum considered the Growth Fund report which was set out in agenda pages 55-60. Piers Brunning, Strategy and Commissioning (People and Place) Senior Specialist presented the report.

Piers Brunning stated that the report contained information on the data activity of last year. He stated that the carry forward deficit of £81k was the consequence of costs arising from commitments for the 2016/17 financial year that were met in the 2017/18 year. These were identified late in the 2017/18 year and had not been included in the expected outturn figures.

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

- Janet Perry asked why Bohunt School had increased its Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 240 and how the school was funded;
- Piers Brunning explained how Bohunt was funded:
 - As a new Free School the Bohunt Wokingham School is funded for the pupils on roll through estimated rolls (rather than lagged funding). This means the annual payments to the school from the DfE are based on the funding formula, but using the estimated roll for the new intake, rather than the historic roll. The DfE can later adjust the payment, if the actual roll is less than the estimated roll. This is known as clawback. There is a mechanism to enable the council to guarantee funding based on the estimated roll, even if the actual roll is less, where the council has given a guarantee as part of the package to ensure the school is viable.
 - The Growth Fund pays for two things. Firstly, diseconomy funding, provided because the formulaic arrangements, being largely pupil led, do not generate sufficient funds to enable a new school to pay for sufficiently senior staff during the start up phase. This is based on the number of unfilled year groups (so the number of children admitted does not affect this payment). It is paid on a sliding scale,

starting with £125,000 reducing through £93,000, £62,000 to £31,000 over a four year period (for secondary schools).

- The second element is for new class start up costs. While furniture and equipment are capitalised (so not funded through the Growth Fund) and formulaic funding will cover consumables, new classes will require access to revenue funded teaching resources (e.g. text books). In future the replacement of these items will be funded from formulaic funding, but using a multi, not single year cycle. This is £500 per new secondary school place.
- Piers Brunning stated that where the Council has agreed that an existing school should expand, the estimated roll cannot be used to fund the school. In this instance the costs of the new class have to be met from the Growth Fund, until formulaic funding is available.
- Piers Brunning stated that Bohunt was allowed to increase its own PAN, and informed that the school was fully allocated for Year 7 starting in September and was likely to continue to be fully allocated going forward;
- Piers Brunning pointed out that the funding for new schools was different from the funding for expanding existing schools;
- Piers Brunning stated that Bohunt was anticipating funding in the future to build a sixth form. However, this was unlikely because it was believed to be sufficient capacity in sixth forms at other schools within the Borough;
- Piers Brunning stated that with all the new developments in the Borough, the Council was required to plan for future sufficiency of school places;
- In response to a question Coral Miller stated that if Schools Forum did not agree to the £81k carry forward, this would increase the pressure on the Council; if Schools Forum agreed, it would be possible to absorb the carried forward £81k within the 2018/19 Budget and she was confident that there would not be any additional requests to carry forward;
- In response to a question Coral Miller stated that there was a set of criteria to be distribute this money to schools;
- In response to a question Coral Miller stated that the regulations allowed for Schools Forum to authorize a carry forward for Growth Fund;
- Piers Brunning informed that Shinfield West and Matthews Green were on target to be opened in 2019.

Upon being put to the vote, Schools Forum decided not to agree to the carrying forward the £81k Growth Fund overspend.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Schools Forum does not approve the overspend of £81k to be carried forward to 2018/19; and
- 2) The Growth Fund update be noted.

79 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS DATA

The Forum considered the School Admissions Data report which was set out in agenda pages 61-89. Lynne Samuel informed that Jackie Whitney, Lead Manager, Customer Management had not been able to attend the meeting, and therefore she would answer any questions.

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

- John Bayes was disappointed that the report did not contain benchmarking as previously requested by Schools Forum. He stated that it was impossible to judge if this represented good value for money without any means of comparison;
- Paul Miller pointed out that comparison may not be appropriate because the structures varied in different authorities, however it was positive to note that there was more transparency;
- Ginny Rhodes agreed that it was important to have benchmarking in order to examine if this provided good value for money;
- Coral Miller informed that the Local Authority now received a centrally retained block from the DfE, this was to cover statutory duties, of which school admissions was one of them; it was likely that there would be a year on year cut to this centrally retained block;
- Elaine Stewart stated that she was surprised to see that there had been 193 school admission appeals and not 300 as previously reported to Schools Forum. Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist stated that the number of school appeals could vary significantly from one year to the next;

Paul Miller stated that Schools Forum benefited from the information contained in this report.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Information in relation to the cost of legal challenges and benchmarking be provided to Schools Forum; and
- 2) The report be noted.

80 FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda pages 91-92.

The following items were added to the next meeting on 17 October 2018:

- Early Years feedback on numbers; and
- School Admissions benchmarking and cost of legal challenges

81 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Paul Miller stated that the task and finish groups which were held during the past year had provided transparency and had been very useful, he suggested the continuation of such groups going forward.

Schools Forum was in agreement to continue with task and finish groups and Janet Perry volunteered to take part in the Schools Block task and finish group.

Ginny Rhodes expressed serious concern with the membership selection process for the HNB task and finish group, she stated that there had been no transparency and that Schools Forum had not been informed of its composition. Paul Miller agreed to write an email to Patricia Davies (who at this stage had left the meeting) asking for an explanation to Ginny Rhodes' concerns in relation to the HNB task and finish group membership.

Paul Miller suggested the creation of an Early Years task and finish group and asked the Early Years representatives to volunteer to take part. Gail Prewett, Karen Edwards and Kerry Clifford stated that they were willing to work together with the Local Authority and that they would speak to colleagues from the Early Years sector to decide who should take part in the task and finish group.