

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday 20th January 2016 at Chace Community School

Schools Members:

- Governors: Ms I Cranfield (Primary) Chair, Mr Clark (Primary), Mrs J Ellerby (Primary), Mrs J Leach (Special), Mrs L Sless (Primary), Mr T McGee (Secondary), Mr G Stubberfield (Secondary)
- Headteachers: Ms H Ballantine (Primary), Mr P De Rosa (Special), Mr B Goddard (Secondary), Ms M Hurst (Pupil Referral Unit), Ms H Knightley (Primary), *Mr M Lavelle (Secondary)*, Ms A Nicou (Primary) and Ms H Thomas (Primary), *Ms A Gaudencio* substituted by Ms L Whitaker (Primary)
- Academies: Ms R Stanley-McKenzie, Ms L Dawes

Non-Schools Members:

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| Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee | Cllr D Levy |
| 16 - 19 Partnership | Mr K Hintz |
| Teachers' Committee | <i>Mr S McNamara</i> substituted by Mr T Cuffaro |
| Head of Behaviour Support | Mr J Carrick |
| Early Years Provider | Vacancy |
| Education Professional | Ms E Stickler |

Observers:

- | | |
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| Cabinet Member | Cllr A Orhan |
| School Business Manager | Ms A Homer |
| Education Funding Agency | <i>Mr O Jenkins</i> |

Also attending:

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|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 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 Lavelle.

b) Membership

Reported that:

- Ms Claire Gopoulos had been nominated to fill the vacancy for the Early Years Representative. Due to the late confirmation of her nomination, Ms Gopoulos had sent her apologies for this meeting.
- This was Ms Stanley-McKenzie's last meeting as an academy representative on the Forum.
- Ms Whitaker was substituting for Ms Gaudencio, but following confirmation by the Primary Headteachers' Conference, Ms Whitaker would replace Ms Gaudencio on the Forum as a Primary Headteacher representative.

The Forum:

- thanked Ms Stanley-McKenzie for her contribution to the work of the Forum.
- welcomed Ms Gopoulos to the Forum and noted her absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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

Agreed an electronic copy of the Register of Business Interests form would be sent to those members still required to submit a completed form.

ACTION: Mrs Brown

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Schools Forum Minutes held on 9 December 2015

Received and agreed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 9 December 2015, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book.

(b) Minutes of Joint Meeting of Education Resources Group and Schools Forum

Received and noted the minutes of the joint meeting of Education Resources Group and Schools Forum held on 12 January 2016, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book.

(c) Matters arising from these minutes

Noted any matters arising from these minutes would be covered by the agenda items.

4. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

a) Schools Budget 2016/17: Update

Reported at the December meeting the Forum was provided with information based on estimated budget figures and pupil data. The Authority had now received the settlement and had used the information to produce a draft budget. The Forum was asked to consider and agree proposals for setting a balanced budget and to confirm the services where funding would be de-delegated.

Once confirmed, the Authority would complete a Pro-forma, detailing the unit rates to be used for the funding formula, and submit to the DfE. To support these discussions, the Forum had been provided with information showing the indicative individual school budgets to be funded from the Schools Block and this excluded any funding from the High Needs Block, Post 16, Pupil Premium and any other grant funding.

Noted:

- (i) the Autumn Statement had mentioned a real term settlement for schools but the funding provided was based on a flat cash settlement with
 - no changes to the per pupil rate for the Schools and Early Years Blocks;
 - an increase of £660k provided for the High Needs block to reflect demographic changes.

To develop a draft budget, estimated participation numbers had been used for the Early Years block.

It was estimated that the total resources available for 2016/17 were £310.2m. This was approximately £1m less than last year, even though there had been a slight increase in pupil numbers for the Schools Block.

The reduction in resources was attributable to:

- the need to fund growth for the non-recoupment academies
- pressure to support an increase in the number of pupils with high levels of need
- there being no balances to support the budget for 2016/17, unlike the previous year.

This meant the draft budget was indicating a budget gap of £2.95m that needed to be bridged to balance and set the budget for 2016/17.

- (ii) The draft budget was based on the following:

- With the exception of the primary split site factor, the same unit rates were used for the funding formula as 2015/16. The Forum was advised that schools had been consulted on increasing the primary split site rate from £25k to £55k to meet the increased costs being experienced by two primary schools that were now operating on split sites. The Forum was asked to agree the unit rates detailed in the report.

- Meeting the additional cost of £400k required to fund FE college placements for funding Post 16 pupils with SEN and also the cost of other financial pressures due to the increase in pupils with high needs and the on-going effect of the SEND reforms.
- The pupil data provided by the EFA showed there was a significant reduction in the number of pupils from deprived backgrounds attracting funding through the free school meal eligibility (FSM) or the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) formula factors. It was assumed that this was due to the introduction of the Welfare Benefit Cap.

The reduction in the number of pupils eligible for FSM or classed as deprived meant the total funding required for these formula factors had reduced, which would impact on individual schools' budgets. However, the continued requirement for the use of the minimum funding guarantee limited any loss for an individual school to 1.5% per pupil.

The Forum was asked to consider and agree the unit rates as detailed in the report, which would be used for the funding formula for mainstream schools. The Forum was advised that they needed to consider in their deliberations how the budget gap would be narrowed if there were no changes to the unit rates.

Clerk's Note: At this point, the Schools Forum agreed to discuss the Central Services item on the agenda.

(b) Central Services Funded from the DSG

Received updated information on the Central Services funded from the DSG.

Reported the Education Resources Group and Schools Forum had met and considered all the central services funded from the DSG. The Authority had, at this meeting, proposed a reduction of 7% to the funding provided to all services except those for which a decision had previously been made, such as the Skills for Work Service and the PE and Sports Support Service. This proposal was discussed in detail. Since the meeting, officers had considered the views expressed at the joint meeting and also previously by the Headteachers' Conferences, together with the viability of each service and the impact on children and young people (CYP) and their families if a service ceased. Following these considerations, officers were recommending to the Forum a percentage reduction across all services to meet the budget shortfall.

Ms Cranfield commented that this was a very difficult situation and should be considered carefully, especially at a time when there was a need to be mindful of value for money and yet, while there was acknowledged to be value, there was essentially no money.

Ms Cranfield then led the discussion on this item by asking for comments.

Noted:

- it was pointed out that the proposal did not include areas which the joint meeting had identified for further reductions. There was a view that the proposal being put forward was acceptable with the exception of three areas that needed to be considered for further reductions.

It was stated all the services were aware that they needed to carry out a review of their work. The proposal put forward had considered carefully the viability of any reduction in staffing and provision and how this would impact on the wider needs of the borough. It was important, as far as possible, that CYP were not disadvantaged and resources were used effectively to support their needs.

- it was commented that the proposal tabled only allowed for the current cash level to be maintained and did not provide further funding of the real costs facing schools. The Authority's view of protecting CYP was supported but the financial burden could not be transferred from the centre to schools.
- it was remarked that, in the previous discussion concerning the Parent Support Service, there was a view that the Service could be reduced, but members had not realised at the

time the full impact of any reduction or cessation of the Service and the effect this would have on schools trying to support vulnerable CYP and their families.

It was commented it was the quality of the Service that was being questioned. Schools had had different experiences from the Service. It was important to have support and early intervention if there was a need but this had to be of a high quality. Openness and transparency were required in how services were provided.

It was suggested that the Service was possibly not marketing and promoting itself effectively and school staff feedback was that they were concerned that the Service was being considered for cuts.

It was stated that this service was included for review.

- (iv) it was observed that the services listed had an impact on the lives of CYP both in and out of school. There was a need to look very carefully at the impact and whether a cut of an individual service would leave schools in a vulnerable position, particularly those smaller schools that may not have the resources and expertise to provide support in the areas cut.
- (v) the review needed to consider the impact a service was having to address the needs of CYP and also how these supported the educational priorities for both schools and the Authority.
- (vi) any in-year savings would remain in the DSG.
- (vii) it was commented that the Authority's proposal appeared to be reasonable and helpful. Over the past year, officers had worked with the Forum to understand the complexity of the Schools Budget and this had been useful in increasing everyone's awareness of what budget funded what area and how it was used. For this reason, it was suggested that, rather than lose any vital services, the Authority's proposal be supported and all the services be given another year to enable an informed decision to be made next year. Furthermore, as the review progressed, it should encompass other areas for review, such as Nurture Groups and Children's Centres, with a view to evaluating effectiveness and whether any area could be delivered or managed in a different way.
- (viii) the proposals had included some services where a full funding cut was being recommended. It was stated that these services were looking to move to trading with schools but were dependent on schools buying back. It was commented that they if they provided high-quality, valuable services, they should be able to gain support and buy-in from schools.
- (ix) Cllr Orhan stated that she appreciated the discussion being undertaken by the Forum and supported accepting the proposal for a percentage cut for all services as presented. She felt this was a significant step forward and would provide an opportunity for each service to be reviewed and scrutinised and an impact assessment of their work to be carried out.

It was commented that the review would need to look at the impact on CYP and staff.

- (x) it was requested that there be a clear timeline for carrying out the review and assessing the outcomes to inform the budget process. As detailed in the budget report, schools in the east of the Borough were experiencing significant reduction in funding due to the changes in FSM and IDACI. These schools used the services listed and so needed to consider carefully the effect on both CYP and their schools.
- (xi) it was observed that a request had been made at the joint meeting information to be provided on how the additional capital allocation was being used and whether it could support the works funded from the Corporate repairs and maintenance budget. It was stated that, this year, the Authority had received £12m rather than £4m. This money had been allocated to fund major priority building projects. The projects were a priority if they related to items on the condition survey, fire precaution, Health and Safety requirements and / or kitchen refurbishment works. These projects were required to follow the stringent capital financial regulations. The Corporate repairs and maintenance budget

provided an important resource to carry out emergency works at individual schools, such as repairing the malfunction of the key fob system at Durants School.

Resolved:

- To accept the proposal for a percentage cut across services as presented.
- Each service to review and carry out an impact assessment of how the service met educational priorities and needs of CYP.

Clerk's Note: At this point, the Schools Forum agreed to go back to discuss the Budget report, the previous item on the agenda.

(c) Schools Budget 2016/17: Update (cont.)

Noted:

- (iv) The Forum was asked to consider and agree to services offered on a de-delegated basis to maintained schools.
- (v) The Practical Learning Options was part funded centrally and part funded as a pooled service. The Forum was asked to consider the continuation of the Learning Options.
- (vi) There were no changes to the per pupil funding rate used for the Pupil Premium. However, the total received had reduced to £19.24m to reflect the reduction in the FSM.

Resolved:

- (i) Schools Forum:
 - Accepts the percentage reduction for central services to bridge the budget gap.
 - Notes the draft budget presented.
- (ii) Schools Members approve:
 - The unit values for the primary and secondary funding formula.
 - The percentage reduction for historical central services funded from the Schools Block.
- (iii) Maintained Schools Members:
 - Approved the continuation of the services identified for de-delegation.
 - Rejected the continuation of funding the Practical Learning Options.

The Forum and secondary Headteachers' representatives, on behalf of all secondary Headteachers, thanked officers and acknowledged the amount of work, time and effort that they had put into identifying the savings required to balance the budget.

The Forum were advised that the decisions from the meeting now needed to be discussed with individual services and it was requested that Forum did not share the decisions from the meeting for a week.

(d) Scheme for Financing: Update

Received a report providing update on revisions to the Scheme for Financing, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book

Reported an annual review of the Scheme for Financing was undertaken to ensure compliance with statutory, national and local regulations.

Noted:

- (i) The procurement threshold for EU tender had changed from 1 January 2016.
- (ii) The regulations regarding the Admission Appeals had changed to enable the different types of schools to receive a similar service. It was proposed to amend the Scheme as required and for the Admissions Appeal Service to provide a central service to all maintained schools.
- (iii) The Scheme would be amended to include the change detailed above for primary schools on split sites.

Resolved to accept the revisions to the Scheme for Financing.

5. WORKPLAN

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

ACTION: Mrs Brown

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ms Cranfield reported, following the discussion on the financial difficulties facing schools at the last meeting, that Mr Goddard and she had finalised a press release for the local press. She had contacted the Council's Press Office for publishing but had been advised that she needed to use other avenues. So, Ms Cranfield was going to forward the press release to the Local Advertiser for publication.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted:

(a) The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 02 March 2016 at Chace Community School.

(b) Dates of future meetings were as follows:

- ?? 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.