

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 13 JULY 2016 FROM 9.30 AM TO 10.40 AM**

Schools Representatives

Helen Ball	Primary Head - Polehampton Infant
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Brian Prebble	Primary Head - Rivermead Primary
Mandy Turner	Primary Head - Shinfield Infant
Julia Mead	School Business Manager - St Sebastian's CE Primary
Carol Simpson	School Business Manager - Colleton Primary
Mary Rome	Pupil Referral Unit - Foundry College Headteacher
Ginny Rhodes	Secondary Head - St Crispins
Janet Perry	Academy Business Manager - The Holt School
Mary Davies	Maiden Erlegh Academy
John Bayes	Governor - Foundry College - Chairman
Paul Miller	Governor - St Crispins - Vice-Chair
Ian Head	Governor - Aldryngton Primary

Non School Representatives

Anne Andrews	Oxford Diocese
James Taylor	Wokingham and Bracknell College
Richard Dolinski	Wokingham Borough Council Representative

Also Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic Services Officer
Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager
John Ogden, Head of Finance

Paul Miller, Vice-Chairman informed that he would be chairing the meeting at John Bayes' request. John had undergone a medical procedure and preferred not to chair the meeting on this occasion.

80 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Charlotte Wilkinson, Kerry Clifford, Liz Meek, Elaine Stewart and Alan Stubbersfield.

81 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 May 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

Item 75 – Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager explained that a new traded services brochure would come out in December which would include an option for academies to buy into the scheme for payment for supply of maternity cover.

Item 77 – a report about the Tribunals process was listed further on in the agenda. The Forum had received an update report which had been circulated previously with the minutes.

Item 78 – Donna explained that no change to the scheme for financing schools was necessary. This was because Graham Ebers, WBC Director of Finance and Resources had agreed a mechanism by which schools could obtain loans from WBC, provided they met a certain criteria.

82 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

83 REVENUE MONITORING

Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager presented the Revenue Monitoring report which was set out on agenda pages 11 -14.

The report provided details of the outturn position on the schools budget funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), including Education Funding Agency (EFA), Pupil Premium Grant and Universal Infant Free School Meal grant as at the end of May 2016.

Donna reminded members that the Forum had requested a revised down end of year position of (£500k) surplus. Donna stated that for the purposes of monitoring and being able to reconcile to the s251 statement, this monitoring report would start from the initial (£838) position.

Donna explained that the pupil growth / infant class sizes deficit of £255 displayed in the report related to the increase in growth fund due to the additional pre-opening costs required by the new secondary school in Arborfield. Donna informed that this was the actual final pre-opening cost and it was not expected to change.

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

- A question was raised about what benchmarking had taken place against the opening of a new secondary school and the running of a school. Donna explained that this was the first time the Local Authority had to open a new secondary school. In addition, this was an atypical site which already had a gym and a library. Donna stated that benchmarking against the running costs of a secondary school had been done;
- Ginny Rhodes expressed concern over the potential lack of expertise to negotiate the best deals for the school. Ginny also believed that there was unacceptable pressure in other local secondary schools as a result of the new school opening in September;
- Mary Davies stated that in her experience of opening a new school, the Trust would be working together with the Local Authority and providing central resources;
- The Forum was informed that Alan Stubbersfield was the project sponsor for the new school and he would be able to provide more information around the funding for the new school.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Alan Stubbersfield would be asked to give more details around the setting up of the new school in Arborfield;
- 2) The report be noted.

84 FIVE YEAR PLAN UPDATE

Paul Miller stood down as Chairman for this item only and John Bayes took the position of Chairman.

Donna explained that it had been agreed that the Forum would be presented a five year plan every year at its July meeting. The report set out on agenda pages 15-18 had been

revised since July 2015 and was as accurate as possible at this point in time. Donna emphasised that this could change should the new government decide to amend its policies. Donna stated that this plan reflected the impact of schools in the borough converting into academies over the next five years. More schools were expected to convert in the near future and this had an impact on the schools finance.

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

- Paul Miller expressed great concern over the figures presented in the report and how different these were from the previous report. Paul emphasised that the difference was in the order of millions and he was seeking clarity as to how this numbers had been calculated;
- Donna explained that the schools' funding had reduced and the schools allocation had reduced whilst the costs facing schools had increased, also the academisation of schools had had a huge impact;
- Donna stated that although there was a variation in numbers, a healthy surplus was projected every year, and this was a better position than other local authorities;
- Donna offered to set up a task and finish group to analyse this plan or to have meetings with members to explain the figures. Not all members felt this would be beneficial, but some members agreed to contact Donna;
- Donna stated that the figures had been worked out on the assumption that the pupil funding would remain the same, but this was not certain;
- Donna explained that once all schools converted to academies, this plan would become redundant as the money would go directly to the schools;
- Members felt that there was a need to understand in more detail why there was such a variation from the plan last year and the plan this year;
- In response to a question John Ogden, Head of Finance stated that the finance team would be able investigate the variation internally and provide the assurance that the Forum was seeking;
- Members expected that an explanation around growth fund would be included in the finance team's investigation;
- Donna referred to the upcoming consultation and the expectation that growth fund would become formulaic, in which case actual historical spend would be used to determine funds received by the Local Authority. This could have an adverse impact on any Local Authority that was opening new schools at an increasing rapid rate;
- Donna explained that the timeframe for the new schools' places in Earley, Woodley and Shinfield to open had been brought forward to this September 2016 as per Executive approval earlier in the year. This was in response to the Local Authority's statutory duty to provide school places;
- Members agreed that it would be useful to have a breakdown of all schools opening in the borough;
- Donna stated that once more schools converted to academies, the local authority would not be in a position to support the remaining maintained schools and therefore those schools would be in practical terms forced into academy status.

RESOLVED That the analysis of the variation between the 2015 and 2016 Five Year Plan would be presented to the Forum via email.

85 FUTURE OF FORMULA FUNDING NATIONAL/ LOCAL AND DSG

Donna Munday stated that the Consultation had not yet taken place; it was anticipated that this would happen in the summer. Donna expected that the consultation would involve schools block, high needs block and early years.

Donna urged the Forum members to respond to the Consultation and to express their opinions. Donna reassured the Forum that briefing sessions would be organised and a paper would be presented to Forum before the final submission of the Consultation.

RESOLVED That the verbal update be noted.

86 MECHANISM FOR WORKING WITH TRIBUNALS

The Chairman, Paul Miller stated that the report contained in the agenda provided an overview of the process for working with Tribunals. Although this was useful information, there were no suggestions in the report of changes to improve the system as requested by the Forum at its last meeting.

John Bayes suggested that as this issue only affected a small number of schools, it might be more productive if only the schools concerned met with the finance team to discuss the possibilities around this issue. The results could then be fed back to Schools Forum for information. Members were in agreement with this suggestion.

RESOLVED That: The schools affected by financial losses as a result of SEN Tribunal processes would meet with Wokingham Borough Council's finance team to discuss a possible solution to alleviate the financial burden.

87 FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda page 33.

Members noted with concern that certain items agreed at its last meeting were not included in the forward programme. After discussion it was agreed that the following items be included in the forward programme, as well as the items already listed in the report:

19 October

- Foundry College
- Education out of schools / fees for independent special schools
- Impact of pupil movement in schools (based on the September headteachers' count)

14 December

- Impact of pupil movement in schools (based on the October census)

Members requested that in the future a note be included with the agenda highlighting items that were likely to need a vote at the meeting.

Janet Perry raised concern over the lagged double funding of pupils as a result of pupils taking up places at new schools, but still being included in other schools' lists. The Forum asked to Donna to investigate and report back at the next meeting.