

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday 9th December 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), Mr M Lavelle (Secondary), *Ms A Gaudencio* substituted by Ms L Whitaker (Primary)

Academies: Ms R Stanley-McKenzie, Ms L Dawes

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

Ms E Stickler

Observers:

Cabinet Member

Cllr A Orhan

Education Funding Agency

Mr O Jenkins

School Business Manager

Ms A Homer

Also attending:

Chief Education Officer

Ms J Tosh

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 Mr De Rosa, Mr Hintz, Ms Dawes, and Ms Homer.

b) **Membership**

The Forum welcomed Ms Dawes, Mr Lavelle and Ms Homer and noted Ms Stickler had been nominated the lead Education Professional.

Reported the deadline for receiving nominations for the Early Years Provider vacancy was December 2011. If nomination were received by this deadline, then the Authority would approach individuals and ask them to consider joining the Forum.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to complete and return the Register of Business Interests form.

Mrs J Leach, as the Head of Service for Disabled Children, registered an interest under item 4(b): Review of Services Funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant – 2015/16; in particular to the services for children with disabilities.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Schools Forum Minutes held on 14 October 2015

Received and agreed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 14 October 2015, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book.

(b) Schools Forum meeting with MPs held on 20 November 2015

Received and agreed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum with MPs held on 20 November 2015, a copy of which is in the minute Book.

(c) Minutes of Joint Meeting of Schools Finance Board and Education Resources Group

Received and noted the minutes of the joint meeting of Schools Finance Board and Education Resources Group held on 1 December 2015, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book.

Clerk's Note: Mr Lavelle arrived at this point.

(d) Matters arising from these minutes

(i) Meeting on 14 October 2015: Item 4(c): Schools Budget Update 2015/16 and 2016/17

Reported that the Forum had previously agreed that the cost associated with union duties be reimbursed on actuals and the current monitoring report was indicating an overspend of £25k against the budget provision. This overspend was due to additional costs following changes in the union representatives and also an increase in membership for some of the unions.

(ii) Meeting on 20 November 2015 with the Enfield Members of Parliament (MPs)

Noted

- (i) A member of the Forum commented that he was dismayed that MPs had not shown up for the meeting, especially as the meeting had been re-arranged to accommodate the MPs' diaries.

The Chair advised the member that both of the absent MPs had to attend other urgent meetings and had sent representatives to attend on their behalf.

- (ii) The MPs were keen to further understand the pressures on individual schools.

The Forum was advised that the MPs would be provided with a copy of the notes from the meeting.

Resolved any member wishing to send additional information with examples of the impact of the cuts were having on their schools should send these to Mrs Brown.

Action: Schools Forum Members

- (iii) Ms Tosh stated that the Chief Executive had asked her to send a letter to the MPs seeking an update on what actions had been taken to support and address the issues raised at the meeting.

Action: Mrs Tosh

Clerk's Note: The Forum agreed to take Item 5a on the agenda first to enable Ms Fitzgerald to leave the meeting.

4. ITEM FOR INFORMATION

a) Local Authority Budget 2016/17: Consultation

Reported the Local Authority had published its Budget Consultation for 2016/17. The document and the online response form were available on the Enfield Council website. To support residents, businesses, other stakeholders and partners, the Council had arranged local focus groups and public meetings. The details of the meetings were also available on

the website.

Noted:

- (i) Government funding had declined from £191m in 2010/11 to £111m for 2015/16, with further reductions required over the next 4 years. It was currently forecast that, by 2018/19, the funding will have reduced to £81m. This forecast did not include any changes following the Chancellor's statement to the Houses of Parliament.
- (ii) The DSG continued to be protected, with schools receiving a flat cash settlement by maintaining the Per Pupil rate. The Chancellor, in his statement, mentioned 'schools would be protected in real terms', but it is unclear what was meant by this statement. Details of the settlement for the Schools Budget were due to be published later in December 2015.
- (iii) The Council's budget was facing significant pressure due to the reduced funding and growth in the numbers of the elderly and school age children, as well as an upturn in the property market that had resulted in higher costs in paying private landlords for rents. The Care Act, the implementation of which had been delayed, would become another pressure in future years. Other pressures included the increase in new borrowing to meet, among others, the requirements of the schools expansion programme.
- (iv) To meet the savings target, the Council was currently required to find cuts of approx. £70m over the next four years. So far, £20m in savings had been identified as part of the Enfield 2017 programme, which included a 50% reduction in staff back office functions. For 2016/17, further cuts of up to £17m were planned, to work towards meeting the required target of £70m. All service areas were being considered for meeting the savings target.
- (v) The recent budget monitoring report was indicating an overspend for Children's Services of £2.3m. This was a result of the additional funding required for the increase in needs and also more children and young people coming into the borough.
- (vi) To support the pressures, the Council was considering an increase of 1% in the Council Tax, which had been frozen since 2010/11. The increase of 1% would result in approx. £1m in additional revenue.

It was observed that the increase should be higher. It was stated that early responses to the consultation were indicating support for a rise in the Council Tax and there was some support for a higher increase. However, any increase over 1.99% would require a formal consultation process to be carried out. After meeting the cost of the consultation, there would not much additional money raised.

Cllr Orhan stated that she would seek to continue this discussion with the Cabinet members. She felt the increases suggested were unlikely to make a significant impact on the level of savings required. The Forum was advised that, by 2020, most of the Council's spending would be on Children's, Adult and Environment Services.

It was queried whether the facility of adding a £2m precept for social care was being considered. It was stated that this ring-fenced provision would be considered as part of the budget setting process.

- (vii) It was commented that schools were either facing or in deficit, and whether there had been any discussion about what the Council could do to support the Schools Budget. It was stated that the Schools Budget was considered separately. It was suggested that pressures facing schools should be raised at Council meetings.

Cllr Levy advised the Forum that the Labour Group had discussed the issues facing schools and had invited Council officers to attend their meeting in January 2016 to present and discuss the issues further.

Cllr Orhan explained that the Administration was working towards making the changes required to meet the reduction in funding provided by the Government. There were

concerns that, with the reduced funding that would be available in 2020, most local authorities would only be able to support statutory duties. The Council and the Schools Forum needed to work together.

It was observed that schools were judged on pupil attainment as part of the inspection process and the work schools had been doing to narrow the gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers had been supported by the additional funding provided through the Pupil Premium. If this funding was not forthcoming, then this would have a direct impact on schools' abilities to narrow the gap.

It was queried if the Council tax was increased whether the Schools Forum would be able to inform the distribution of the additional money received from the Council Tax.

The Forum was advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be receiving and discussing the outcomes from the Budget Consultation at their meeting on 1 February 2016 at 7pm. This was a public meeting and members of the Forum were invited to submit a written response to the Consultation and / or attend the meeting.

Cllr Orhan stated that ring-fencing income from raising Council Tax could lead it to becoming a political issue, and without a significant contribution from the Government in school funding, it was difficult to see a way forward.

- (viii) The Forum members were asked if they knew whether schools had raised with their parents and communities the financial pressures they were facing. It was commented that schools were concerned that talking about financial issues to parents may cause alarm about this and other issues. It was questioned if the local residents had been provided with information on the current situation facing the Council and schools.
- (ix) It was commented that the number of families and children with complex needs coming into Enfield was increasing. Schools had been able to manage this increase by employing Teaching Assistants and other support staff by providing an appropriate level of funding. With schools facing challenging times with their budget and reducing the number of support staff, the Pupil Referral Unit was seeing an increase in the number of pupils with complex and challenging needs being excluded. Currently, the Unit was being asked to accommodate up to five new pupils each week. The Unit was now over capacity and these pupils were being placed in expensive alternative provision. With less support services available in schools, the Education, Health and Care Plans were not always available and some of the pupils had more than five services attached to them.

The significant and continuing increase in referrals for pupils with complex needs was resulting in more funding required from the DSG. The Forum was advised a placement in an alternative provision could cost in excess of £1k per week. It was important to ensure pupils with high complex needs were provided with early help and so reduce the burden for the future.

It was commented that research and experience of special schools indicated that early help and intervention was the only way to keep children in the borough and avoid huge costs in later years. The Forum suggested some examples and case studies should be shared with the MPs.

It was suggested that it may be helpful to circulate a briefing note on the financial position from the Schools Forum for all schools to consider and share, as appropriate, with their parents. It was further recommended that the briefing note be simple and focus on key areas raised at the meeting with the MPs. This could also be used to support a press release from the Forum.

Resolved to:

- Circulate a copy of the presentation with the minutes
- Draft a briefing note on behalf of the Schools Forum for all schools

Clerk's Note: Mr McGee left at this point.

5. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & DECISION

(a) Schools Budget: 2016/17: Update

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

Reported a draft budget, for 2016/17, had been prepared using the local data from the October Census. The DfE had indicated that the funding settlement and dataset to be used for the funding formula would be published mid to late December 2015. Once the funding settlement and dataset had been received, the budget would be recalculated and presented to the next meeting of the Forum.

Clerk's Note: Ms Fitzgerald left at this point.

Noted:

- (i) It was estimated the overall resources available for 2016/17 would be £1.977m less than 2015/16. This was because no balances were available to carry forward and the reduced funding received for disadvantaged two-year-olds.
- (ii) The budget pressures included the need to fund growth for academies and free schools and the additional costs of the increased number of pupils with high complex needs. The pressure for high needs was estimated, at this time, as £1.4m. This was based on known placements and for out-borough SEN children reaching 18–19 years. The pressure had also been exacerbated by an increase in the number of the post-16 SEN placements. With the introduction of the SEND reforms, there was a duty to support young people up to the age of 25; some of these young people had left education but were now returning to college but extra funding was provided. Using all the known information and pressures, it was estimated that there was a budget gap of £4,928m.
- (iii) The contextual changes included an increase in primary pupil numbers and an overall decrease in the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). It was questioned if anything was being done to assess the drop in FSM eligibility. It was stated that the DfE had indicated that the IDACI indicator for deprivation was being updated but it was unclear when this would be available. It was confirmed that the budget proposals included the same unit rates as 2015/16.
- (iv) The approval required for de-delegation of the central licences would only include the CLEAPSS license, as all the other licenses were purchased by the DfE and the cost top-sliced from the DSG.
- (v) The funding for the 14-16 Practical Learning Options was not a de-delegation item and was a separate item to be agreed as part of a pooling arrangement.
- (vi) The Forum was advised of the options available to bridge the gap. The Forum was reminded that previously the Forum had agreed to use the available balances to support the budget gap but this option was not available for 2016/17. It was noted a reduction in the AWPU by £25 would produce a saving of £1.25m, subject to the effect of the minimum funding guarantee. It was commented that there had been a meeting of the Schools Finance Board and Education Resources Group to consider and identify reducing the funding for the centrally retained services.
- (vii) It was remarked that schools had been invited to meet with the Education Psychology Service to pilot a change in the operational arrangements, so that an initial EP report would not be required for the Panel.
- (viii) Owing to the tight timeline for discussing in detail the options for meeting the budget

gap and setting the budget, it was suggested that there be an extra meeting of the Forum. It was stated that there was a meeting of the Education Resources Group planned for Tuesday 12 January 2016 and this could be a joint meeting with the Forum.

Resolved to:

- Continue the growth fund for 2016-17 at a cost of £1.163m.
- Hold a joint meeting of the Education Resource Group Meeting and Schools Forum on Tuesday 12 January 2016, at 8am at Highlands School.

ACTION: ALL

(b) Central Services Funded from the DSG

Received a report providing information on the Central Services funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), a copy of which is included in the Minute Book

Resolved this item would be discussed at the meeting of 20 January 2016.

The Forum members were asked to bring the report to the meeting.

ACTION: ALL

6. ITEM FOR INFORMATION (Cont.)

School Funding Arrangements for 2016/17

Received a report providing information on the School Funding Arrangements for 2016/17, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book.

Reported the Forum, at the previous meeting, had been advised that there were two primary schools expanding on split sites and consideration was being given to funding these schools as traditional split-site schools. The paper circulated had been sent to all schools and academies for comment. The comments would be summarised and reported to the next meeting of the Forum. At this meeting, the sector representatives would be asked to consider the proposals.

7. WORKPLAN

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

ACTION: Mrs Brown

8. FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted:

(a) The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 20 January 2016 at Chace Community School.

Resolved, if the papers for this meeting could not be published and circulated to meet the required timeline, they would be circulated by the Friday prior the meeting.

(b) Dates of future meetings were as follows:

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

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

No items were considered to be confidential.