

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2017 FROM 9.30 AM TO 12.30 PM**

Schools Representatives

Helen Ball	Primary Head - Polehampton Infant
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Sally Hunter	Primary Head - Wescott Infant
Brian Prebble	Primary Head - Rivermead Primary
Sylvia Allen	School Business Manager - Hawkedon Primary
Julia Mead	School Business Manager - St Sebastian's CE Primary
Carol Simpson	School Business Manager - Colleton Primary
Sara Attra	Special School Head - Addington School
Ginny Rhodes	Secondary Head - St Crispins
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
Paul Miller	Governor - St Crispins - Chairman

Non School Representatives

Anne Andrews	Oxford Diocese
Richard Dolinski	Wokingham Borough Council Representative
James Taylor	Wokingham and Bracknell College
Mary Parker	Early Years Representative
Gail Prewett	Early Years Representative

Also Present

Hawa Bedwa, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Madeleine Shopland, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement
Katherine Vernon, Accountancy Assistant

17 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from John Bayes, Mary Davies, Ian Head, John Ogden, Maggie Segrove, Elaine Stewart and Mandy Turner.

18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 December 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the removal of the words 'and individual schools' (item 12).

18.1 Clarifications on questions arising at the last meeting

Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement took the Forum through a report regarding 2017-18 Financial Pressures arising from Education Services Grant removal, produced in response to questions raised at the December Forum meeting.

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

- In December, the Forum had considered a report about the removal of the Education Services Grant (ESG) from local authorities with effect from April 2017.

The report had also proposed stratagems to address this shortfall, including staff reductions in Learning & Achievement amounting to £279,000. The Forum had requested the production of a business plan outlining the budgetary position if the Forum agreed or disagreed to the proposals, what the services were and a judgement as to whether services were needed or could be cut.

- Alan Stubbersfield emphasised that further staffing reductions to the Learning and Achievement team to those already proposed would present insuperable service delivery problems, such that it was hard to envisage viable services being maintained.
- The funding to be withdrawn from 2017-18 was the £1.806m ESG. However the Retained Duties element of the ESG of £15 per pupil was to be rebased into the Central Services Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). In response to a question it was clarified that this would be calculated as a lump sum.
- It was anticipated that £373,000 would be available for retained and statutory duties, such as internal audit, for all schools.
- The regulations regarding and the approach taken towards school improvement had been amended and it was possible for maintained schools to de-delegate this. However, the Council was not proposing its de-delegation.
- National consultation had taken place on Early Years funding, with proposals for a new formula and a reduction of the top-slicing option available to local authorities, but not previously taken in Wokingham Borough Council. The top-slice was to be limited to 7% for 2017-18 and thereafter 5%. The proposal for Wokingham Borough Council was a top-slice of £370,000, amounting to approximately 4.08%.
- Gail Prewett questioned whether the 30 hours allocation had been included in the calculation. Alan Stubbersfield indicated that it had not. From September some Early Years setting may see a reduction.
- Derren Gray asked that it be clarified what services maintained schools received from Early Years that academies did not.

19 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

20 FINANCIAL PRESSURES ARISING FROM EDUCATION SERVICES GRANT REMOVAL

The Forum received a report regarding the financial pressures from Education Services Grant removal.

Discussion of this item took place during discussion of item 12.1 Clarification on questions arising at the last meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum supports proposals for a shared solution to the funding shortfall, including agreement to:

- i) Top-slice the Early Years Block as proposed by the Government's Early Years Consultation in September 2016;
- ii) Confirm the 100% de-delegation of the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant that has been re-based into the DSG Central Schools Block to continue delivering the Local Authority's Statutory Education duties as set out in Annex B of the DfE's National Funding Formula consultation in March 2016.

21 REVENUE MONITORING

The Forum considered the revenue monitoring report regarding Budget Monitoring Period 7 2016/17 which provided an update of the 2016/17 financial position. Appendix B referred to within the report was circulated at the meeting.

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

- The net overall year end surplus was still forecasted to be £552,000.
- Further detail was provided on Wokingham schools predicted surplus/deficit 2016/17, projected outturn carry forward from 2016/17 compared to the final carry forward from 2015/16 and movement from September 2015 forecast to final outturn 2015/16. The position for 2016/17 was more positive than that forecast in September 2016.
- It was noted that £340,000 had been identified for the October forecast for school specific contingencies. Forum members questioned whether this had been allocated and if so to what. Hawa Bedwa clarified that £230,000 had been allocated against five different activities, including a £120,000 internal recharge in contingencies for Foundry College. Forum members questioned whether this was historic or recurring. It was agreed that it would be helpful to receive a written breakdown of the contingency costs to better understand the actual spend on contingencies.
- Hawa Bedwa informed the Forum that how contingency was spent would be reported on going forwards.
- The Forum was informed that the Finance team would be undertaking a detailed analysis for all costs for 2018/19.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) schools continue to work with the Council's Finance Team to ensure a clear understanding of the 16/17 financial position and ensure that any emerging deficits are addressed in an appropriate manner.

22 FINAL PROFORMA SUBMISSION

The consideration of the final Proforma for submission to the Department of Education took place as part of the discussion of item 20 'indicative budgets sent out to schools' and the final Proforma submission figures circulated at the meeting.

23 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT STRATEGY

The Forum considered the Dedicated Schools Grant Strategy.

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

- The Forum was reminded that from 2017/18 the Education Services Grant would be reallocated to the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Forum was asked to agree to top-slice the Early Years Block to help provide retained services. The proposed top-slice figures and percentages detailed within the report were updated.
- It was noted that all reference to 'Statutory and Regulatory' duties should read 'Retained duties.'
- 2016/17 figures had been included against all Centrally Retained Dedicated Schools Grant proposals for clarification.

- Recommendations 3 and 12b) were removed.
- The Forum was recommended to agree to allocate £304,000 to the School Admissions Service in 2017/18, an increase on previous years. This increase was due to the reapportioning of miscellaneous items.
- The Forum was recommended to agree to allocate £1,300,000 for the Pupil Growth/Infant Class size fund for 2017/18 as per 2016/17. Forum members queried the likely spend in this area for the financial year. An update on pupil growth at Bohunt School, including published admission number and the impact on other secondary schools and their budgets, was requested and would be incorporated into 2018/19 analyses underway.
- The de-delegation of redundancy costs was discussed. It was explained that this would be a new cost to schools. £30,000 would be allocated as per the previous year. Alan Stubbersfield emphasised that should this function not be de-delegated redundancy costs would need to be found from the schools' individual budgets.
- Janet Perry questioned what the situation would be should redundancy costs for maintained schools exceed £30,000 if the de-delegation of redundancy costs were agreed. Alan Stubbersfield indicated that there would be an overspend. Officers were asked to ascertain if there been an overspend against redundancy costs that year.
- Forum members were of the view that £30,000 once divided between all schools would not provide significant provision for individual school's redundancy costs.
- Forum members requested a report for its next meeting explaining the process of the Apprenticeship Levy. Hawa Bedwa indicated that calculations had been made for each school which would be circulated to the individual schools.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Schools Forum agree the top-slice of £370,000 in 2017/18;
- 2) Schools Forum agree to transfer of the ESG settlement for £373,000 from the DSG to contribute towards funding the shortfall for the ESG removal and note the proposed use for the funds as detailed within the report;
- 3) Schools Forum agree to allocate £1,300,000 for the Pupil Growth/Infant Class Size Fund for 2017-18;
- 4) Schools Forum agree to allocate £4,000 for the costs associated with the Forum for 2017-18;
- 5) Schools Forum agree to allocate £304,000 to the School Admissions Service in 2017-18;
- 6) Schools Forum agree to allocate £265,000 for Support Costs in 2017-18;
- 7) maintained school members agree to de-delegation of School Specific contingencies for 2017-18;
- 8) maintained school members agreed to de-delegation of Insurance for 2017-18;
- 9) maintained school members agreed to de-delegation of Licences and subscriptions for 2017-18;

- 10 a) Members representing primary maintained schools agree to de-delegate Support to Underperforming Ethnic Minority Groups for 2017-18;
- 10b) Members representing secondary maintained schools agree to de-delegate Support to Underperforming Ethnic Minority Groups for 2017-18;
- 11) Members representing primary maintained schools agree to de-delegate a Contingency for Behaviour Support Services for 2017-18;
- 12a) Members representing primary maintained schools agree to de-delegate funding for Trade Union facilities time for 2017-18;
- 12b) Members representing secondary maintained schools agree to de-delegate funding for Trade Union facilities time for 2017-18.

24 DRAFT 2017/18 BUDGET WITH INDICATIVES

The Forum considered the draft 2017/18 budget with indicatives.

RESOLVED: That the Draft Budget 2017/18 as set out in the report be agreed.

25 DE-DELEGATION REPORT

The Forum received the de-delegation report. The report explained the regulations around de-delegation. Forum members had previously queried whether smaller primary schools in particular would be negatively impacted by de-delegating certain areas.

The Forum noted which services might be de-delegated including contingencies, insurance, licences/subscriptions, staff costs supply cover, support to underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners and behaviour support services.

Hawa Bedwa explained that an analysis of fixed and variable costings had been undertaken as per the Forum action point but most of the de-delegated items did not vary therefore cost changes were very small and the frequency for recalculations made the implementation unviable. Also current de-delegation items were based on delegations to all schools for £39,000 in 2013/14 therefore there would be no negative impact to smaller schools and the requested £33,000 was value for money as resulting savings to schools.

Janet Perry raised the possible implications of the national fairer funding review. Officers indicated that this would be considered.

RESOLVED: That the services listed within the report be de-delegated for 2017/18.

26 INDICATIVE BUDGETS SENT OUT TO SCHOOLS

The Forum considered the indicative budget sent out to Schools.

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

- Janet Perry commented that the budget would have an impact on maintained primary schools and questioned whether the Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) figures remained the same. She was informed that they did.
- In response to a question as to why consultation had not been carried out, Hawa Bedwa indicated that consultation on this matter was not a legal requirement and had not been carried out due to limited resources.

- Derren Gray stated that the budget was built on the 1:1:27 ratio and that the national ratio had now changed, the mean being 1:1:29 and the median 1:1:30. It was felt that schools needed stability moving forwards and now was not a suitable time to change the ratio. Consideration would be given to changing the ratio for the 2018/19 budget.
- Forum members questioned whether there was a cap applied to the budget. It was noted that caps had been removed in 2014.

RESOLVED: That the Local Authority Funding Reform Proforma 2017-18 set out in the report be agreed and submitted to the Department of Education.

27 EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION OUT OF SCHOOL / INDEPENDENT AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS

The Forum considered a report regarding expenditure on education out of school, independent and special schools.

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

- Following a previous request from the Forum, Officers clarified the sequence of events which had led to the current identified over commitment in the High Needs Block. This had arisen from independent special school placements.
- The report identified report trends over the last three years in Independent Special School placements. A decrease in the number of placements in 2015-16 had disguised the impact of an increase in average unit cost. An increase in the number of places in 2016-17 coupled with those costs had had a major impact on this year's commitments.
- Hawa Bedwa explained that £6.1m had been projected for the High Needs Block allocations for the 2017/18 budget. The proposed budget for this area at the start of the year had been £5.2m based on the number of placements. However, the number of placements had since increased from 109 to 111. In addition there had also been recategorisation of some individual children's needs.
- The Forum was informed that the actual spend for this area was likely to be £6.4m by the end of the financial year although it was hoped that this could be reduced to £6.1m.
- In response to concerns from the Forum, Hawa Bedwa commented that the original projection of £5.2m had been conservative.
- In response to a question Alan Stubbersfield indicated that the number of children and young people with high level needs was likely to increase. However, a number of those currently in placements were due to leave over the next few years.
- Ginny Rhodes questioned how the High Needs block was funded. Alan Stubbersfield commented that it was originally funded by census and would now be funded by precedent going forwards.
- Additional information regarding the SEN process, current placements and the projected number of children placed 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 was circulated at the meeting. The Chairman thanked Officers for the detailed information provided.
- Jay Blundell questioned the inclusion of Just Around the Corner as a placement provider as it was not a Department of Education registered provider. Officers were asked to clarify this issue.
- Jay Blundell expressed concern that there was an apparent reduction in allocation on the PRU line of the High Needs Block funding of £10,000. She commented that Foundry College should have 47 places but currently had 55 and that need for the

provision offered was increasing. Officers indicated that a detailed analysis would be undertaken of the cost centres relevant to Foundry College.

- The Forum questioned how the decision was taken over where a child was placed. Officers were asked to clarify this process. The Forum noted that the cost of a placement at St Joseph's for one child with severe learning difficulties was £255,000. The Forum was advised that higher cost placements tended to be residential. Placement availability and parental preference were also factors in where a child was placed. Officers would be undertaking a further collaborating exercise for High Needs Block pressures with neighbouring Councils to ensure value for money was being achieved for the identified current average cost per placement. If possible joint efforts to achieve benefits through economies of scale would be implemented.
- Helen Ball questioned whether there was sufficient support within the legal team to manage SEN tribunals and was informed that there was.
- With regards to SEN transport Gail Prewett questioned whether there were any instances where transport was funded and families also received Disability Living Allowance to cover transport costs. Officers were asked to clarify this issue.
- The Chairman questioned what would happen should a SEN Tribunal decision be made and sufficient funds be unavailable and was informed that a conversation would need to be had with the Council's Chief Finance Officer and the Department for Education.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

28 FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme.

Various clarifications had been requested throughout the meeting, to be reported back at the Forum meeting on 22 February.

The Chairman informed the Forum that it would be required to review its membership and constitution in future.

Derren Gray indicated that the Charvil Piggott School would host the Schools Forum meeting on 29 March 2017 9.30am.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Programme be noted.

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