

Schools Forum

Minutes

Tuesday 20 November 2018

PRESENT

Forum Members

Gary Kynaston (Hammersmith Academy) (Chair)
Nathan Crawley-Jones (TBAP)
Eileen Harding (TBAP)
Ruth Browne (TBAP)
Krishna Purbhoo (TBAP)
Alan Campbell (Cambridge School)
Michele Barrett (Vanessa Nursery and Randolph Beresford EYC)
Freddie Adu (Queensmill School)
Jane Gleasure (Little People's Nursery)
Claire Fletcher (St. Paul's CE Primary School)
Jessica Mair (John Betts Primary School)
Wayne Leeming (Melcombe Primary School)
Robert Jones (The London Oratory School)
Peter Smith (Jack Tizard School)
Tim Scott (Fulham College Boys School)
Sharon Robinson (John Betts Primary School)
Remi Oladapo (3BM)

LBHF Officers

Jill Lecznar (Head of Finance, LBHF)
Tony Burton (Head of Finance, LBHF)
Caroline Baxter (Strategic Finance Manager, LBHF)
Mandy Lawson (Assistant Director of SEND, LBHF)
Kevin Morris (Secondary Adviser and 14-19 Development Lead, LBHF)
Steve Miley (Director of Children's Services, LBHF)
Jan Parnell (Assistant Director of Education, LBHF)
Lize Ferreira (Strategic Finance Manager, LBHF)
David Abbott (Scrutiny Manager, LBHF)

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed forum members (listed above) to the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Membership and vacancies

Jan Parnell noted that there had been a recommendation at the previous meeting for an additional PVI representative. The forum agreed this in principle, though a formal decision would be made at a future meeting. The Chair asked officers to look at the membership and provide a list of all vacancies.

ACTION: LBHF Officers

RESOLVED

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

3. EARLY YEARS UPDATE

Jill Lecnzar (LBHF Finance), presented the update report focussing on the early years entitlement for 3 & 4 year olds since the introduction of the Early Years National Funding Formula in April 2017.

Members noted that the central services allocation was showing a deficit. Officers said there would have to be efficiencies in central services. Representatives from the PVI sector said there were only 4 posts there and their only point of contact was the full-time inclusion officer (who covered all 70 settings). They asked the Council to consider this when making decisions about efficiencies. Officers ensured members that the budget related to more than just those staff and there were other options to reduce spend in the area. However, the limit imposed by the budget formula meant the Council had to send 95 percent of the funding to providers.

Members asked for a breakdown of the impact on schools. Tony Burton noted that Finance had brought Jill Lecnzar in to do this. She had been modelling scenarios for Bayonne and James Lee - and Randolph Beresford and Vanessa. The Public Services Reform department had run workshops with primary schools helping them with business planning and budgeting. Officers had also identified schools with nurseries that had greater challenges.

The Chair summarised the key issues:

- Engagement of PVI sector
- Four schools will have serious challenges moving to the participation model

The Forum asked for an urgent item to the next meeting that provided absolute clarity on the wider impact of these changes. Jan Parnell noted that work was happening this week but officers were still waiting on data from key providers. Until the Council got that information officers couldn't produce the report – but major mitigations had already been put in place. Jill added that officers had modelled the best scenario given the financial envelope.

There would be a workshop in the first week of January – with officers bringing models for early years and the schools block. The workshop would provide a deeper understanding of the papers going to Schools Forum on the 15th of January.

The Chair asked what about schools that couldn't take part. Jill Lecnzar said she can arrange sessions.

4. SCHOOLS BLOCK UPDATE

Caroline Baxter (Strategic Finance Manager, LBHF) presented the report that provided an update on the indicative budget allocations through the 2019/20 schools funding formula.

Members asked if the new census figures meant the modelling would change. Tony Burton said it could and if that's the case then officers would present updated figures. He added that officers expected only slight differences though.

Members suggested moving the workshop date to the 8th of January from 3pm to 6pm (to avoid teacher training on the first day of term). Reminders should be sent out on the 7th to Headteachers and Finance Directors.

ACTION: Tony Burton

An Academy representative noted they were confused by the difference between the MFG figure in these papers and the figure in the ESFA papers. Officers noted that the ESFA do further adjustments on Academies and Free Schools - based on historical factors.

Members queried that some schools (Pope John) seemed to be down as growing and as having falling rolls. Officers noted that they were applying the regulations for growing schools. Falling rolls was at the forums discretion though and for 2019-20 the forum will be able to make recommendations. This could be done at the January meeting. It was suggested that there be a recommendation to limit support for either growth or falling rolls, but not both. The Chair asked officers to report back at the workshop.

ACTION: Tony Burton

Members asked what the process was for applying to the falling rolls fund and the deadlines. Tony Burton said officers would be asking for feedback on the approach to use under allocated funds in 2019/20. It would be open to all mainstream schools. The Council was asking for responses from schools that think they are eligible by 14 December. He added that they must be good and outstanding schools, as per the DfE requirement. Officers also noted that falling rolls protection was intended to cushion the short-term shock and provide interim funding whilst schools reversed the trend. It was intended to be one-off funding - so officers did not expect the 2018/19 schools to automatically roll on.

On the budget forecast, members asked to see budgets from last year to compare. Officers noted it would be around 1.5 percent less on a per pupil basis – and said they would provide the data.

ACTION: Tony Burton

Tony Burton noted that the dis-application request from the school's block to the high needs block will be sent today.

The Headteachers noted their thanks to Tony Burton, Jan Parnell and the team for arranging the workshops. The feedback had been very positive and all were clear on the challenges ahead. The Chair added that the information coming through from the Council was much more accessible and in turn the level of understanding was far greater.

5. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK UPDATE

Mandy Lawson (Assistant Director of SEND) presented the report that provided an update on the financial position of the DSG High Needs Block and the local response to address funding pressures. She noted the significant pressures – highlighting the retained deficit of £7m and forecast overspend of £6.4m by the end of this financial year. Officers had met with the DfE to discuss as this was a national, but there were no quick solutions offered. The DfE were gathering information from Councils as part of a wider review.

Mandy Lawson explained that the Council was moving forward on 'phase 1' – addressing the overspend. This included:

- Dis-application from the Schools Block of up to £1m.
- Cost recovery for non-resident children - letters had gone out to local authorities asking them to fund the 10 percent top-up fee.
- Targeted primary funding was being considered.

Phase 2 would be a whole system approach – including options for improving early intervention and work in schools.

Members asked if the H&F overspend was in line with other councils. Officers said this was an emerging issue in all councils – in terms of the overspend we were about average.

Members asked if there was an expectation of a £1m dis-application year on year. Tony Burton said dis-application has to be requested every year with School's Forum agreement – there was no assumption it's ongoing. He added that it's also not clear if the facility will be available under the full implementation of the National Funding Formula.

Members asked why H&F was seeing huge increases in SEND in the borough. Mandy Lawson said this was a national issue with a number of factors:

- The recent SEND reforms hugely increased parental expectations without increasing budgets in line with them.
- More children were being diagnosed with SEND generally - advances in healthcare also meant more vulnerable children were surviving for longer.
- The threshold for an Education Health and Care Plan was lowered.

Many of the issues above were out of the Council's or School's control but through phase 2 we could get better at identifying issues early, putting in interventions and tracking outcomes – and avoid the expectation that children will have an EHCP from age 3 to 25.

Steve Miley (Director for Children's Services) made it clear that the Council wants to meet the needs of children with additional needs. If we can have the discussion with schools and partners we will find ways of meeting those needs. Members said headteachers welcomed the opportunity to have a common strategy and put in place a more effective use of funding streams for inclusion etc.

A member suggested the idea of notional funding that moved at the point that the child moved schools. The gap without funding under the current system caused huge issues for schools. Officers agreed. Mandy Lawson said a report was already in the works on notional funding.

ACTION: Tony Burton / Mandy Lawson

Headteachers noted there were inconsistencies in EHCPs – the levels seemed to be very different. They suggested looking at this issue across boroughs.

The Chair asked for an update at the next meeting on what pressures schools were facing and the options being considered.

ACTION: Mandy Lawson

6. SCHOOLS BUDGET CONSULTATION 2019/20

Tony Burton (Head of Finance, LBHF) tabled the draft budget consultation questions. He noted that some narrative would be added discussing the approach on moving towards National Funding Formula rates. The consultation would be put up on the Council's website, Schools Zone, sent directly to headteachers and Chairs of Governors etc.

Members asked if officers wanted one response per school or multiple responses from schools (Heads, Heads of Finance, Chairs of Governors). Officers advised that one per school would be best.

The Chair suggested getting key people together to discuss creative solutions. He suggested a half-day session on innovation, retention etc. A chance to bring talented people together to solve problems.

ACTION: TBC

7. UPDATE TO LBHF SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Tony Burton (Head of Finance, LBHF) presented the report that detailed amendments arising from the DfE's issue 9 of the statutory guidance on schemes for financial schools relating to Section 48 of the School Standards

and Framework Act 1998. In addition, there were proposals aimed at clarifying the extent of the Council's capacity for liability towards redundancy costs incurred by schools as well as the expectations the Local Authority has in terms of financial planning from schools.

Members suggested sending a high-level summary of these proposals out to all headteachers.

ACTION: Tony Burton

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that the next meeting would be on 15 January 2019 at 2pm in Lilla Huset.

Members were reminded that the meeting scheduled for 4 December 2018 was cancelled.

Meeting started: 2pm
Meeting ended: 5pm

Chair

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