

Schools Forum

Minutes

Monday 15 June 2015

Representing	Name	Organisation	Attendance
Primary Schools	5 Members		
Primary Head	Claire Fletcher (CF)	St Paul's CE Primary School	Present
Primary Head	Wayne Leeming (WL)	Melcombe Primary School	Present
Primary Head	Vacant		
Primary Governor	Daisy Donovan (DD)	Avonmore Primary School	Present
Primary Governor	Sharon Robinson (SR)	John Betts Primary School	Present
Secondary schools	1 Member		
Secondary Head	Alan Streeter (AS)	Phoenix High School	Absent
Academies	5 members		
Secondary Non Recoupment Academy Principal	Gary Kynaston (GK)	Hammersmith Academy	Present
Secondary Recoupment Academy Head	David McFadden (DMcf)	The London Oratory School	Apologies
Secondary Recoupment Academy	Sally Whyte (SW)	Lady Margaret School	Apologies
Secondary Recoupment Academy (Observer)	Peter Haylock (PH)	Fulham College Trust	Present
Primary Academy	Elissa Douglas	Lena Gardens Primary School	Apologies
Maintained Nursery Schools	1 member		
Nursery Head	Michael Pettavel (MP)	Randolph Beresford Early Years Centre School	Present
Special Schools	1 member		
Special Schools Head	Jude Ragan (JR)	Queensmill	Apologies
Alternative Provision	1 member		
Alternative Provision Rep	Nathan Crawley-Lyons (NCL)	TBAP	Present
Early Years (PVI)	1 member		
	Vacancy		
14-19 Representative	1 member		
	Vacant		
School Business Manager	2 observers		
Primary (Maintained)	Caroline Collins (CC)	Miles Coverdale Primary School	Apologies
Secondary (Academy)	Tim Scott (TS)	Fulham College Trust	Present
Trade Union	1 observer		
	Dennis Charman (DC)	NUT	Present
Officers in Attendance			
Tri Borough Director of Finance & Resources	Dave McNamara (DM)	Tri Borough Children's Services	Present
Tri Borough Director of Schools Commissioning	Ian Heggs (IH)	Tri Borough Children's Services	Apologies
Tri Borough Assistant Director Special Educational Needs & Vulnerable Children	Alison Farmer (AF)	Tri Borough Children's Services	Present

3BM Managing Director	Andy Rennison (AR)	3BM	Apologies
3BM Schools Finance Director	Remi Oladupo (RO)	3BM	Present
Clerking Service Manager and Clerk to Schools Forum	Owen Rees (OR)	Tri Borough Children's Services	Present

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies from Caroline Collins, Ian Heggs, Jude Ragan, Elissa Douglas, Sally Whyte and Andy Rennison.

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting on 16th March 2015 were agreed as a true and correct record.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Parking and Teacher Retention

DM noted that teacher retention had been mentioned as an issue, with car parking permits mentioned as one possible way of rectifying the problem. He had been asked to find out which schools were having retention issues, and what measures they would like to see the local authority take, including in relation to parking. He said that he could do this by e-mail or through representative groups. He said that the local authority would consider creating a new permit on a limited basis, but there were concerns about wider application of the argument for permits.

WL asked what the local authority wanted.

DM said that it wanted an assurance that parking was an issue. He said that an open door approach was unlikely. He noted that in another measure to aid retention, the penthouses on the Edward Woods Estate had been earmarked for key worker housing, and that measures to improve teacher retention were a manifesto commitment of the Council administration.

DC said that teacher retention is a complex issue, but was a problem for most schools. He noted that there were a limited number of schools in academy chains, and it was worth looking at how the borough could make itself attractive to come to.

GK welcomed the commitment to the issue shown by the local authority.

Normand Croft

DM clarified that the reduction in funding to Normand Croft was a result of the decision to stop running under 3 provision by the Governing Body. He said that the borough was working with the school to manage current cohort, and planning for the future. He emphasised that the decision to close the provision and the consequent reduction in funding was not a decision of the Schools Forum or of the local authority and its administration.

4. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2014-15 OUTURN

In the absence of Andy Rennison, DM spoke to the report. He noted that table 1 page 9 showed that more was spent than came in, in 14-15. He noted that this was not sustainable, but reflected the pressures on the budget. He said that it had been addressed through 2 year old funding overspill. He said that Table 2 showed the overspend in High Needs.

He said that a number of schools had been or continued to be in financially challenging circumstances, but added that funding was not an open door. He said that schools did need sustainable arrangements for the medium to long term, though there was provision in the short term. He noted that as funding continued to tighten, there will be more pressures on this type of funding. He added that there was likely to be a move to equalise funding through the National Funding Formula.

A forum member asked if the contingency level was normal. RO said that it was a lot higher due to unspent two-year old funding, almost 3 million of two year old spend. DM noted that work in high needs was necessary, as demand was increasing but income falling.

CF asked if there was a Communications strategy to Heads on nursery places.

DM said that there would be a lead in period to any change. He said that the local authority was not changing in its position, but would adjust in relation to Government policy.

MP noted that there may be a mismatch to the 30 hour offer and the rate paid for a full-time place.

DM said that while the current expenditure was unlikely to be met, the additional funding would be helpful.

DM won't change primary and secondary split either .

WL stated that falling numbers of pupils in the borough would create the most issues for schools

DM said that the expectation was stable numbers, but there was a need capacity to support schools with falling rolls. He noted that there were more places than demand in some areas, and that needs to be kept under review. He noted that on page 11 of the report, a school had asked for a proposal to establish a provision to establish a falling rolls fund. This set aside a portion of funding which automatically be available to Good or Outstanding schools whose numbers fell by a certain percentage. This approach had never previously been adopted in Hammersmith and Fulham. DM said that the decision was for schools and the Schools Forum, however.

DD asked if there was a trend or common denominator to schools which experienced a dramatic drop in rolls.

DM said that it tended to follow an event, which triggered further consequences. He gave examples such as Phoenix and Sullivan as schools who had received additional funding in these circumstances. He said that the local authority expected schools with falling rolls to look to improve their offer, especially where there had not been such an event.

DC asked how financial support for schools was carried out now.

DM said that funding is available through the balances in the Fund. By contrast, a fund for falling rolls would be annual, and would put money aside from the main Schools Block. All schools would contribute to a fund for falling rolls.

MP asked if the likelihood of reduced underspends and related impact on balances strengthened the case for a falling rolls fund.

DM explained that the timeframe for introducing a falling rolls fund. He noted the schools also had a Minimum Funding Guarantee which reduced the rate at which their funding could fall.. GK noted that top-slicing the funding could create pressures on all schools.

MP asked if academies would be affected by the introduction of a falling rolls fund. DM said that this depended on where they fell in terms of contribution.

The Forum asked to receive a paper on the establishment of a falling rolls fund at its October meeting.

School Balances

DM noted these were shown in Appendices 2 and 3, with committed and uncommitted. He said that the local authority would look at movement from year to year, as it will show schools' financial health if they are using uncommitted balances to subsidise in year expenditure. He noted that there was £5 million uncommitted.

MP asked about balances at academies. TS said that accounts were published on an academy's website. DM said that officers would gather that information to present as a comparator.

DC asked whether it was possible to judge the effectiveness of the formula from the balance levels. DM said that the formula was broadly correct, though it was difficult the

In response to comments by GK on the percentage of budget spent on staff, DM noted that this was often over 80%. GK noted the need for schools to take responsible decisions on that, and that schools needed to be notified of this. DM said that the local authority would be re-emphasising to schools the

need for 3 year budget plans, and would look at returns and CFR budgets to see the reasons for allocation

MP noted that balances were kept relatively high at his school, given the instability of funding for children's centres, with money kept high in case of the funding being discontinued.

DM acknowledged this, but noted that that schools needed to align expenditure with income in the medium term.

WL asked if the level of uncommitted balances was concerning.

DM said that this was a Forum matter. The Forum would need to consider whether schools were retaining excessive balances.

In response to a question from AF, DM acknowledged that there would need to be work with individual schools to understand what was committed, the documentation supporting that, as well as the extent to which balances would be used to support expenditure. He noted that there were legitimate reasons why carryforward would be growing, and gave schools planning for future works as an example.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the report be noted, and
- (ii) That a report be on the falling rolls fund be presented to the next meeting of the Forum.

5. SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

DM noted that there was regular guidance from the EFA issued and adopted locally, and overlaying additional financial regulations. He noted that the borough was needed to refresh the guidance. He said that the intention was to consult and asking for input.

He reported that the revisions would address the debit card issue, possibly through a procurement card approach. He said that the scheme will go out to consultation, and that there was a recognised need to modernise the approach to controls.

TS said that he had brought forward the Fulham College guidance. He noted the schools made use of a debit card. He said that any fraud was easily detected. .

DM acknowledged that concerns about increased fraud risk through electronic transactions could be addressed through proper controls, with electronic transfer the most efficient method of avoiding fraud.

DM noted that other areas of concern included photocopier contracts (where there were finance lease issues), maintenance (schools need to make adequate provision for it from their budgets) and maintenance of caretaker's

houses, which was school's responsibility. DM emphasised that the Council was only responsible for major investment.

DC asked if there was work ongoing on collective contracting.

MP said that it has been done in the past, but can be very difficult to do the contracting. DM said that the school meals contract was an example of that. He said that he would discuss the issue with Rachel Wright-Turner and report back

6. HIGH NEEDS - FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

AF gave an update on the High Needs Block (HNB) and on the operation of contingency arrangements in the previous academic year. She said that the report contained information showing where contingency funds had been allocated, and the total given. She also gave an update on the implementation of an enhanced SEN Early Years local offer through implementation of block HNB contingency funding.

She said that there would be a fuller report in October on HNB.

MP asked if the schools delivering the enhanced local offer for Early Years would still be eligible for interim funding.

AF confirmed that they would

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7. DIRECTOR'S REPORT INCLUDING MANAGED SERVICES UPDATE

Managed Services

DM noted that when, reported to the Forum in March, Managed Services was still at the project stage and implementation still in progress. He reported that there had been significant issues with the set-up of the system following . He said that the scale of change had hampered the transition and the situation was unlikely to get there before September. He said that the local authority was putting every effort into resolving the issues through BT.

DR confirmed that he and his staff were working hard to identify issues and escalate them. He said that BT now had a dedicated person working on schools issues. He said that he had taken the Chief Operating Officer of BT to visit Chelsea Academy to hear first-hand the issues that schools were experiencing. DM said that officers would seek to ensure that the experiences of primary schools were also reflected.

Schools Forum members thanked officers for their work in trying to amend the situation. They noted that the positive was that the majority of payments had been made in time, but that there remained difficulties in terms of systems arrangements which indicated an absence of planning from BT prior to

implementation. DM said that the local authority was listening and responding, and that more resources from BT had been put in place meaning that the service should improve. DR noted that there were likely to be back-end issues that were yet to come light.

DM noted that any missed payment to staff was unforgivable, and noted that there was provision to make emergency payments. He said that the chief concern was the reversion of changes made on one payroll for the next. He said that there had been no prepay roll report to allow changes to be requested. He said that the money for payroll was still in school's accounts, and BT had yet to collect an invoice.

MP asked if there was anything schools could tell their staff if there were issues. DC gave the example of an individual who might make a larger student payroll. DM said that any exceptions of this nature should be sent to DR.

DR noted that the local authority would drop intercepting and batching payslips, and this duty would go back to BT in July. He said that schools should monitor how this was executed.

School Meals Contract

DM reported that the school meals contract was in the process of establishing frameworks for the lot. He said that the current price would be cheaper for primaries, but there would need to be an update for secondaries on what was coming through. He said that it affected H & F schools the most as they comprised the majority of schools in the contract, and that contract arrangements needed to be worked through. He said that the sequencing would likely see Hammersmith and Fulham are the last borough to call off from the contract,

Vote of Thanks

The Schools Forum recorded its thanks to Sally Whyte, Bernie Peploe, Michael Pettavel, Jude Ragan for their work on the Schools Forum.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

MP said that at the head's conference, Heads had asked whether CAMHS and Community CAFS received top-sliced funding from DSG. AF said that these were health funded but that she would check on the relationship to DSG.

MP said that there had also been concerns raised that the Courtyard was under pressure due to the number of Tri-Borough pupils purchasing places.

AF said that Westmisnter schools have recognised the issue and have funded their own provision in Beechcroft from October,. She said that this would reduce pressure in LBHF with only RBKC spot purchasing from both provisions.

Dates for the following year

Dates would be circulated after the meeting. It was agreed that Lila Huset would host the next meeting.

Meeting started:	Time	Not
	Specified	
Meeting ended:	Time	Not
	Specified	

Chairman

Contact officer: Owen Rees
Committee Co-ordinator
Governance and Scrutiny
☎:
E-mail: