

Hammersmith & Fulham
Schools Forum
Draft Minutes
 Tuesday, 14 January 2020

Present

Voting Members	Non-Voting Members
<p>Primary School Heads Claire Fletcher, St Paul's CE Primary Michelle Barrett, Randolph Beresford and Vanessa Nursery</p> <p>Academies and Free Schools Gary Kynaston, Hammersmith Academy (Chair) Clare Wagner, West London Free School Daniel Upfield, Ark Swift Primary Academy</p> <p>Alternative Provision Academies Krishna Purbhoo, Exec Head of TBAP</p> <p>Non-Schools Members Jane Gleasure, Little People (EY PVI)</p>	<p>School Representatives Tim Scott, Fulham College Aidan Smith, LA Governor at Jack Tizard Jessica Mair, John Betts</p> <p>Trade Union Representatives Dave Anderson</p> <p>Observers Alex Parker, Business Manager Jo Chapman, Business Manager Stacy George, Business Manager</p>

Quorum is over 40% of voting members in attendance. The Forum currently has 12 voting members. 7 voting members attended the meeting (58.3%).

H&F Officers
Jacqui McShannon, Director of Children's Services Tony Burton, Head of Finance, Children's Services & Education Jan Parnell, Assistant Director of Education Kevin Gordon, Assistant Director of Assets, Operations and Programmes Mandy Lawson, Assistant Director SEN and Disabilities (SEND) Kevin Morris, Secondary Advisor and 14-19 Development David Abbott, Clerk

1. Welcome, Introductions and Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and led a round of introductions (attendance is listed above).

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Apologies

Apologies were received from Wendy Aldridge, Sulivan Primary.

Minutes of the previous meeting

Action 1 (page 4) - Officers noted that the draft letter would be updated with feedback from this meeting. The Chair asked if there was a way to share the information in the letter about the challenging financial circumstances in the education system more widely. He asked for it to be forwarded on to Central Government.

Action 2 (page 7) - Officers noted that the High Needs Block was on the agenda.

Action 3 (page 7) - The disapplication request was also on the agenda.

RESOLVED

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Early Years Block Budget Update 2020/21

Tony Burton (Head of Finance, Children's Services) presented the report on the Initial Allocation of Early Years Block funding for 2020/21 based on January 2019 census numbers. The report explained the impact of the allocation on the participation model for all providers. The focus was on the funding for the 3 and 4 Year Old offer and the steps required for setting the 2020/21 Early Years budget.

Tony noted that there had been a modest increase in the Early Years DSG funding rate, equivalent to an additional 8p per hour.

Tony explained that more information on the SEN Inclusion Fund (including costs and suggestions of how best to balance funding) would be presented to the Forum at the next meeting in March. The fund was currently set at £300k but it may need to grow if demand on the budget exceeds that figure.

The Chair asked how best to feed into that work. Jan Parnell (Assistant Director of Education) said the Early Years Strategy was going out to consultation for a six-week period at the end of January. The Council had recently appointed a new Early Years lead who was currently meeting stakeholders. Jan Parnell added that officers were also streamlining the process to make it less onerous for schools to apply for funding - e.g. schools could apply on a group rather than an individual basis etc.

Tony discussed the central services budget in section 4 of the report. A forum member asked how the £80k for the finance team in the central services block had been calculated. Tony explained that it was based on staff time that service the finance elements of Early Years work. Previously this was picked up by the central services block, but officers were looking to regularise the budget. The DfE had signalled their intention to claw the central services block back at some point.

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Jane Gleasure commented that the level of SEND in the borough was the most significant issue for the PVI sector. There was very little training or funding available. She said there was just one support worker spread between 75 nurseries. At one of her nurseries 15 percent of children had SEND – at the other it was around 10 percent. Michelle Barrett agreed that the need was outstripping the resources available.

Jane added that there was good access to the speech and language therapy service. Concerns were raised about the issuing of funds allocated through EHCPs. Mandy Lawson noted that this should not be happening and agreed to follow this up.

ACTION: Mandy Lawson

Michelle and Jane raised the issue of access to enhanced or full-time places for vulnerable children including those who are CP and CIN. It was noted that a system for the LA's allocation of additional support for these children remains outstanding.

Claire Fletcher said schools with nurseries were struggling to have two qualified teachers in nurseries.

Jan Parnell asked that all of these points were including in the letter. The Chair added that this area needed real focus from the Council.

Mandy Lawson informed members that as part of the consultation on the SEN Inclusion Fund it is essential that officers got accurate data on the numbers of children, this will support the LA to direct resources at an appropriate level.

RESOLVED

The recommendations and next steps in the report were noted.

3. High Needs Block Update

Tony Burton (Head of Finance, Children's Services) presented the report on the High Needs block position and the medium-term position with respect to funding and expenditure. He noted that the DfE had informed officers in November 2019 that they intend to begin clawing back the central services allocation. Officers would be raising this with the DfE next month.

Tony noted that there was an overspend of £5.8m in the current year. Paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 gave examples of what kinds of expenditure the funding covered.

Tony noted that H&F was the beneficiary of additional funding and said, if this was an indication of how Government rebalances the High Need Block in future then it was a promising step. He would give further updates as this developed.

A member noted that the forum had previously asked officers for more specific information about the impact of not approving the disapplication – and the report made that clear. Tony noted that the funding gap would increase to £3m next year if the disapplication wasn't approved.

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Michelle Barrett said some EHCPs were very prescriptive with very expensive provision that wasn't always necessary in Early Years.

Tony highlighted the alternate provision section of the report and officers noted that the reshaping of TBAP and alternate provision in the borough had been challenging but the Council was committed to working as flexibly as possible towards an outcome that would benefit schools more than the current static model.

Tony added that officers would continue to work with the ESFA to understand future funding and lobby for better position for H&F.

The Chair then moved on to the recommendation for the disapplication request. The Forum took a vote on the recommendation. The decision was unanimous in favour of the disapplication (all 7 present voting members of the forum and 4 of the 4 present mainstream schools voting members voted for the proposal).

RESOLVED

Schools Forum agreed the disapplication request of 1% or circa £1.05m of the schools block provisional allocation for the 2020/21 financial year as a key element of the strategy to close the gap over the medium term.

4. Schools Block Budget 2020/21 - Final Proposed Authority Proforma Tool

Tony Burton (Head of Finance, Children's Services) presented the report which provided an update on final proposed modelling following notification of final 2020/21 financial year School Block allocations by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in late December 2019. He noted it had also been covered at recent budget workshops with schools.

Tony highlighted that the 2021 schools block allocation had improved from provisional allocation due to an increase in growth funding (described in 1.4 of the report).

A member asked if there would be any minimum funding guarantee in future years with the national funding formula fully implemented. Tony said the Council didn't know yet.

Tony noted that the report recommended Model 3 which used area cost adjusted national Schools Block NFF rates and increased each rate by 7.06%. It assumed a 1% transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs Block and 0.5% Minimum Funding Guarantee factor rate.

Tim Scott noted that the comparison table made it seem as though most secondary schools were worse off under Model 3 than Model 2. He asked if there was an argument apply a different percentage in Key Stages 3 and 4 to even it out. Members also questioned the use of FSM6 over FSM numbers.

Tony explained that the proposed model 3:

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- ensures a move towards the NFF – albeit at proposed local factor rates set 7.06% above the NFF factor rates after area cost adjustment.
- distributes funding via NFF funding factors linked to school census in a way that is clear and transparent and linked with weighting of factor funding set out in the NFF for 2020/21
- Avoids passing very high levels of funding through the MFG rather than NFF factors
- results in £1.5m of MFG funding allocation at the 0.5% positive level
- The move to 2020/21 NFF adjusted rates provides a significant key stage 4 AWP/PU factor increase versus the current rate.
- that the choice in the formula was to use FSM or FSM 6 – you couldn't use both. Officers recommended keeping with FSM6.

A member noted that the Council's universal free school meals initiative meant it was very difficult to get people to sign up to the official 'Free School Meals' so those numbers would be off. Another member asked if the fully implemented National Funding Formula would need FSM numbers. Tony to check.

ACTION: Tony Burton

A member asked if it was possible to show the comparisons as a percentage of total school budget. Primaries with small budgets don't look like their losing much compared with schools with larger budgets but in percentage terms it could be a lot.

A member raised the issue of falling rolls and the significant impact that reductions in funding could have on a school. It was noted that four primaries had over 10 percent falling rolls. Officers said the maintained schools contingency fund could help and the issue was on the agenda at the Primary Heads meeting scheduled for 15 January 2020. There was a plan to mitigate the impact.

Tony recommended that a sub-group of Schools Forum meet with to consider bids for falling rolls protection and make recommendations to the Forum. Daniel Upfield, Jessica Mair, Tim Scott, Claire Fletcher volunteered.

The recommendations in the report were put forward by the Chair and unanimously agreed (recommendations 5 and 6 were unanimously agreed by the maintained school representatives).

Tony noted that final checks and minor adjustment to schools NNDR business rates recently confirmed would be made prior to submission to the ESFA. There may be changes following submission to ESFA linked to queries raised by the ESFA. It is not expected that the proposed allocation for any individual school would change as a result of this.

The Chair thanked Tony and the rest of the H&F Children's Services Finance Team for their hard work – particularly over the Christmas break.

RESOLVED

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1. That the APT for Model 3 is submitted to ESFA for 2020/21 school budget shares, with revised NFF rates for local factors in appendix 2 and with an MFG value of 0.5% per pupil positive.
2. That Schools Forum agree a proposal to continue to transfer 1% of the total Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2020/21. This equates to £1.05m based on the final grant allocation.
3. That, in the event the Minister of State declines the disapplication (Recommendation 2), and additional funding to schools needs to be allocated through a revised model it is proposed that the factor rates in Model 3 are further uniformly uplifted to adjust allocations at a school level.
4. That Schools Forum agree a proposal to top-slice the 2020/21 Schools Block to the value of £0.13m or 0.01% of the total for the Falling Rolls protection fund in 2020/21. Together with the £0.125m retained balance for falling rolls, this would establish a total fund of £0.25m for 2020/21. A sub-group of Schools Forum is recommended to consider final bids for funding and to agree allocations. 8.5.
5. That maintained school representatives at Schools Forum agree to the proposed de-delegated budgets proposed for 2020/21 in Table 4 totalling £709,115.
6. That maintained school representatives at Schools Forum agree to the proposed Education Functions budgets proposed for 2020/21 in Table 5 totalling £323,024.

5. Draft Work Programme Update

The draft work programme was presented for information and noted.

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Meeting started: 2.00 pm
Meeting ended: 4.25 pm

Chair

Clerk: David Abbott | david.abbott@lbhf.gov.uk

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