

Schools Forum

Minutes

Tuesday 18 September 2018

PRESENT

Primary School Representatives

Giles Finnemore, Brackenbury Primary School
Wayne Leeming, Melcombe Primary School
Jessica Mair, John Betts Primary School
Sharon Robinson, John Betts Primary School

Secondary School Representatives

Gary Kyneston, Hammersmith Academy (Chair)
Tim Scott, Fulham College Trust
Robert Jones, The London Oratory School

Special School Representatives

Alan Campbell, Cambridge School
Aidan Smith, Jack Tizard

Alternative Provision

Nathan Crawley-Jones, TBAP

Nursey School Representatives

Michelle Barratt, Vanessa/Randolph Beresford Early Years Centre School
Patricia Logan, Bayonne & James Lee

Officer Representatives

Steve Miley, Director of Children's Services
Tony Burton, Head of Finance (Children's Services)
Kevin Gordon, Head of Assets and Strategy (Children's Services)
Dave Rogers, Deputy Head of HR
Jan Parnell, Assistant Director of Education
Mandy Lawson, Assistant Director of SEND
Lize Ferreira, Strategic Finance Manager (Children's Services)
Caroline Baxter, Strategic Finance Manager (Children's Services)
David Abbott, Scrutiny Manager (Governance)
Kevin Morris, Secondary Adviser & 14-19 Development Lead

PVI Sector Representatives

Bridget Simons
Ruth Gibson

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Gary Kyneston, led a round of introductions. Attendees are listed above.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Information on budget surpluses

Tony Burton noted that the requested information on Academy Schools' budget surpluses (point 3) was still pending. Officers had received some but many were still outstanding.

School's debt and BACS payments

Giles Finnemore asked if there was any update on helping schools with bad debt and BACS payments. Tony Burton said officers had an 'in principle' agreement from the Council's Corporate Finance team. A formal change to the school financial procedures was hoped to be signed-off this by half-term. A paper on this would come to the November School's Forum meeting for final approval.

The Chair noted that this issue mostly affected Primary and Special Schools and asked if it could be addressed at the next Primaries Heads meeting. Tony Burton said at the next meeting for school business managers there would be more information available and a representative from the bank would be in attendance to talk through the detail.

Tony Burton noted that follow-up work was still required on school meals debt. He had spoken to the Council's ethical debt recovery team and they were looking in to it. A clearer update would be provided in November. Steve Miley added that schools still needed to consider this a risk area.

Meeting dates

Tony Burton informed the group that the Forum meeting on the 4th of December would be replaced with the 20th of November. This was to accommodate the final disapplication request for the high needs block transfer. There would then be a further meeting on the 15th of January to approve the final schools block budget and allocation model. Officers were also proposing bringing the final early years budget agreement. The Chair said both meetings would be provisionally extended by an hour (2pm to 5pm). There may also need to be an additional budget workshop in early January.

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. GOVERNANCE AND VOTING RIGHTS

Jan Parnell, Assistant Director for Education, introduced the item – noting that she would be sending out the Schools Forum structure along with briefing papers on voting rights. She stated her ambition to reconstitute the forum,

giving the relevant sectors the opportunity to vote in their own representatives. She noted the three current vacancies and asked the Forum if they wanted to fill those gaps now or have a complete refresh – voting in a new cohort of members. She added that the Council's Governance team would carry out the nomination process on behalf of the Forum.

The current vacancies were:

- Secondary Academy School Headteacher
- Primary Academy Headteacher
- 14-19 representative

The group suggested asking members if they wanted to step down then voting in a new cohort to fill the gaps – leading to a mix of continuity members and new faces. It was also suggested that there should be more than one PVI representative given the size of the sector. Jan Parnell also noted that the Forum would welcome Trade Union representation. The membership agreed that the Forum would be reconstituted post-April 2019.

RESOLVED

Schools Forum to be reconstituted after April 2019. Existing members to be asked if they wanted to continue after April 2019 and any vacancies to be filled through a formal nomination process.

4. EARLY YEARS FUNDING

Jan Parnell, Assistant Director for Education, introduced the item – noting that at the last meeting members had requested more detail on early years funding. The challenge stemmed from upcoming changes to the National Early Years Funding Formula which would affect the financial sustainability of maintained nursery schools in H&F. Most affected by the changes are Randolph Beresford, Vanessa, James Lee, and Bayonne.

Jan informed the group that the Council had been working on an Early Years Strategy since April 1. Unfortunately, there was still a lack of clarity from Government and no updates expected until December. The Council had taken the following action:

- Modelled the impact of the full participation formula
- Lobbied Government to change the formula
- Looked at federation opportunities for the most affected schools
- Set up financial workshops on the schools block and early years changes (details to be circulated)

Michelle Barratt said the formula would have a huge adverse impact on her schools – as it only took into account 3 and 4-year olds while she was working with ages 1 to 5, often from very deprived backgrounds, with around 30 percent requiring SEND support. At Randolph there were just 5 children who qualified for the funding. Nursery schools didn't receive SEND funding in advance – it had to be applied for retrospectively so staffing was a major issue.

The Chair asked what the next steps were and the timescales. Tony Burton said officers had been working with maintained nursery schools for a while now and information on Randolph Beresford and Vanessa would be available in the next few weeks. That information would be presented at workshops in October with Primary Schools so they could consider their budget planning. Schools Forum in November would also provide more detail on budget planning.

The Chair asked if any decisions had been made about closing nurseries and the redistribution of those pupils. Were we being proactive engaging with schools facing the biggest challenges? Tony Burton said officers were focussing resources on maintained nursery schools at this stage. The workshops in October were the best time to engage the wider group and it should leave enough time to enable them to budget plan for 18-19 and beyond. Steve Miley asked anyone considering closing nursery schools to speak to the Council (Jan or Steve) before taking any action. The Council was committed to having the best possible provision within this challenging envelope.

A member asked if a charging policy had been considered. Steve Miley said it was up to the provider – all options should be considered to ensure provision can continue. Jan Parnell noted that there were links in the paper to information about the commercialisation of nursery provision – including business feasibility, staffing costs etc.

5. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK OVERSPEND

Kevin Gordon, Head of Assets and Strategy, presented the briefing paper that provided an update on key findings since the previous meeting, a summary of progress made, and options to address the overspend. He took the group through the paper and talked through the options for reducing the overspend in Section 4 – these included:

- Schools Block Dis-application (redeployment)
- Central Schools Services Block (redeployment)
- Outreach (whole system review)
- Home Tuition (whole system review)
- Non-Resident Admin Fee (cost recovery)
- Non-Resident 'Wrap-Around' Provision (cost recovery)
- Academy Recoupment from 2019/20 (high needs block allocation)

Steve Miley summarised the issue – the Council received £20m for the high needs block and was currently overspending by £6m each year. The Council has committed to tackling the accumulated deficit but the annual overspend will need to be reduced to zero over the next 4 to 5 years. Provision has to be sustainable and a re-calibration of expectations would be required.

Mandy Lawson, Assistant Director for SEND, said we would have to do things differently - capture children earlier, have more effective outreach, tackle the speech and language therapy issue. There would be a whole system review working closely with schools and partners. Officers proposed setting up a sub-group to lead on this work.

ACTION: Sub-group to be set-up

Mandy also said she would like to bring proposals to the upcoming SEND thematic meeting scheduled for 13th November.

ACTION: Proposals to go to SEND thematic meeting on 13th November

Kevin Gordon highlighted the options in Section 4 and talked through the dis-application from the schools block to the high needs block. He noted that to do this the Council would have to apply to the ESFA with a business case. Officers were proposing a one percent transfer.

Members said they would like to know the impact on schools funding. They also asked if there was a proposal around early years SEND funding too. Tony Burton said he would provide that information at the next meeting.

ACTION: Tony Burton

The Chair asked the group if they agreed the proposal for the dis-application. The group unanimously agreed the proposal.

The Chair asked members to take the other proposals to their schools for discussion.

RESOLVED

1. That the Forum agreed the proposal for the dis-application of one percent from the schools block to the high needs block.
2. That Forum members would take away the six other proposals in Section 4 of the report for consideration with their colleagues.

6. SCHOOLS BUDGET SHARE AND BUDGET PLANNING

Tony Burton, Head of Finance, presented the paper which provided an update on the changes being made by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for the 2019/20 schools national funding formula – and the impact of the first indicative budgets based on modelling the local funding formula.

Steve Miley drew the Forum's attention to the stark findings at the top of page 10. Applying the full implementation of the National Funding Formula (NFF), without the minimum funding guarantee, took £8m out of a £99m budget – a reduction of 8 percent across the board.

The Forum said this was very worrying for all schools. They suggested the Council picked some case studies to look at the real-world implications of the post-NFF landscape and what that means for the model of education in the borough. What would a primary school look like with these reductions, how many teachers would there be, how many sports staff? Officers noted that they were planning to do this through the workshops.

ACTION: Schools to put themselves forward for case studies

Tony Burton highlighted the different models in paragraph 5.3 of the report and noted that the outcomes were broadly similar. The Chair asked for the Forum's views on the different models (i.e. go straight to the full NFF implementation or transition over three years). Some members suggested keeping as much money out of the MFG as long possible to aide transition. Some felt going to the formula quickly would mean a sharper impact. Tony explained that the options had the same total pot, the NFF just changed how it was allocated between schools. The NFF shifted the weighting given to certain factors – e.g. it moved money away from deprivation factors and towards

English as a second language. Steve Miley felt, given the given the complexity of the formula changes, we needed to look at individual school populations and flag which schools were likely to be affected the most.

The Chair asked schools to take this paper away and discuss with their colleagues to formulate a position on whether to go with the full implementation or transition into it.

ACTION: All schools

Tony Burton highlighted the section on the falling rolls fund (5.11 of the report) and noted that the Forum would need to consider how to support that. The Chair requested a paper for the next meeting about the implications of falling rolls.

ACTION: Tony Burton

Some members raised concerns about the impact of the loss of bulge classes – particularly on associated costs such as buildings and maintenance. Tony said he would ask schools for information on this in the October workshops.

7. ADMISSION AND THE IMPACT ON FUNDING

Kevin Gordon presented the item – noting that a detailed paper would be presented at a future meeting. He gave the headline figures – the Council was forecasting for 2022 a 27 percent surplus in primary places (compared with 18 percent today) and a 7 to 11 percent surplus in secondary places (compared with 12 percent today).

Officers were working on the School Organisation Strategy now and this was expected to be completed by the end of October.

8. SALARY SETTLEMENT - HR INPUT

Dave Rogers, Deputy Head of HR, presented the item and noted that the consultation had ended on 3 September and was published on 14 September along with additional guidance. Further information would be circulated to all schools, including the trade union position, the LGS position, the spinal points, and the available options.

The Chair asked if there was clear modelling for governors about how the grant worked. Dave Rogers said there were models for primary, secondary, and special schools.

The Chair highlighted the potential issue of schools committing to increases before fully understanding the long-term funding implications. There was no guarantee of funding beyond March 2020. The Chair asked officers to model this out and recommended that schools waited to see the modelling before committing to anything.

ACTION: Tony Burton to provide modelling data

9. FORWARD PLAN / DATES

The forward plan was noted.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

One of the members noted that, in their capacity as governor of a primary school, they heard that 12 pupils didn't receive an offer of a place at secondary school. The group requested a summary of secondary transfer data for review.

ACTION: Officers to provide high-level summary of secondary transfer data

Meeting started: 2.00pm

Meeting ended: 4.00pm

Chair

Contact officer: David Abbott
Scrutiny Manager
Governance and Scrutiny
☎: 020 8753 2063
E-mail: david.abbott@lbhf.gov.uk