

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
SCHOOLS FORUM  
HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2018 FROM 10.00 AM TO 11.58 AM**

**Schools Representatives**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Helen Ball      | Primary Head - Polehampton Infant                   |
| Ali Brown       | Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary               |
| Brian Prebble   | Primary Head - Rivermead Primary                    |
| Elaine Stewart  | Primary Head - Aldryngton 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          |
| Ginny Rhodes    | Secondary Head - St Crispins                        |
| 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              |
| Ben Godber      | Academy Headteacher - Bohunt                        |
| Keith McConaghy | School Business Manager - Oakbank                   |
| Emma Clarke     | Primary Head - Farley Hill                          |
| Paul Miller     | Governor - St Crispins - Chairman                   |
| John Bayes      | Governor - Foundry College - Vice-Chair             |

**Non School Representatives**

|                 |                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| UllaKarin Clark | Wokingham Borough Council       |
| James Taylor    | Wokingham and Bracknell College |
| Mary Parker     | Early Years Representative      |
| Gail Prewett    | Early Years Representative      |

**Also Present**

Luciane Bowker, Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Coral Miller, Interim Senior Finance Specialist, Schools  
Lynne Samuel, Senior Finance Specialist, People Services  
Jane Winterbone, Interim Assistant Director, Education  
Steve Nyakatawa, SEND Consultant

**30 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from: Anne Andrews, Derren Gray, Ian Head, Sally Hunter, Jonathan Peck, Janet Perry and Paul Senior.

**31 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 December 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**32 MATTERS ARISING**

**Service Trade Charges** – Paul Miller asked for clarification in relation to charges that were brought up part way through the year when there was no opportunity to react to it, not what was included or not. Lynn Samuel, Senior Finance Specialist agreed to discuss with John Ogden, Head of Finance and report back to Schools Forum.

**School Admissions** – Schools Forum requested a breakdown of the £300k allocated to school admissions and benchmarking with other local authorities. Coral Miller, Interim Senior Finance Specialist agreed to bring this information to the next meeting.

### **33 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

### **34 REVENUE MONITORING**

The Forum considered a report which was set out in agenda pages 17-20, detailing the schools' current financial position.

Coral Miller explained that the forecast as at 30 November 2017 showed an overspend of approximately £1.039m. There was an improvement of £42K on what was previously reported which reflected a small movement within the High Needs Block.

Lynne Samuel, Senior Finance Specialist stated that contingencies were shown in the report as fully utilized. The full contingency figures may not be 'spent'. It was understood that the sums in the Early Years contingency were still be passported to providers, so there would be further movements.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

### **35 CONTINGENCIES BREAKDOWN**

Coral Miller presented the report which was set out in agenda pages 21-22. Coral Miller explained that 2017/18 contingencies breakdown had not changed since it was last presented to the Forum.

Coral Miller stated that there were two schools which had applied to the contingencies fund and she anticipated that a third school might apply in February.

Jane Winterbone, Interim Assistant Director for Education stated that the third school was likely to be able to mitigate their circumstances in this financial year.

Paul Miller reaffirmed the commitment made by Officers that going forward the contingencies would expand to include other items such as the Growth Fund.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

### **36 EARLY YEARS UPDATE**

Coral Miller presented the report which was set out in agenda pages 23-24. Coral Miller informed that the same hourly rate was paid to all providers of Early Years. Wokingham had in 2017/18 passported 96% of the funding on to their providers, and from 2018/19 onwards all local authorities would be required to passport at least 95%.

Coral explained that this pass-through requirement ensured that the vast majority of government funding reached providers so that they could deliver the free entitlements which had been recently introduced.

Coral stated that the 95% included the following:

- Base rate funding for all providers;
- Supplements for all providers (excluding deprivation funding);
- Lump sum funding for Maintained Nursery Supplement (MNS);

- The top-up grant element of Special Educational Needs (SEN) inclusion funds paid to providers; and
- Contingencies funding

Coral Miller stated that the contingency of £229,000 had not changed for several years and perhaps should be referred to as a Providers Reserve Fund. The Department for Education (DfE) recommended the Council to hold an allocation of funds for future growth in numbers. This fund represented a provision for growth of 93 children a year at £2,462 per year (15 hours for 38 weeks of the year at an average hourly rate of £4.32).

Coral Miller explained that the funding for each Early Year's provider was based on three censuses, therefore the funding was adjusted three times a year to reflect any changes in provider numbers as per each census. The final budget was given in July.

In response to a question Coral Miller stated that it was not yet known what the take up of the free entitlement was.

Coral Miller informed that if there was any underspend in the contingencies, this was passed back to the providers. In response to a question Coral stated that if there was an overspend, this would be carried forward and the hourly rates would be revised.

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

- Mary Parker stated that parents had not been sufficiently aware of their entitlement of additional free hours of childcare last year, and the DfE website kept crashing when people tried to use it. Therefore, she believed that there would be a significant increase in the take up going forward;
- Jane Winterbone was of the opinion that Wokingham's take up was satisfactory but she also expected it to increase;
- Gail Prewett stated that if the hourly rate was reduced Wokingham would lose providers or providers would opt out of the scheme and not offer 30 hours. She stated that some providers were already having difficulties and operating at a loss;
- Paul Miller acknowledged that Early years were likely to face significant pressures in 2018/19 when the take up increases;
- Gail Prewett pointed out that with the number of new houses being built in the Borough, there would be a significant growth in demand which would add to the pressure;
- Coral Miller pointed out that there had been an increase in the hourly rate;
- Mary Parker stated that it was the first time that Wokingham Early Years budget had been top sliced so in real terms what was gained in one way was taken out by the top slicing; and
- Jane Winterbone explained that the service was looking very carefully at all the functions related to Early Years top slice, including holding a 0.9 vacancy and covering the loss of the Head of Early Years by line managing that area herself.

Paul Miller asked that a report containing information about the review of statutory duties in Early Years and future pressures be brought to the next meeting for discussion and analysis.

Schools Forum were in agreement that it made sense to change the name of this pot from Early Years' Contingency to Providers Reserve Fund.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) A report containing an assessment of Early Years current situation be submitted to the next meeting of Schools Forum;
- 2) Going forward the Early Years' Contingency Fund be referred to as Providers Reserve Fund;
- 3) The report be noted.

**37 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK - CONSULTATION**

Coral Miller presented the 2018/19 High Needs Block (HNB) Consultation paper which was set out in agenda pages 25-27.

Coral Miller explained that the HNB proposed allocation was £18.58m, however this did not include the 0.5% which was still awaiting approval from the minister. An overspend was expected and this would have to be carried over to the next year.

Coral Miller stated that strategies were in place to deal with the overspend, including a task and finish group.

Jane Winterbone stated that the first meeting of the HNB had already taken place. Jane was pleased to report that Steve Nyakatawa, SEND Consultant had been employed to help her with strategic work.

Jane Winterbone stated that it would take time to solve the overspend in the HNB. It had been identified that the most challenging issue was the Out of Borough placements in independent schools. That was because there was a regional shortage of specialist spaces.

Steve Nyakatawa would be looking at the Resource Base Review. One of the recommendations resulting from the review was the commissioning of new places in the Borough. However, it would be difficult to change children from places where they were already settled.

Jane Winterbone stated that the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) audit had been completed and was attached to the agenda.

**RESOLVED** That: the report be noted.

**38 SCHOOLS BLOCK BUDGET CONSULTATION**

Coral Miller presented the findings of a consultation which had been carried out in December to find out the views of Wokingham schools in relation to the proposed changes in the School Block factors for 2018/19 which had been influenced by the future introduction (2019/20) of the New Funding Formula (NFF).

Coral Miller drew attention to five changes as listed below:

| No. | Description - changes    | 17-18 budget | 18-19 budget | NFF   | Comment           |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1.  | Primary Prior attainment | 226.07       | 500          | 1,050 | Moving toward NFF |

|    |                                      |           |         |                |   |
|----|--------------------------------------|-----------|---------|----------------|---|
| 2. | Lump sum reduction                   | 175,000   | 150,000 | 110,000        | Moving toward NFF                           |
| 3. | Capping                              | 0%        | 3%      | 3%             | Move to the NFF                             |
| 4. | Minimum Funding Guarantee            | -<br>1.5% | 0%      | 0% to<br>-1.5% | To stop any school losing funding per pupil |
| 5. | Primary & Secondary Ratio adjustment | 1:1.27    | 1:1.28  | 1:1.29         | Moving toward the NFF                       |

Coral Miller went through the consultation responses that were listed in the report. The following comments were made during the discussion:

- Coral Miller stated that Wokingham had never had capping before, Members pointed out that Wokingham had had capping in the past;
- Coral Miller stated that a 3% capping was being suggested;
- The Task and Finish Group would be working over the next year to establish the impact of falling rolls;
- It was recognised that the number of responses to the consultation had been disappointing and that may be due to the timing. Coral Miller agreed to send future consultations earlier in the year, hopefully in November.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

### 39 DE-DELEGATED ITEMS 2018-19

Coral Miller explained that the 2018/19 De-delegated budget presented the same items as last year. She was seeking the approval of the Schools Forum maintained schools Members to the item.

Coral Miller clarified that the *staff costs supply cover* did not include long term sickness as stated in the report.

In relation to licenses and subscriptions Coral Miller explained that the DfE paid on behalf of the schools and then re-charged schools afterwards, this enabled schools to get a better rate.

Coral Miller stated that schools achieved a very good rate of insurance through the Local Authority.

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

- Coral Miller reported that it had been noticed that academies had not been charged for licences in previous years, this was now being corrected;
- Carol Simpson believed that schools were being charged twice or that there were two elements to the licensing charges, Coral Miller agreed to look into this as there should be only one charge for licences;
- Some Members expressed concern that the maternity cover was expensive;
- Members asked for clarification on the wording around the different types of cover;
- Jane Winterbone explained that the paper on page 37 provided clarity around the use of the Ethnic Minority Achievement funding. Jane was confident that it was good value for money;

- In response to a question Jane Winterbone offered to provide the numbers around the outcomes of ethnic minority pupils, she would circulate it with the minutes;
- Corrina Gillard asked if it was possible to look into the cost of de-delegated items in relation to the size of the schools, as opposed to every school being charged the same. Coral Miller agreed to look into unit costs rather than a lump sum for future calculations;
- Jane Winterbone stated that Emily Waddilove, Curriculum Development Advisor was having to manage a reduction in her budget and would be impacted if academies did not buy the service back from her;
- Jay Bludell confirmed that she was in the same position and would invite people to buy back her services at the same rate;
- In response to a question Coral Miller informed that the secondary phase did not buy into behaviour support services;
- Elaine Stewart stated that Foundry College provided behaviour support for both primary and secondary school children and asked if this was being sponsored by the primary phase only. Jay Blundell explained that secondary schools were commissioned separately;
- Jane Winterbone stated that secondary schools had chosen to opt out of behaviour support services, they paid for the services on the spot. That meant that Foundry College did not have a secure stream of income from secondary schools, which had an implication in continuity plans around staffing;
- In response to a question Jay Blundell stated that currently there were approximately 40 primary pupils and 15-20 secondary pupils at Foundry College;
- Elaine Stewart stated that as a Headteacher she valued the certainty of provision that buying into the behaviour support services provided, collectively all schools were enabling the provision offered by Foundry College, even if this was not always needed;
- Jay Blundell emphasised that primary schools did not subsidise the service provided to secondary schools;
- Ginny Rhodes stated that it was just easier for secondary schools to deal with each case separately and spot buy the service from Foundry College, and the service provided was much valued.

Members had a discussion around insurance costs and Coral Miller agreed to ask Dan Skinner, Insurance Finance Specialist to provide a statement to re-assure Schools Forum that schools were getting good value for money in relation to insurance.

#### **RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Schools Forum agreed to continue with the following de-delegated services for maintained schools:
  1. Contingencies
  2. Behaviour support services (for primary maintained schools only)
  3. Staff costs supply cover
  4. Licences and subscriptions
  5. Insurance
- 2) Clarification around the different types of staff cover would be provided to Schools Forum;
- 3) The total cost per school was:
  - Primary - £32,709
  - Secondary – £26,158

- 4) A statement of re-assurance that schools were obtaining a competitive rate for their insurance cover would be provided.

#### **40 SPLIT SITE CRITERIA**

Coral Miller presented the Split Site Criteria report which was set out in agenda pages 41-42. She explained that she had researched and used various criteria which she had found in the Gov.uk website to write the report. She had also used her experience with split sites in other local authorities.

Coral went through the proposed criteria contained in the report and the following comments were made during the discussion of the item:

- Paul Miller reminded the Forum that Derren Gray had raised this issue and this had been discussed at the last meeting, where it had been decided that Charvil Piggott should qualify for split site funding. At that meeting it had also been decided that a set of criteria should be adopted in case other schools decided to apply for split site funding in the future;
- Paul Miller shared with the Forum an email from Derren Gray which listed some research he had done into the distance criterion. The examples demonstrated that the distance criterion varied significantly from place to place. It was important to decide which set of criteria should be used and which parameters;
- John Bayes believed that distance should be the main criterion and that this should be less than the proposed 2 miles;
- There was a debate as what constituted a public highway; and
- Jane Winterbone point out that there were undoubtedly additional costs to running two sites, such as two caretakers, two receptions and travelling staff. She felt that the 2 miles criterion was not necessary fair as the distance did not change the extra costs in running two separate sites.

After much debate it was agreed that the distance should be changed to one mile and that this would be reviewed on a regular basis. Paul Miller suggested that in view of the adoption of these new set of criteria, Charvil Piggott should be contacted and prompted to apply to split site funding under the new criteria.

#### **RESOLVED That:**

- 1) The Split Site Criteria be adopted as proposed in the report with the distance changed to one mile;
- 2) The Split Site Criteria would be reviewed on a regular basis; and
- 3) Charvil Piggott will be offered the option to apply for split site funding under the adopted criteria.

#### **41 2018-19 SCHOOL BLOCK BUDGET**

Coral Miller stated that the 2018/19 School Block Budget report which was set out in agenda pages 43-52 was for information only.

Coral Miller explained that there had been a mistake in the financial tool that the DfE had sent, therefore this was not yet the final budget. The free school meal factor had been

doubled up so the final numbers had to be revised. However, this would have minimal effect because the school meals only represented 2% of the total.

Coral Miller explained that the approval of the request to move 0.5% from the 2018/19 Schools Block Budget to the High Needs Block had still not been received from the ministers, so the final budget was on hold. Once the final figures were available these would be circulated to Schools Forum. Paul Miller reminded attendees that Schools Forum had not approved this proposal.

**RESOLVED** That: the report be noted.

## **42 FORWARD PROGRAMME**

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda page 53.

The following items were added:

- 21 February
  - Early Years review
  - School Admissions breakdown
  - HNB Task and Finish Group review
- 28 March
  - Foundry College report

## **43 WOKINGHAM LEARNING PARTNERSHIP**

Jane Winterbone stated that there had been two scoping meetings of the Wokingham Learning Partnership. The purpose of the meetings was initiate a debate about the future of education in Borough when more schools become independent, and how best to have strategic discussions to achieve the desired outcomes.

Jane Winterbone made the following comments in relation to the Wokingham Learning Partnership:

- The Partnership was currently composed of: two Primary reps, one Secondary rep, one Special School rep, an Alternative Provider rep, one College rep and two Early Years reps;
- The Partnership was seeking an independent chair to bring objectivity and challenge;
- The Local Authority had instigated this partnership and was moving from being a leader to being a partner;
- It was hoped that the partnership, with the independent chair would put together a briefing stating what they were planning to achieve;
- The Partnership would set out a consultation to find out what was the ambition for the Borough. At the moment it was not easy to identify what was ambition for the Borough as a whole;
- The group would report to the Children and Young People's Partnership;
- Any safeguarding issues would be reported to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board;
- The Partnership was education focused, for 0-25 year olds; and
- Teaching schools would take part in the partnership.

Paul Miller thanked Jane Winterbone for her update and asked that Schools Forum be kept informed on the development of the Wokingham Learning Partnership.

**RESOLVED** That: the verbal update be noted.

**44 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as appropriate.

**45 EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLAN AUDIT REPORT SUMMARY**

This item was discussed in a part 2 session.

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