

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FORUM
HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2015 FROM 9.25 AM TO 11.40 AM**

Schools Representatives

Phil Armstrong	Maintained Nursery Headteacher
Helen Ball	Primary Head - Polehampton Infant
Ali Brown	Primary Head - Nine Mile Ride Primary
Elaine Stewart	Primary Head - Aldryngton Primary
Ginny Rhodes	Secondary Head - St Crispins
Liz Meek	Special School Head - Addington School
Mary Rome	Pupil Referral Unit - Foundry College Headteacher
Derren Gray	Academy Headteacher - The Piggott School
Janet Perry	Academy Business Manager - The Holt School
John Bayes	Governor, Chairman
Paul Miller	Governor
Ian Head	Governor

Non School Representatives

Matthew Mardesn	Finance Business Partnering Manager
Ian Pittock	Wokingham Borough Council
Clare Sheppard	Early Years Forum

Also Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic Services Officer
Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager
Rob Stubbs, Head of Finance
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director Learning and Achievement

16 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Anne Andrews, Nick Dyer, Dominic Geraghty, Louisa Gurney, Brian Prebble and Charlotte Wilkinson.

17 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 September 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

19 MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

The Forum considered the report that was circulated containing information and a proposal regarding the Schools Forum membership.

Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director Learning and Achievement went through the report outlining the need to review the membership of the Forum in view of the recent increase in the number of academies in the borough.

It was a requirement that the composition of the Forum should reflect and be proportionate to the number of pupils in each school, academy and phase. The regulations stated that

school members and academy members must together comprise at least two thirds of the membership of the Forum.

Special schools, pupil referral units and nursery schools must be represented in the Forum.

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

- It was noted that the imbalance in the number of governors for certain categories was due to a lack of volunteers. This was something that Officers could try and address once the final composition was agreed;
- Members felt that there was inaccuracy in the tables presented in the report. Alan recognised that it had been a struggle to produce the report in time for the meeting and that more work needed to be done to improve the report before the next meeting;
- Officers noted that neighbouring authorities had fewer members in their forums;
- Some members questioned the rationale for not taking into account the sixth form pupils in the calculations and pointed to regulations supporting this;
- Donna quoted other regulations excluding sixth form numbers and explained that the sixth form was not funded by the Dedicated School Grant and therefore the Forum could not influence or make decisions on sixth form funding. Sixth form was funded by the Education Funding Agency based on learner hours rather than pupil numbers;
- The October census would be used for the next report but it was anticipated that the numbers wouldn't vary significantly;
- There could be a distinction between the number of members and the number of votes in each category;
- According to the regulations only certain people had speaking rights, but the chair was minded not to prevent due contributions from interested parties;
- The main purpose of the membership review was to ensure that the Forum had enough expertise to make good decisions for all the schools in the borough.
- It was important to agree and appoint members to the Forum before the final budget submission;
- In order to save time at the next meeting, it was agreed that discussions about the new structure take place via email;
- Members asked that the report be produced in sufficient time to allow the members to consider it.

Alan suggested that the Forum considered carefully the proposal and its implications and that a decision should be taken at the next meeting in November. Alan encouraged members to send him their views and suggestions around the composition of the Forum.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) An update report be produced and circulated to members of the Forum;
- 2) Discussions and suggestions would be carried out before the next meeting via email;
- 3) The final agreement on the membership would be sought at the next meeting on 18 November 2015.

20 RESULTS OF CONSULTATIONS

Donna Munday, Schools Finance Manager presented the report which was set out on agenda pages 13 to 28. The report contained the key findings from the 2015 funding consultation. Donna stated that the response had been good at 71% borough wide.

Donna explained that where questions were missing this was because the response to the question before had been sufficient and did not prompt a further response.

Donna stated that she would circulate the labels to appendix A which were omitted from the report.

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

- The proforma presented in Appendix C for the October submission was a draft as it was not yet know what the eventual funding allocation would be;
- This draft proforma maintained all the previous rates from 2015/16 as a basis of making a comparison with the current year;
- That some schools were currently running at a deficit, it was important that schools worked within the DSG budget;
- There was ongoing lobbying to try and secure better funding from central government but it was uncertain if and when this would happen;
- There was anxiety about the limited funding for schools;
- The proposed proforma maintained the primary secondary ratio of 1:1.27
- It was recognised that both primary and secondary schools faced difficulties in managing a tight budget and it was important to make the primary/ secondary ratio as fair as possible;
- It was suggested that a piece of work be carried out analysing the primary secondary ratio comparing 1:1.26 / 1:1.27 / 1:1.28 and its implications;
- The results of the consultations should be taken into account in the proforma;
- It was not expected that the funding was going to be significantly different from previous years;

After much deliberation the general consensus was that it would be useful to have an early indication of the budget even if this had to be changed when the final allocation was known. It was up to each school to decide how or whether to use this information.

Members requested more detail on the responses to the consultation, including the percentage of secondary/ primary/ academies/ special schools that replied to be circulated with the minutes. Also a further analysis and discussion on the responses given to questions 9, 15, 20 and 24 was necessary before a decision could be made.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Forum accepted and noted the results of the consultation;
- 2) The adoption of the proforma for the October submission was agreed;
- 3) The schools should be sent the early indicative budgets;
- 4) Questions 9, 15, 20 and 24 will be discussed at the next meeting.

21 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ALERT

The Forum considered the report set out on agenda page 29 which gave an update on the independent school placements since the last meeting.

RESOLVED That: The report be noted.

22 REVENUE MONITORING

Donna Munday presented the revenue monitoring report which was set out on agenda pages 31 to 34. Donna stated that there had been an improvement of 51K since the previous report. The final budget report presented at the March 2015 forum showed an outturn position of (£807k) as at the end of March 2016. The forecast as at the end of September was (£519k).

It was noted that although there had been an improvement, the in-year deficit position had not changed; as more DSG money was being spent than it was being received.

Donna had met with Paul Miller, Southfields and St Crispins governor to discuss the presentation of the report and asked if the Forum was happy with the new format. Members of the Forum were satisfied with the new format and made a few suggestions to further improve the presentation.

In response to a question asking if the change to Contingency was due to the Waingels academy conversion; Donna stated that she had anticipated Waingels conversion to academy when calculating the NNDR and that there had been no impact to contingency. The impact to contingency was due to the standard in year NNDR revaluation by the Valuations Office, which occurred at this time each year.

RESOLVED That: The report be noted.

23 DRAFT PROFORMA SUBMISSION

The draft Proforma which appeared in appendix C of item 20 of the agenda was proposed as the submission from the Local Authority to the DfE which was due on 30 October 2015.

RESOLVED That: the draft Proforma be submitted to the DfE as the principles upon which the final January submission would be based.

24 REVISED FIVE YEAR PLAN

Matt Marsden, Finance Business Partnering Manager went through the report that was circulated to the Forum. The report considered the possibility of a loan to the DSG to spread the cost of investment over a longer period of time and further protect schools from reductions in funding.

It was noted that the option of borrowing would not be beneficial to all schools, potentially 21 schools would not benefit. The loan option was not recommended, as explained on the report.

Matt noted that the Section 151 Officer had agreed to a deficit budget, provided that a plan was put in place to balance the books in due course. In view of this the Forum thanked Matt for his work and decided not to pursue the borrowing option.

RESOLVED That:

1) The report be noted;

2) The recommendation be agreed.

25 DE-DELEGATION OF BUDGETS

Donna Munday pointed out that the de-delegation of budgets was set out as Appendix D, page 27 of the Agenda.

A decision on the de-delegation of budgets was going to have to be made by January before the final budget submission.

During discussion it was noted that most Members would like to continue to de-delegate to: Behaviour support services and support to underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report be noted;
- 2) A final decision on de-delegation will be made in time for the January budget submission.

26 DRAFT 2016/17 BUDGET

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

27 FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forum considered the report that had been circulated via email by Donna Munday.

The forward programme was agreed, with the addition of the following items to the next meeting:

- The Schools Forum Membership;
- Consultation results, including more details on the responses and a review of questions 9-15-20-24;
- Progress report on alternative provision review;
- Virtual School review.

Members asked that in the future reports should be sent well in advance of the meeting to allow time to read the reports.

Matt Marsden announced that this was his last meeting; he was standing down as member of Schools Forum as he was taking on a new role at the Council. The chairman thanked Matt for his work and wished him well in his new job. Matt stated that Rob Stubbs, Head of Finance would be attending the meetings of the Forum in the future.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be at 9.00 at the Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham Borough Council.

The dates of future meetings were noted:

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

28 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

Ginny Rhodes, St Crispins Headteacher brought attention to the first bullet point on page 9 of the agenda and the action arising from it. Councillor Pittock agreed to review it and report back to the Forum.

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