

Schools Forum

Minutes

Monday 19 January 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	Present
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	Present
Secondary Recoupment Academy	Sally White (SW)	Lady Margaret School	Present
Secondary Recoupment Academy	Bernie Peploe (BP)	Fulham College Trust	Apologies
Primary Academy	Vacancy		
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	Not 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	Present
Secondary (Academy)	Tim Scott (TS)	Fulham College Trust	Apologies
Trade Union	1 observer		
	Dennis Charman (DC)	NUT	Present
Officers in Attendance			
Tri Borough Director of Finance & Resources	Dave McNamara (DM)	Tri Borough Children Services	Present
Tri Borough Director of Schools Commissioning	Ian Heggs (IH)	Tri Borough Children Services	Apologies
Tri Borough Assistant Director Special Educational Needs &	Alison Farmer (AF)	Tri Borough Children Services	Present

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

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies from Ian Heggs, Andrew Tagg, Bernie Peplow, Jude Ragan and Tim Scott.

2. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The Chair asked for an update on the vacancies on the Forum membership. The clerk said that the vacancies in the maintained and AP Academies sector had now been filled, along with the School Business Manager positions. He said that the West London Free School had declined to nominate a representative. It was proposed and agreed that Elissa Douglas of Lena Gardens be appointed as an Academy representative.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a true and accurate record, and
- (ii) That Elissa Douglas of Lena Gardens Primary School be invited to become an Academy Representative on the Forum.

3. **DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2015-16**

Andy Rennison, Managing Director, 3BM (AR), presented the report.

A. Allocation of Direct Schools Grant

AR reported that the Schools Block Funding from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) was £101,557,000. He noted that the EFA had transferred funding responsibility for academies that were previously outside the recoupment process and Free Schools into the Direct Schools Grant, without increasing funding levels for already agreed growth in these schools. As the borough had rising school rolls, this would create a pressure on the budget.

AR reported that the indication was that that within the Early Years Block, the per pupil entitlement would be the same as 2014, and that, based on current census estimates, total funding would be £11,576,000.

AR reported that the High Needs Block was £18,622,000. He noted that the authority had submitted a request to the EFA on the basis of exceptional need, seeking funding for 43 pre 16 and 55 post16 places, which would mean an effective increase of 15%. To date, the EFA had offered a 0.86% increase.

RESOLVED

To note the indicative allocations from the EFA.

B. Schools Block Grant

AR reported on the Schools Block Grant. He said that the factors used were the same, and had been adapted, in the case of IDACCI and EAL to local pressures; the report contained detailed figures setting out the allocation to element type. He said that rates would be maintained for 2015-16.

He noted that the Schools Forum had previously agreed the creation of a growth fund, for schools which were growing in size. He said that, in 2015-16, allocations would be made to Holy Cross and St Stephen's. The Schools Forum approved the creation of the Growth Fund for 2015-16.

He then outlined the likely impact of the EFA's decision to ask that growth at academies and free schools be funded from the Direct Schools Grant. He noted that academies received funding from the EFA on the basis of the factors in the local authority's formula and that one of the benefits of the provision of increased pupil places through free schools and academies hitherto had been the lack of direct impact on the Schools Block Grant. He noted that pressure in the first year would amount to a total of unplanned growth of 510 places, with a year at Hammersmith Academy to be added to the list contained in the paper. He said that the local authority had lobbied the EFA regarding the change, but the Forum might wish to support a further effort.

In response to a question from the Chair, David McNamara (DM), Tri-Borough Director of Finance, said that the pressure could be absorbed by DSG balances in the short-term, but that if, as seemed likely, the change took effect permanently, the factor funding would have to be reviewed.

In response to questions from GK and LF, AR confirmed that the additional funding would continue until a school was full (growth), and that the EFA retained responsibility for the first year.

DC asked why money did not "follow" a child in the system, or, if more places were required, why allocation from the EFA was not increased. DM said that there was an increase in funding in line with an increase in rolls, but that this was lagged due to the timing of the census and allocation. He said that the change would move cost into the Schools Block Grant.

GK asked whether, in light of the changes, the authority had altered its views on additional secondary provision in the area. AR noted that the birth rate in the borough had slowed from its peak. DM reported that the Schools Organisation Strategy that was due to go before the Cabinet recognised that there was a future need for more secondary provision in light of proposed development in the north of the borough, but not a present one. This view would be communicated to the EFA in relation to the proposed Livingstone Free School. The Schools Forum agreed to receive a paper on the Schools Organisation Strategy at its next meeting, and would receive a further update at the March Forum.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Schools Forum agree to maintain the 2014/15 individual funding rates into 2015/16, and
- (ii) That the establishment of a Growth Fund be agreed on the terms set out in the paper, and
- (iii) That the local authority continue to lobby the EFA in relation to proposals for growth in rolls at academies and free schools, and
- (iv) That officers be requested to report on the Schools Organisation Strategy to the next (March) meeting of the Forum.

C. High Needs Block

AR noted that, in light of rising demand, there was significant cost pressures in this area, with a predicted shortfall of £500,000 as a result. He proposed that, in light of this, the Forum should agree to hold place rates at the same level.

Alison Farmer, Assistant Director for SEN and Vulnerable Children, noted that the borough had been forced to make 2 very high cost independent placements, with a knock on effect. She said that there was some evidence that the changes to legislation had made parents more inclined to challenge the school offered in statements.

In relation to top up rates, AR proposed an increase to the top-up rate at Wood Lane to £9,000, off-set by other changes in funding provision to Wood Lane noting that the cost of doing so would be significantly defrayed based on recoupment from other boroughs. The Schools Forum agreed the proposal, but asked to see detail of the recoupment at all special schools in the borough at the March Forum.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the top-up rates be agreed, subject to an increase to £9,000 per pupil at Wood Lane and
- (ii) That officers bring forward a paper on recoupment levels at the Special Schools to the March meeting of the Forum.

D. Early Years Block

AR reported that funding levels would remain the same. He said that the potential challenge facing the Borough was around the number of full-time places on offer. DM clarified that the local authority was keen to maintain the status quo, but could not make any guarantees given the potential for national policy shifts. As a result, the local authority would not allocate additional funding to support full-time places, as this had the potential to create a larger and insupportable pressure.

MP asked how funding would be reviewed following the census in January. DM said that the allocation would be on the basis of children attending, and that the local authority reserved the right to reduce payments as a result.

MP asked if the Early Years Pupil Premium would be received separately from the main allocation. DM confirmed that it would.

RESOLVED

That the proposed method for allocation of the Early Years Block be agreed.

E. DSG 2014-15 Monitoring and Notional Schools Budget 2015-16

AR reported on expenditure in 2014-15. He noted that there was a small overspend on the General Fund, which reflected previous agreements in relation to growth and bulge classes. He said that, as in previous years, schools in challenging circumstances with significant falling rolls were supported with April to August funding. He added that there had been additional turbulence as a result of the consultation on the closure of Sullivan in the South of the Borough.

In addition, he noted the in-year pressures on the High Needs Block, despite the exceptionally high quality of the borough's special schools.

SW noted that the figure for independent SEN provision appeared high. AF said that the figure was low compared to other boroughs, but there was an increased legal activity and parental interest in seeking independent solutions.

AR stated that there was an underspend in the Early Years Block and 2-year old offer, which was discussed elsewhere on the agenda.

GK asked if there was a risk of shortfall in 2016-17. AR said that this was not likely in the Schools Block, due to increasing rolls within the borough, but the High Needs Block had real pressures.

DM noted that schools funding was less likely to be protected than in the past, and this could mean a more difficult position for schools in general in future years.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the DSG monitoring figures be noted, and
- (ii) That the notional school allocations be noted.

4. EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2015-16

DM presented the report, noting that it essentially restated the position in the earlier report. He noted that the report referred to contingency costs in relation to reorganisation; he said that the local authority had no plans in this area, but was conscious of the need to improve the 2 year-old offer and make sure places were taken up. He noted that the funding would change from a population to a take-up basis.

In response to a question on reasons for low take-up, DM said that in London the rate paid (£6 an hour) was low, and that there were inherent risks to subsidising this. Given the low number of hours available, there may be both demand and supply issues. MP said that the purpose of the offer was not clear, and that the educational value at its present rate of funding was uncertain.

GK asked if it was possible places were being taken up outside the borough, noting that supply was larger in Acton. DM said that the local authority would have to look at this in more depth, but that there were additional issues.

RESOLVED

The Council to review proposals to stimulate the provision and take-up of two-year-old places

5. HIGH NEEDS FUNDING

AF reported on the work of the High Needs Reference Group. She said that the group was considering applications for short-term contingency funding in respect of element 3, which was for those pupils who required between 12 and 20 hours of support (the former covered by decoupled funding, the latter usually by a Statement or EHCP). She said that there had been 7 successful applications, but there would be further promotion of the facility through SENCO training and the EHCP resource panel. The group continued to work to identify an appropriate method for allocating Element 3 to schools directly, with useful discussions with Primary Schools in particular.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

6. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Capital Programme

The Cabinet had agreed funding for Burlington Danes Primary School and for a feasibility study and condition survey at Phoenix. DM noted that funding for window replacement at Addison was being considered, in the light of a large backlog of work across the schools' estate. The local authority would submit a capital bid to the EFA, but could not be certain of receiving any funding.

School Meals Procurement

The procurement exercise was on-going, and had reached the PQQ stage with 10 companies invited to tender. The contract structure would offer savings if the same bidder won all three contracts, but this would depend on local decisions. DM added that a majority of schools had requested that the borough remain the contracting authority. DM said that this had been agreed, but that the SLA would make clear that schools were responsible for income recovery.

Passenger Transport

A report had been compiled, which was now under consideration prior to presentation to the Children and Education Public Accountability Committee.

Savings

DM noted that £4,000,000 of savings would be required from Children's Services in 2015-16. The details would be appended to the minutes of the meeting.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Falling Rolls Fund

CF asked how schools could apply for access to the fund. AR advised that DM made a decision on the basis of an analysis carried out by 3BM. Applications could be made to DM.

Hurlingham and Chelsea

GK asked for an update on the position. DM said that Hurlingham and Chelsea was now a United Learning sponsored academy, and that Langford would become a United Learning sponsored academy on 1st April. The federation had been discontinued. GK noted that potential growth at Hurlingham and Chelsea should be factored into the Schools Organisation Strategy and the associated Capital budgets.

Reserve Levels

The Chair noted recent press coverage regarding academy balances in comparison to maintained schools. He asked what the current position was. AR said that the majority of schools in the borough had a healthy balance.

25th Anniversary of LEA Status

DC noted that the 25th anniversary of the Council becoming an LEA fell around the next meeting. He said that the occasion should be commemorated, given the achievements in the borough's schools.

Bernie Peploe

The Forum noted that Bernie Peploe would retire at Easter. It placed on record a vote of thanks to her for her excellent and highly valued work in the borough's schools and as a member of the Schools Forum.

Meeting started: 2.00 pm

Meeting ended: 3.19 pm

Chairman

Contact officer: Owen Rees
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