

## MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday 14 October 2015 at Chace Community School

### **Schools Members:**

Governors: Ms I Cranfield (Primary) Chair, Mrs J Ellerby (Primary), Mrs J Leach (Special), Mrs L Sless (Primary), *Mr T McGee (Secondary)*, Mr G Stubberfield (Secondary), Mr Clark (Primary)

Headteachers: Ms H Ballantine (Primary), Mr P De Rosa (Special), Mr B Goddard (Secondary), *Ms M Hurst (Pupil Referral Unit)*, Ms H Knightley (Primary), *Ms A Nicou (Primary)* and Ms H Thomas (Primary)

*Ms A Gaudencio (Primary)* - substituted by Ms L Whitaker

Academies: Ms R Stanley-McKenzie, Vacancy

---

### **Non-Schools Members:**

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr D Levy

*16 - 19 Partnership*

*Mr K Hintz*

Teachers' Committee

Mr S McNamara

Head of Behaviour Support

Mr J Carrick

Early Years Provider

Vacancy

Education Professional

Vacancy

---

### **Observers:**

Cabinet Member

*Cllr A Orhan*

Education Funding Agency

*Ms B Pennekett*

---

### **Also attending:**

Head of Finance Business Partner

Mr N Goddard

Head of Finance Business Partner

Mrs J Fitzgerald

Assistant Finance Business Partner

Mrs L McNamara

Resources Development Manager

Mrs S Brown

Resources Development Officer

Ms J Bedford

\* Italics denote absence

## **1. MEMBERSHIP AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

### a) **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Orhan, Mr McGee, Ms Hurst, Ms Nicou, Mr Hintz and Ms Gaudencio, who was represented by Ms L Whitaker.

### b) **Membership**

#### **Reported:**

- Mrs Warrington and Ms Burgess had tendered their resignation from the Schools Forum. These resignations created vacancies for a secondary and an academy representative.
- Mrs Roberts's term had come to an end and nominations were being sought from Early Years providers.
- Ms Knightley, Ms Thomas and Ms Ballantine had been nominated by the Primary Headteachers' Conference to fill the vacancies for primary Headteacher representatives.

#### **Noted:**

- (i) The Secondary Headteachers' Conference had met and nominated Mr M Lavell to fill the vacant position of secondary Headteacher representative.
- (ii) A nomination had been received from Ms L Dawes, Headteacher Oasis Hadley, to fill the vacancy for an academy representative. It was stated that the other academies would be advised of the vacancy and Ms Dawes's nomination. The other academies will also be asked to forward any other nominations. If another nomination was received then there will need to an election process.

**RESOLVED** to accept:

- the nominations from Ms Knightley, Ms Thomas and Ms Ballantine as primary Headteacher representatives and Mr Lavelle as a secondary Headteacher representative;
- Ms Dawes's nomination following receipt of confirmation from the other academies.

**Action: Mrs Brown**

Ms Knightley, Ms Thomas, Ms Ballantine were welcomed to the Forum

Ms Whitaker was thanked for attending on behalf of Ms Gaudencio and welcomed to the meeting of the Forum.

## **2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

### **(a) Schools Forum Minutes held on 8 July 2015**

Agreed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 8 July 2015 with the following correction:

*Apologies of absence were also received from Mr NcNamara.*

A copy of the minutes are included in the Minute Book.

### **(b) Education Resources Group (formally the Commissioning Group)**

**Received** a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Education Resources Group held on 15 September 2015, a copy of which is in the minute Book.

### **(c) Matters arising from the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 8 July 2015**

#### **(i) School Funding Review 2015/16 (Item 6a)**

**Reported** that the three Enfield Members of Parliament (MPs), David Burrowes, Joan Ryan and Kate Osamor, were sent a letter, a copy of which was circulated to Forum members, inviting them to meet with members of the Schools Forum.

Following considerable delay, Mr Burrowes and Ms Ryan confirmed that they were both able to attend a Forum meeting on either 20 November or 4 December 2015. Unfortunately, Ms Osamor was unable to attend on either of these dates but had offered to attend a Forum meeting on another date.

Members were asked to confirm whether they still wanted to meet with the Enfield MPs and, if so, were they agreeable to meeting two of the Enfield MPs on either of the proposed dates.

Ms Cranfield further explained that she was unable to attend a meeting on 20 November 2015 and if the Forum agreed this date for the meeting, then arrangements for chairing the meeting would also need to be considered and agreed by the Forum.

Noted:

- A. It was observed that it would helpful to have a meeting sooner with only two of the MPs present than a meeting with all three but after the Autumn Statement.
- B. Mr Goddard advised the Forum that if the meeting was held on 20 November then he would be happy to Chair it.
- C. The meeting needed to be a single item agenda focussing on school funding, with Headteacher representatives from the three sectors required to attend.

#### **Resolved:**

The meeting with the MPs would be held on 20 November 2015 and chaired by Mr Goddard;

A briefing paper with key points for discussion will be prepared and sent to the MPs in advance of the meeting;

Members wishing to attend the meeting should confirm and advise of their attendance to Mrs Brown;

Members to forward any key points for inclusion in the discussion to Mrs Brown, who will co-ordinate and liaise with Mr Goddard.

**Action: Mr Goddard & Mrs Brown**

(ii) **Education Resources Group held on 15 September 2015**

**Reported** the Education Resources Group was replacing the Commissioning Group and would lead as a Headteacher consultative group advising the Local Authority and the Schools Forum on issues related to school and education funding.

It was questioned what arrangements were for accountability for this group. It was stated that the group would be accountable to the Schools Forum. It was requested that the Forum be provided with a copy of the Terms of Reference for the group.

**Resolved** to circulate the Terms of Reference for the Education Resources Group.

**Action: Mrs Brown**

#### 4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & DECISION

##### (a) Schools Budget: Outturn Report 2014/15

**Received** a report reviewing the Schools Budget revenue expenditure for 2014/15, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book.

**Reported** the report providing a summary of the year-end position for revenue expenditure for 2014/15 and reasons for any variances in the expenditure.

**Noted:**

- (i) The balances being carried forward into 2015/16 amounted to £6.024m.
- (ii) Since the previous report to the Schools Forum, additional funding of £65k was received for Early Years and this resulted in the final DSG of £294.5m before the academies recoupment.
- (iii) The underspend for the two-year-old provision was due to funding being provided on a target number set by the Government, but actual take-up was lower than estimated. It was stated, for 2015/16, funding would be provided on actual participation, as recorded on the January 2015 Census; there was a concern the change would lead to a future funding pressure because of the low number of pupils traditionally recorded in January.  
  
It was questioned if the numbers were based on actual children registered or based on full time equivalent. It was confirmed that they were based on the full time equivalent.
- (iv) There was an increase in the number of pupils with a high level of complex needs and due to lack of provision in borough had to be placed out of borough, thus leading to an overspend.
- (v) The underspend reported for the speech therapy service was due to disputing and assessing the invoice from the provider, which then resulted in an underspend.
- (vi) As part of the budget setting process, the Forum had agreed to £2.5m of the carry forward to be used to support the budget pressures for 2015/16: this, together with other commitments detailed in the report, would provide £1.2m in balances to be carried forward into 2016/17.
- (vii) It was questioned if any expenditure had been incurred on the autism project. There was a view that information on the project and spend should be presented to the Forum and any unspent money be added to the balances. It was stated that a report was planned to be presented to the next meeting of the Forum.

**Clerk's Note:** Ms Knightley arrived at this point.

- (viii) The revenue balances held by schools had reduced from £13.3m to £11.2m (15.8%) and similarly capital balances had also reduced from £2m to £1.66m (20%).

##### (b) Schools Balances and Recycling of Balances for Financial Year 2014/15

**Received** a report providing information on revenue balances reported by maintained schools as at 31 March 2015, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book

**Reported** there were a couple of errors in the report: the Forum was advised the balances reported excluded balances for community focused activities, and also there was a missing data set in Figure 1. This revised graph would be circulated to the Forum members.

**Noted:**

- (i) The balances had been reducing over the last five years and were now below the levels reported for 2010/11.
- (ii) An analysis to assess if there was a relationship between the balances held and size of school or free school meal eligibility had indicated a small relationship for balances held by primary voluntary aided and secondary schools and free school meal eligibility. However, it was difficult to assess the significance, as the data sample was very small.

It was commented that schools were experiencing a significant reduction in the number of pupils eligible for free school meals and were using all the funding provided to narrow the gap by supporting pupils from deprived backgrounds. The effects of the support provided were being seen in improvements in the results being achieved.

It was queried if, as detailed in the 1999 Act, the pupil premium was provided for children from families seeking asylum. It was stated that the current regulations precluded these groups of pupils. This was because they were not able to access the public funds used to assess free school meal eligibility.

- (iii) Following an assessment of returns received from schools above the threshold for retaining balances, it was recommended not to recycle any balances from schools.
- (iv) The Forum were advised, for 2014/15, the upper and basic threshold for recycling had been the same and the process for assessing the recycling balances had been amended to seek information on balances once. It was recommended that the Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools be amended as detailed in the report.
- (v) Six schools had reported in their initial return a projected deficit at the end of 2015/16. This position had changed to five schools projecting a deficit: the Authority was working with these schools to move to a balanced position. To ensure consistency, a process for supporting recovery was being devised and would be presented to the Forum.

It was questioned if the deficit would be met from other funds. It was stated that it was not met and the Authority would need to work with the schools concerned to achieve a balanced position. It was observed that schools in this position were likely to face considerable challenges including potential redundancies.

It was commented the 28 schools projecting a deficit in the second year of their budget plans, but this did not highlight in-year deficit being experienced by schools.

The Forum considered this would be an issue that would need to be raised at the meeting with the MPs.

**Resolved** to note and agree the proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools.

(c) Schools Budget Update 2015/16 and 2016/17 (Update)

**Received** a report providing an update on the Schools Budget for 2015/16 and 2016/17, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book.

**Reported** the report was in three parts that provided an update and summary on:

- the latest amount of DSG for 2015/16
- the current position on expenditure against the DSG for 2015/16
- early information and indications on the DSG for 2016/17.

**Noted:**

- (i) Since the previous update, the total DSG available had reduced from £308.5m to £306.3m because of a change in the regulations in how funding was provided for the nursery provision for two year-olds. The change required the numbers recorded on the January Census to inform participation for funding purposes. It was stated another factor was also the numbers of three- and four-year-olds accessing the nursery provision had dropped. Officers were investigating these changes and seeking further clarification from the DfE.

Based on the above change, the current position was indicating a potential shortfall of £1.3m in the overall DSG, which would need to be met from the carry forward from 2014/15. Therefore, this may mean there will be no balances available to use for 2016/17.

- (ii) The monitoring report produced at the end of August 2015 provided the year-end projections, but the position had significantly worsened since the report was written. The expenditure for the out of borough provision was now significantly over budget. It was questioned why this was the case. It was stated that there were no places in the special schools for the children requiring to be placed and the cost of a single placement could be over £100k. With pupils and their families migrating in and out of the borough due to the

Welfare Benefit reforms, it was difficult to predict demand. The Forum was advised that the position for this and the other budgets was being monitored.

The expenditure projected for the Union Duties was queried.

Resolved the expenditure incurred for Union Duties would be clarified.

**Action: Mrs McNamara**

- (iii) The assumption, for this initial calculation, was the Schools Budget for 2016/17 funding would be based on a flat cash settlement for the Schools and Early Years blocks and no changes to the High Needs Block.
- (iv) The Authority was reviewing the arrangements for schools that had expanded onto two sites and considering whether the funding provided for these schools operating as a split site was reasonable. It stated this would be a change to the funding arrangements and would add further pressure to the Schools Budget.
- (v) The Authority was required to submit a pro-forma to the DfE on the factors to be used for the funding formula and draft rates being considered. The Forum was advised, at this point, the pro-forma would be completed with factors currently being used with the rates applied for 2015/16. The rates would then be reviewed in line with the settlement received and a revised pro-forma will be presented to the Forum before being submitted in January 2016.
- (vi) The initial calculations were indicating a reduction of £2.3m and once all the pressures detailed in the report were taken into account; there was a potential budget gap of £3.5m. Officers were working on options to close this gap and the options will be presented to the Schools Forum at the next and subsequent meeting.

The Forum noted the report.

**Clerk's Note:** Mr Levy left at this point.

## **5. ITEM FOR INFORMATION**

### Schools Finance Board

**Reported** the Schools Finance Board had been set up by Mr Leak, Chief Executive, as a task and finish group with a limited life.

### **Noted**

- (a) At the request of secondary Headteachers, Mr Leak set up the Schools Finance Board. The Board comprised of Cllr Orhan, Mr Leak, Senior Officers and Headteacher representatives from the three sectors.

The Board was considering the use of the DSG, Education Support Grant and the provision of traded services.

- (b) At the last meeting, the Board had discussed the LA central services funded from the DSG. This had highlighted there were approximately 45-50 different central activities supported by the DSG. The Headteachers had sought to seek information on these services and were assessing their impact in terms of safeguarding and outcomes for CYP. The aim was to consider what were the most appropriate and effective ways of providing these services while providing the most impact and achieving value for money.
- (c) There was a concern that the process being described was not transparent and appeared to exclude the Forum. It was stated that this had been the first opportunity to advise the Forum about the Board and any recommendations arising from the work of the Board would be brought to the Forum for consideration.
- (d) Information on the services was being presented to the next Headteachers' Termly Conference with the aim of seeking the views of all Headteachers and then these views would be shared with the Forum.
- (e) There was a concern that Governors were being excluded from this process. It was commented that the Member Governor Forum received information from the Schools Forum and this will be included for discussion at their next meeting.

- (f) The Forum felt that they needed to have sufficient time to assess the information and requested the information provided to the Headteachers also be circulated to the Forum.

**Clerk's Note:** Mr Clark left at this point.

**Resolved** information on services funded from the DSG would be circulated to members.

**Action: Mrs Brown**

**Clerk's Note:** Mrs Leach left at this point.

## **6. WORKPLAN**

Any additional items arising from the meeting would be added to the workplan.

**ACTION: Mrs Brown**

## **7. FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Noted:**

(a) The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 9 December 2015 at Chace Community School.

(b) Dates of future meetings were as follows:

- 20 January 2015
- 02 March 2016
- ?? May 2016
- 06 July 2016
- 12 October 2016
- 18 January 2017
- 01 March 2017
- 19 April 2017
- 05 July 2017

## **8. CONFIDENTIALITY**

No items were considered to be confidential.