

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
SCHOOLS FORUM  
HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2017 FROM 9.30 AM TO 11.30 AM**

## **Schools Representatives**

Helen Ball	Primary Head - Polehampton Infant
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Sally Hunter	Primary Head - Wescott Infant
Elaine Stewart	Primary Head - Aldryngton Primary
Julia Mead	School Business Manager - St Sebastian's CE Primary
Carol Simpson	School Business Manager - Colleton Primary
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	Special School Headteacher - Foundry College
Sara Attra	Special School Head - Addington School
Paul Miller	Governor - St Crispins - Chairman
John Bayes	Governor - Foundry College - Vice-Chair
Ian Head	Governor - Aldryngton Primary

## **Non School Representatives**

Anne Andrews	Oxford Diocese
Richard Dolinski	Wokingham Borough Council Representative
Mary Parker	Early Years Representative

## **Also Present**

Luciane Bowker, Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Hawa Bedwa, Interim Schools Finance Manager  
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement

## **29 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from John Ogden, Brian Prebble, Ginny Rhodes, Maggie Seagrove and James Taylor.

## **30 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **31 CLARIFICATIONS REQUESTED AT THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **Page 6 – what services maintained schools received from Early Years that academies did not**

Derren Gray, Piggott Headteacher confirmed that he had received the information from Alison Pugh, Early Years Team Manager.

### **Page 7 – contingencies breakdown**

Hawa Bedwa, Schools Finance Manager explained that due to transaction changes received in the morning, the document containing the breakdown that she had intended to circulate to Forum was irrelevant as the position had now changed. Hawa proposed to update the document and circulate it with the minutes, Forum accepted this proposal.

The Chairman stated that as contingencies represented large amounts of money, the Forum would like to receive regular reports going forward.

Hawa stated that in relation to the 340K de-delegated items, a number of transactions had been identified to date totalling 222K, making the difference unspent 117K, however there were transactions still to be posted because the system had not been available to use. It was possible that once all adjustments were taken into account there would be an underspent of 84K, it was anticipated that this would be fully spent by year end.

Hawa informed the items related to:

- music for Looked After Children (LAC) £9.3K
- school funding for additional pupils £19K
- safeguarding for children £25K

As there was uncertainty over the figures for music for LAC Hawa stated she would double check and report back to Forum.

*Subsequently Hawa informed that the music for LAC amounted to £7K. The contingencies breakdown is attached to the minutes.*

Hawa was confident that from April, with the new system, the figures would be worked out from actuals and therefore would be more accurate.

In response to a question, Hawa explained that safeguarding related to a subscription to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). Hawa stated that this had been agreed by Schools Forum in the past. John Bayes, Vice-Chairman confirmed that to be the case.

Hawa stated that the bulk of the spent was £163K approximately and consisted of a variance on business rates. The cost had changed considerably and therefore had to be considered under contingencies. Janet Perry, Holt School Business Manager stated that she believed this related to council tax and questioned if this should have been budgeted for. Hawa explained that this had been budgeted for; however the rates were received late, so there was variance in the rates. John Bayes believed this related to uniform business rates and he understood this money was recouped from the government; therefore it did not make any difference to Schools Forum. After discussions, the Chairman asked for further clarification on the following:

- whether this money was recouped or not
- whether this should be budgeted for
- what to do if there were changes during the year, and
- what to do with any differences

Hawa agreed to investigate and report back with more details, including a full breakdown of contingencies, to be circulated with the minutes.

#### **Page 7 – Detailed analysis for all costs for 2018/19**

The Chairman stated that a detailed analysis of all WBC costs in each line was asked at the December meeting. Hawa stated that that analysis would be undertaken at year end and reported back to Schools Forum.

#### **Page 8 – Pupil Growth Fund**

Hawa stated that due to the re-structure that was currently taking place she had only been able to visit two schools. She was hopeful that she would in the near future be able to visit the other schools and meet with the relevant people to calculate the costs to date and make sure the budget had been spent. If not, the budget would be revised.

Hawa explained that the budget had to be revised in order to reduce the budget from 1.5million to 1.3million, all projects would be revised.

Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement explained some of the principles behind pupil growth fund. Firstly, if a school recruited up to its planned admission number of 30, there would be no cost to growth fund. Secondly, a new school always incurred establishment costs before it opened to pupils.

Carole Simpson, Colleton School Business Manager pointed out that it was important to consider that there were two scenarios in this situation: i) maintained schools that agreed to take on new classes and ii) new schools, and it was not possible to compare them.

The Chairman was seeking to have reassurance that there was control over the spend in new build. He asked that the report be split to show pupil related issues and non-pupil related issues in order to clarify the questions around the pupil growth fund. Hawa agreed to provide this information in future reports.

Corrina Gillard, Emmbrook Infant School Headteacher expressed concern that schools had not been consulted on the expansion programme and asked who had made the decision as to which schools were selected for expansion. She believed that there were two schools within her cluster that could have been expanded at half the cost of the current programme. She was concerned that there had been no transparency in the process.

Alan Stubbersfield explained that the decision involved a complex analysis of the pupil pressure areas in the borough, talking to headteachers and other factors. Piers Brunning, Service Manager, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships had been involved in the planning of the expansion project.

Councillor Richard Dolinski stated that it was the Council that made that decision, based on the information provided by Officers.

The Chairman suggested that Officers should consider implementing a mechanism to consult schools about future expansion plans. Alan believed that there was consultation with schools, but perhaps this should be extended. Alan agreed to provide a clarification as to how senior leaders in schools would be consulted in the future.

#### **Page 8 – whether there was an overspend against redundancy costs**

Alan reported that there was no significant overspend this year. Alan did not have the figures available; this would be circulated with the minutes.

#### **Page 9 – consultation with schools**

There was a general consensus that this was no longer required going forward.

#### **Page 10 – the inclusion of Just Around the Corner as a placement provider**

There was no update, clarification would follow with the minutes.

## **Page 10 – SEN transport**

There was no update, clarification would follow with the minutes.

## **DE-DELEGATED CONTINGENCIES BREAKDOWN**

The de-delegated contingencies breakdown analysis is attached to the minutes.

## **32 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

## **33 BUDGET MONITORING**

The Forum received the Budget Monitoring report which was set out in agenda pages 13-22 and was presented by Hawa Bedwa, Schools Finance Manager.

Hawa reported that the overall trajectory of the budget was of an increase in surplus. However, the net forecast position was likely to change significantly once all transactions were taken into account. The reason for the delay was that there had been some issues in implementing the new system.

Hawa stated that the summary position showed a consistent spend from last quarter reports, and the variances indicated were comparatively low. The surplus had increased from £552K to £559K, with all the expenditure and income now static. Hawa was confident it was possible to achieve the projected £552K surplus.

Hawa informed Schools Forum that it had been difficult to produce the reports in time due to limited staff resources and delays in receiving schools returns. She pointed out that returns were often late, incomplete and inaccurate. Hawa urged headteachers and governors to emphasize to schools the importance of submitting school returns accurately and on time, and also to respond to queries in a timely manner.

Janet Perry asked what information exactly was required from schools that was preventing the production of the report. Hawa explained that the schools control codes needed to be placed against school forecasts to find out what the actuals were. John Bayes pointed out that it was also important to have the census reports returned.

Carole Simpson stated that sometimes the returns were not signed because of difficulties in coordinating governors meetings in time for the deadline for the submission. It was agreed that headteachers and governors should be advised to timetable governors' meetings in time for schools returns.

After much discussion, it was agreed that Hawa would advise bursars to work together with her to find a solution to the issue of returning submissions in a timely manner.

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

- John Bayes noticed that the Variance column was calculated from the June forecast, and not as Variances from the Budget. The Chairman suggested dropping the June figures from the report;
- The Chairman suggested adding the figures for the next year's budget to the report;
- Derren Gray, Piggott Headteacher made the following points:
  - If there was a carry forward at year end 2017/18 of a surplus of £559K, what would happen to this surplus (or any deficits) when the formula changed in 2018/19?

- It was predicted that next year's budget would have a significant deficit; Forum asked who would be making a decision to address it? Hawa stated that she would have to consult with Senior Management on this issue and report back;
- The first draft of the new national funding formula suggested that Local Authorities would retain an element of Growth Fund matched to previous year's spend. Therefore it might be advantageous to increase the planned size of the Growth Fund for next year, if this was to be matched out in future years;
- The Minimum Funding Guaranty (MFG) was at a 1.5% reduction every year, the new funding formula said this could not be increased by more than 3% or go down by less than 3% of the core budget. Currently the Lump Sum sat outside of MFG. If the same formula was retained by having £175K Lump Sum any reduction in the Lump Sum in the new formula where it says it will be £110K would mean everyone would lose £65K;
- Forum was in agreement that it was important to discuss the implications of the proposed new funding formula;
- Hawa pointed out that this was still under the consultation period. Councillor Dolinski urged Forum to encourage Headteachers and Governors to respond to the consultation and put forward the views and questions;
- In response to a question, Hawa stated that the consultation related to the allocation for 2019/20;
- Alan Stubbersfield suggested looking at the implications of a new funding formula as a separate item in another meeting.

#### **RESOLVED That:**

- 1) Headteachers and Governors would be advised to consider the deadline for school returns submission when timetabling governors' meetings;
- 2) The implications of the new funding formula be included in the forward plan for further discussion;
- 3) Headteachers and governors be encouraged to respond to the funding formula consultation;
- 4) The report be noted.

#### **34 SEN ALERT**

The Forum considered the SEN (Special Educational Needs) Alert report which was set out in agenda page 23. Alan Stubbersfield explained that the report indicated what new placements were likely to take place in the next year. Alan went through the figures in the report.

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

- The Chairman noted that this budget was overspent by 25%; he welcomed the increased transparency but was concerned that there was little control over such a large amount of money;
- Alan stated that the figures in the report did not significantly affect this year's budget, as the placements were to take place next year;
- Hawa stated that a cost review analyses showed a reduced spend. She would be able to report back to Forum once the position was finalised;

- Hawa stated that there was ongoing work with other Local Authorities to try and find the best way forward;
- Alan recalled the discussions about Out of Borough placements and reminded members of the Forum that this service was 'needs led' and legal requirements had to be met. Other Local Authorities faced similar pressures at national level, due to increased needs;
- Alan stated that a zero based budget exercise had been undertaken where each individual placement had been looked at. This exercise was almost complete and he felt there was now a much tighter grip on understanding the budget and the nature of needs;
- Alan stated that using the resource spaces within Wokingham schools would save a lot of money. He mentioned the new resource in St Crispins. Alan suggested that Forum undertook a review of funding of schools with resource spaces; he believed that making use of these spaces would help to contain costs.

#### **RESOLVED That:**

- 1) The report be noted;
- 2) A review of funding of schools with resource spaces be brought to Schools Forum for consideration.

#### **35 APPRENTICESHIP LEVY**

Alan Stubbersfield presented the apprenticeship levy report which was set out in agenda pages 25- 36. Alan explained that Billy Webster, Head of Support Services had produced a substantive report on apprenticeship levy.

Alan stated that the report provided a summary of the Apprenticeship Levy position for maintained and voluntary controlled schools budgets. It created an account to which the government added 10%, this account was available for apprenticeship training.

Alan drew attention to recommendation 3 in the report: *The Council will need to determine a mechanism for providing access to levy from connected organisations (schools)*. It was recommended that the Council set up a working group to consider the options and optimal solution in conjunction with schools.

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

- The Chairman stated that Schools Forum should take part in this working group;
- Alan stated that information about this would be available in the schools' newsletter;
- Kerrie Clifford, Ambleside Centre Headteacher stated that more apprenticeships could be offered if the levy was accessible to 19 year olds. At the moment the funding was available for younger people only;
- John Bayes asked who would decide in the event of requests for funding being greater than the funds available. Alan believed this would be decided by the task and finish group, however it was ultimately a Local Authority decision as the Council was the employer;
- Helen Ball, Polehampton Infant Headteacher asked Alan to include the FAQs with the newsletter to schools as it was a very useful paper;
- Forum discussed the best way to send representatives to the working group and decided that having representatives from each cluster would be a good way to ensure a robust level of engagement.

## **RESOLVED That:**

- 1) Schools Forum would send one representative from each cluster to the working group;
- 2) The FAQs would be circulated with the schools' newsletter.

### **36 REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP**

The Forum considered the report reviewing Schools Forum membership which was set out in agenda pages 37-42. Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement presented the report.

Alan stated that the membership was last reviewed in 2015, therefore it was time to review it again, in line with the new pupil population statistics. The Local Authority was required to secure that primary, secondary and academy schools' representation was broadly proportionate, having regard to the number of pupils registered at them.

Alan pointed out that the Forum had to comply with the membership requirements set out in the Schools Forum regulations. The regulations stipulated the following statutory representation:

- Academies at least
- Schools/academies at least 2/3 in relation to non-schools members
- Maintained schools at least 1 head; at least 1 secondary; at least 1 governors
- Special schools at least 1
- Nursery schools at least 1
- PRUs at least 1
- 14-19 partnership at least 1
- Early Years providers at least 1

Alan stated that the tables contained in the report on the distribution of pupil population did not show a significant change in percentages, therefore representation could remain as it was at the moment. However, there may be a need to review this arrangement in the future if more schools became primary academies.

Alan asked Forum to consider the following points before agreeing on its membership:

- There were 11 primary school members with 10 votes;
- There was a vacancy for a secondary academy member;
- There were two PRU members with one vote;
- The last time Schools Forum membership was discussed that there had been a desire to move to a smaller number of Members;
- Early years had two representatives with one vote;
- There was an option to have a Local Authority member (Matt Marsden had in the past been a member of Schools Forum, however the regulations stated that no finance officer should be a member);
- Consideration of the need for the Roman Catholic Diocese vacancy, given the fact that this post had been vacant for a long time and that there were only two Catholic schools in the borough.

Alan explained that it was important to consider that Schools Forum may not exist in two to three years' time. In view of this fact, it may be sensible to continue with the current membership model and to retain the expertise of the present members.

Alan was of the opinion that Early Years should be entitled to two members and two votes, due to the fact that they represented a large number of children.

After careful consideration the Forum was in agreement with the proposals.

**RESOLVED That:**

- 1) There would be 11 primary members with 10 votes;
- 2) There would be two PRU members with 1 vote;
- 3) There would be two Early Years members with two votes;
- 4) There would be one member from the Local Authority, this would be the Head of Learning and Achievement;
- 5) The Roman Catholic Diocese member would remain;
- 6) The overall numbers would remain the same and there would be no length of office attached to the membership.

**37 FORWARD PROGRAMME**

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda page 43.

It was noted that some items had been on the forward plan for some time. Forum recognised that the service was under a lot of pressure and it may be necessary to prioritise the order of items.

After a brief discussion Forum decided that the *Five Year Plan* should be dropped from the forward plan as Schools Forum would probably not exist in five years' time.

The following items were agreed:

29 March

- Revenue Monitoring
- Pupil movement and lagged/double funding
- Review of SEN funding / High Needs Block
- Contingencies breakdown
- Pupil Growth
- Review of resource spaces
- Feedback on meeting in Westminster by Brian Prebble, Rivermead Primary Headteacher

24 May

- Foundry College
- Revenue Monitoring
- Final 2017/18 Budget

- Implication of new funding formula
- SEN funding and High Needs Block

The Chairman announced that this was Alan Stubbersfield last meeting with Schools Forum. The Chairman thanked Alan for his contribution, his attention to detail and all the support he provided to the Forum over the years.

The next meeting would be held at Charvil Piggott Primary School on 29 March 2017 at 9.30.

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