

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
SCHOOLS FORUM  
HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2015 FROM 9.00 AM TO 11.55 AM**

## **Schools Representatives**

Phil Armstrong	Maintained Nursery Headteacher
Helen Ball	Primary Head - Polehampton Infant
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Louisa Gurney	Primary Head - Emmbrook Junior
Sally Hunter	Primary Head - Wescott Infant
Brian Prebble	Primary Head - Rivermead Primary
Elaine Stewart	Primary Head - Aldryngton Primary
Ginny Rhodes	Secondary Head - St Crispins
Ann Keane-Mayer	Secondary Head - Waingels College
Liz Meek	Special School Head - Addington School
Mary Rome	Pupil Referral Unit - Foundry College Headteacher
Derren Grey	Academy Headteacher - The Piggott School
Janet Perry	Academy Business Manager - The Holt School
John Bayes	Governor, Chairman
Nick Dyer	Governor Vice Chairman
Paul Miller	Governor
Ian Head	Governor

## **Non School Representatives**

Ian Pittock	Wokingham Borough Council
Charlotte Wilkinson	Early Years Forum

## **Also Present**

Matthew Marsden, Service Manager, Finance  
Tricia Harcourt, Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Luciane Bowker, Democratic Services Officer  
Donna Munday, Schools Finance Officer  
Linda Orr, SEN Team Manager  
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director Learning and Achievement  
John Wood, Programme Manager, Children's Services

### **1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** That John Bayes, (Governor representative) be elected as Chairman of the Schools Forum for the 2015/2016 academic year.

It was noted that Anne Keane-Mayer would be in attendance of the meeting until the issue of the Forum's membership was resolved.

Tricia Harcourt announced that this was her last meeting as she was due to retire. The Forum wished Tricia well on her retirement and thanked her for her contribution to the Forum over the years.

### **2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** That Nick Dyer, (Governor representative) be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the 2015/2016 academic year.

### **3 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Anne Andrews, Dominic Geraghty and Clare Sheppard.

### **4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 20 May 2015 were confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 15 July 2015 were confirmed subject to the following change: That resolution number 2 on page 11 should change the word 'approve' to 'recommend for approval' as set out below:

#### **RESOLVED:**

2) That the Schools Forum may not be willing to recommend for approval a budget for 2016/17 which includes a £1.2m cut to the AWPU.

The following comment was made regarding the 15 July 2015 Minutes:

- On page 9 of the Agenda, the 9<sup>th</sup> bullet point correctly reflected the discussion that occurred at the meeting. However, Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager, clarified that in fact, license deficits could be allowed with the approval of the Local Authority, provided that a programme for recovery was in place.

### **5 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

### **6 MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM**

The Forum considered the Membership of the Schools Forum report as set out on Agenda pages 19-22. Tricia Harcourt, Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the report and explained that due to Waingels College change to Academy, it was necessary to review the composition of the Forum. Tricia explained that Ann Keane-Mayer, Waingels Headteacher was no longer able to be a Member of the Forum as a Secondary Head representative. Also Mike Hutchinson, Waingels Governor, was no longer able to continue as a governor representative.

Tricia explained that it was expected that the Academy's Trust would elect its own representatives and not the Secondary Federation.

Academies and secondary school representatives reported that the Secondary Federation had indicated that they would be very happy for Ann Keane-Maher to represent either Academies or Maintained Secondary schools going forward and therefore the Forum agreed to Ann to take part in the meeting.

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

- Tricia clarified that under the Regulations there was no stipulation to have separate primary and secondary academy representatives; the requirement was limited to academy's representatives.
- It was explained that the membership of the Forum should reflect the local profile. The decisions relating to the composition of the Forum had always been made in consultation with the Forum.

- Tricia stated that Anne Andrews, representative from the Oxford Diocese had recently been appointed to the Forum. She had sent her apologies to this meeting.
- It was noted that there was a member appointed from further education, however this person had not been regularly attending the meetings.
- It was explained that in terms of membership representation, the 'Early Years' fell under the Non-school category.
- It was recognized that the Regulations were not up to date with the recent increase in funding received by early years.
- It was noted that the estimated pupil numbers listed on page 20 did not include 6th Form pupils.
- The Forum requested that a more detailed breakdown of pupil numbers, including maintained nurseries figures be provided in future reports.
- The Forum would like to receive a 'membership proposal' report containing the exact numbers of members to be represented in each category in order to make a decision on the membership of the Forum.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) a membership report containing more prescriptive indication of the recommended representation numbers be presented to the Forum at the next meeting on 21 October 2015.

**7 SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS ALERT**

The Forum received a verbal update from Linda Orr, Special Education Needs (SEN) Manager on the SEN provision in the borough.

Linda went through the most up to date numbers as follows below:

- Two children reported on at last Forum had moved to independent special school placements, however the cost of placements came in at £100K less than projected;
- New academic year placements from September:
  - One child had a sudden change in placement due to closure of a nearby independent special school and the new school would require weekly boarding placement costing and additional £50K;
  - One child had moved to Treloar School for secondary school provision from a maintained special school, increasing placement costs of £60K;
  - Two children had started at the new free special school for ASD in Maidenhead at parental preference with a neutral cost to the DSG;
  - One child started at Thames Valley special school for autism, costs at this school have increased from £22K to £34K;
  - One child, pending on Tribunal, placed in 52 week Independent special school provision, jointly funded with Social Care
  - Two children currently unplaced and two of whom placement search continued, costs were difficult to project as the spectrum of costs within the ISS sector could vary enormously as demonstrated by the first report.

**RESOLVED** That: the report on the Special Education Needs be noted.

## **8 EXCEPTIONAL PLACE SEN FUNDING**

Linda Orr gave a verbal update on the current financial situation regarding the exceptional place SEN funding allocated by the Moderation Panel.

The new system for exceptional funding agreed earlier in the year was introduced to the borough at the end of last term and cluster panels would be able to allocate requests for up to £2K. The Borough Moderation Panel would continue to consider requests for higher amounts.

The allocation for the last two terms had been about £50K and there was around £100K in the budget available for the next two terms.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) further clarification on the issue of how the receipt of Pupil Premium affects the Borough Moderation Panel's allocation decision be provided to the Forum;
- 3) that a written report be included in the future.

## **9 REVIEW EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE EWS**

The Forum received and reviewed the Education Welfare Service (EWS) report which was set out on Agenda pages 23-24. Alan Stubbersfield went through the report and explained the current situation regarding this EWS. The Forum was informed that the service was in the process of drawing up a paper for consultation which would outline the range of activities with costed models for delivery, including those in addition to statutory requirements.

It was noted that the Forum wasn't being asked to provide additional funding.

**RESOLVED:** That the proposal for consultation be noted and that the report be brought back to the December meeting.

## **10 REVENUE MONITORING**

The Forum received and considered a Revenue Monitoring report which was set on pages 3-6 of the supplementary Agenda. Donna Munday presented the report in its new format and tabled a report in the old format. Donna explained that this new version was very time consuming and she didn't feel this was a practical option going forward.

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

- Some Members preferred the old format but there was a general consensus that Members of the Forum needed to have a better understanding of the report, so it was suggested that a supplementary paper should be produced with explanations of what is covered under each budget line;
- Some Members preferred the new format but asked that it should include lines for better visibility;
- It was mentioned that it was important to have clear information about the budget that the Forum had authority to make decisions on;
- It would be good to colour coordinate the report and include previous year's figures;
- It was suggested that Donna and her team arranged a meeting with Paul Miller to discuss the options regarding the format presentation of the report;

- Donna pointed out the reduction in funding to post 16 element 2 DSG
- It was noted that the figures on page 3, paragraph 4 should have brackets as they are surplus;
- It was predicted that by the end of 2015/16 there would be a surplus of £468K.

Donna reported that the final budget report presented at the March 2015 Forum showed an outturn position of (£807k) as at the end of March 2016. It was predicted that by the end of 2015/16 there would be a surplus of £468k, which meant a £171k improvement since the last Forum. It was also noted that the post 16 element 2 DSG had been reduced from £546k to £536k.

The Forum asked for a benchmarking exercise to be produced on the composition of our Schools Forum compared with neighbouring LA's.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) Donna and Matt arrange a meeting with Paul Miller to discuss presentation formats;
- 3) a supplementary paper be included with the Revenue Monitoring report.
- 4) benchmarking the Forum's composition comparing with neighbouring Local Authorities.

**11 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 5 YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Forum received and considered a report giving details of the requirements for growth provision within the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) and an analysis on internal recharges; this was set out on Agenda pages 25-32.

The Forum welcomed the proposal to review this report annually as it enabled Headteachers to prepare for any difficulties that might arise in the future.

Matthew Marsden tabled a revised forecast relating to the new secondary school to replace table on page 27. One of the forecasts within the report had been made with the predicted admission number of 90, it was noted that the Published Admission Number was 180. After discussion, it was clarified that no minimum number of pupils was required to open the new school.

In discussion of the item the following points were made:

- Members asked that as soon as the data containing parental preferences was available that this information was passed to the schools to help Headteachers to prepare their organisation plans accordingly. It was understood that the data would be a rough estimate. It was feared that as a result of the new secondary school, the pupil numbers in some other secondary schools would be reduced in future years, consequently affecting the schools' budget negatively.
- Matt stated that the new school was not the only reason for the deficit and it was expected that most schools would receive reductions in funding.
- It would be useful to know what proportion of the deficit related to the new secondary school.
- It would be useful to know the reality of the impact of potential cuts to each individual school.

- The Forum questioned about DFE regulations on deficit, Donna would clarify it at the next meeting.
- Officers indicated that it was hoped that the indicative budgets would be provided by the end of November. Academies and Free Schools were asked to provide Officers the data of the pupil census as soon as possible to enable the preparation of the report.
- It was pointed out that the Early Years requirement to increase childcare to 30 hours per week had not been taken into account.

The Forum asked that more options to deal with the deficit to fund the new secondary school be explored, such as:

- Spreading the cost of the deficit over a longer period of time, maybe 20 years;
- Borrowing to cover the deficit in the short period until the school starts to receive income.

Donna suggested that it may be possible to borrow money from the schools' current surplus. The Forum was sympathetic to this idea and would like to explore it.

It was noted that Wokingham had the worse funding per pupil in the country. It was reported that John Redwood was lobbying with the Central Government to change this situation. It was suggested that schools could engage with parents to join efforts to put pressure on the government to improve the situation for Wokingham.

The section of the report giving information on internal recharges was considered. It was suggested that it would be clearer to have one line in the budget showing the consolidated internal charges amount.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the options that were discussed to deal with the deficit be presented to the Forum at the November meeting;
- 2) schools be informed of parental preferences by November if possible.

## **12 POTENTIAL IMPACTS UPON SCHOOL BUDGETS 2016/17**

The Forum received and considered a report on the potential impacts upon school budgets 2016/14 which was set out on the Supplementary Agenda pages 7-10.

The Forum discussed the scenarios listed in the report and decided to discard Scenario 1. The Forum suggested to consult with the Section 151 Officer (the Council's Chief Finance Officer) regarding deficit and explore the option of borrowing money.

It was mentioned that the result of the Consultation should be considered when composing the proposals.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Scenario 1 be discarded;
- 2) Section 151 Officer be consulted on deficit;
- 3) Proposals be presented taking into account the results of the Consultation.

### **13 CONSULTATION**

Donna informed the Forum that a borough wide consultation was now underway and responses were required by 30 September. This consultation was upon the funding formula that would be used for the financial year 2016/17. Donna had three briefings in her diary that were open to all who would like to attend.

The Forum was also informed that there was a national consultation taking place which was also centred upon the funding formula for 2016/17.

Donna stated that she would bring a draft response on behalf of WBC to next meeting.

**RESOLVED** That: a report on the responses to the Wokingham consultation be presented at the next meeting.

### **14 EXCESS BALANCES - FUTURE USE CRITERIA**

The Forum received and considered a report giving details of excess balances and the future use criteria, this was set out on the supplementary Agenda pages 11-12.

Following the discussions at the July meeting the recommendation that the Excess Balance Clawback Scheme be discontinued and an amendment to the Scheme for Financing Schools be implemented was agreed.

**RESOLVED** That: the Forum endorses the recommendation to no longer operate the Excess Balance Clawback Scheme.

### **15 FORWARD PROGRAMME**

The Forum considered and noted the Forward Programme of work and dates of future meetings as set out on Agenda pages 13-14.

The next meeting will be held on 21 October, 9.15am at Charvil Piggot School, Park Lane, Charvil RG10 9TR. The following items to be included in the Agenda for the next meeting:

- The Membership of the Forum (with specific numbers) report to be included to the next meeting.
- The Indicative Budgets and Primary Strategy (focusing in the Earley and Woodley area).

The dates of future meetings were noted:

21 October, 18 November, 16 December, 20 January, 24 February and 16 March.

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