

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Virtual Meeting Held on Wednesday 7 October 2020 at 5.30 p.m. via Microsoft Teams

Governors: Mr J Ellis (Primary)*, Ms H Kacouris* (Primary), Mrs J Leach (Special), Mr J Donnelly (Secondary), Mr T Hellings (Primary).

Headteachers: Mr D Bruton (Secondary), Ms K Baptiste (Primary), Ms C Fay (Pupil Referral Unit), Ms N Husband (Primary), Ms M O'Keefe / Ms T Day (Secondary), Mr D Smart (Primary), Vacancy (Primary)

Academies: Ms H Thomas (Chair), Mrs A Goldwater, Ms A Nicou, Ms Z Thompson

Non-Schools Members:

16 - 19 Partnership Mr K Hintz

Early Years Provider Ms A Palmer*

Teachers' Committee Mr J Jacobs

Education Professional Mr A Johnson

Head of Admissions Ms J Fear

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Cllr S Erbil*

Observers:

Cabinet Member Cllr R Jewell*

School Business Manager Ms S Mahesh

Education Funding Agency Ms A Latheron-Cassule

Director of Education Mr P Nathan

Finance Manager Mrs L McNamara

Resources Development Manager Ms S Brown

Head of Knowledge and Insights Mr S Buckley

Insight Officer Ms K Prior

NASAWT Association Mr T Cuffaro

Clerk: Andrew Stapleton

** italics denotes absence*

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

(a) Apologies For Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Erbil, Ms Kacouris, Mr Ellis, Ms Palmer and Cllr Jewell.

(b) Membership

REPORTED that:

- Ms Datta had resigned as she had left West Lea School, so a nomination for a special school representative would be sought.
- Mrs Sless had resigned as she was no longer a member of the Children First Academy, so a nomination for an academy representative was being sought.

The Chair pointed out Mrs Sless was a founding member of the Schools' Forum and thanked her for her valuable input over many years.

- Also reported that Mrs Leach was retiring as Chair of Governors at Waverley School at the end of term and would cease to be a Governor, so another representative would be needed for the Schools Forum.

Action: Mrs Brown

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

An opportunity was provided for Members to declare an interest whether pecuniary or otherwise regarding any of the items on the agenda. No declarations were made.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Minutes

RECEIVED and agreed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 July 2020.

(b) Matters Arising

NOTED there were no matters arising that were not on the agenda.

4. ITEMS FOR PRESENTATION

Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)

REPORTED by Kate Prior that:

- (a) The indices of deprivation were updated last year, replacing those from 2015. The indices were used to measure deprivation across neighbourhood areas of the country, with each area consisting of about 800 households. Factors considered included health, living environment, crime risks and so forth.
- (b) The IDACI index measured children in income deprived households in each area. An income deprived household had an annual income of less than 60% of the national median. The figure for Enfield overall was 22.5%, although it was nearly 40% in certain areas. Deprivation had worsened in the north of England compared to the south. In 2015, Enfield had a significant number of the most deprived areas but these had reduced in 2019. Whilst there was still deprivation, particularly to the east of the A10, the number of children in deprived households had decreased to less than 25% in Enfield overall. There had been 47 lower-layer super output deprived areas in 2015 and now it had fallen to 13.
- (c) IDACI was one of several proxy factors used in the national funding formula for schools. The Forum was advised that the DfE had confirmed to manage change in funding that the 2019 data would be weighted to match funding received using 2015 data.
- (d) It was questioned whether the reduction in deprivation in Enfield was real or comparative, in reply to which it was said to be a measure of both and there had not been any perceptible change in the way deprivation had been measured. Some of the data had been based on information collected by HMRC.

It was stated that some communities in the most deprived areas may possibly not figure at all in the data HMRC held. In response to a question, it was confirmed there were parallel trends between child deprivation and the total population. The indices were not a measure of affluence, just of deprivation.

The Forum thanked Ms Prior for her useful and helpful presentation.

Agreed to circulate a copy of the presentation to the members of the Forum.

Action: Ms Brown

5. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

(a) Schools' Budget – Monitoring 2020/21

RECEIVED the DSG Budget Monitoring Report 2020/21.

REPORTED that the report detailed the latest budget monitoring position. The deficit carried forward from 2019/20 of just under £4.5m was less than previously advised because of a late positive adjustment by the ESFA to reflect a change in pupil numbers between January 19 and January 20.

The August 20 budget monitor was projecting the deficit increasing to just under £7m at the end of 2020/21.

Noted the high needs block was currently projecting an in-year overspend of £2.8m. The DSG budget remained under considerable pressure due to high needs overspends and work was being carried out to increase in borough provision and reduce expensive out-borough placements.

RESOLVED to note the position.

(b) High Needs Review

REPORTED that:

- (i) The High Needs Review had been commissioned in order to identify options to increase and develop local provision to manage the pressure on high needs and reduce the deficit. The Working Group agreed with the Forum at the last meeting had met a couple of time and was due to meet again in November.
- (ii) The review had highlighted the significant increase in EHCPs and demand for SEND and one of the options was to develop early interventions. The Working Group supported the development of additional early intervention because it was felt it would make a significant difference in addressing needs during early stages of development. Speech and language was a particular area in which a real difference could be made through early intervention.

Another area identified by the group was interventions that supported pupils with autism. The Group considered this could be achieved by increasing the remit of the Advisory Service for Autism.

The Working Group recognised developing additional early intervention within existing resources was not feasible and that there needed to be a sizeable investment which would then provide future savings. The Group recommended that an additional £1m should be invested in early intervention strategies to yield savings in the longer term.

In response to how the money would be used, it was confirmed a business plan would be developed in order to assess how this resource could best be used.

It was confirmed that the business plan would be monitored against measurable outcomes through the Education Resources Group and this Forum.

- (iii) Another option supported by the Working Group was the development of an Inclusion Charter to ensure funds and services could be accessed by all.
- (iv) The review had identified an option to fund top ups for pupils with EHCPs using a banding system rather than the use of an hourly rate. This had been discussed with the Working Group and it was recommended that funding should be based on an amount. A few members from the Working Group were developing a criteria to support the allocation of an amount.

As reported at the last meeting, the school funding consultation would seek responses to the principle of moving to an amount. The responses from schools and the criteria when it's been developed would be brought back to the Forum.

- (v) The other area included in the consultation was the transfer of 0.5% from the Schools to High Needs block to fund the element 2 £6k per pupil to schools with high number of pupils with EHCPs.

RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the recommendations from the High Needs Working Group;
- (ii) agree, in principle subject to a business plan, investment of £1m to develop early intervention strategies;
- (iii) agree subject to consultation to 0.5% being transferred from the Schools to High Needs block to fund the element 2 £6k per pupil to schools with high number of pupils with EHCPs.

Action: Mrs Brown

(c) Schools Block 2021/22

REPORTED that the DfE had confirmed that school funding would increase by £4.8m and had published their requirements for 2021/22. The DfE had also confirmed that full implementation of the National Funding Formula (NFF) was postponed to 2022/23. The report being presented to the Forum outlined the proposals for the local arrangements for 2021/22.

Noted:

- (i) The overall increase for Enfield was approximately 2% per pupil led funding.
- (ii) There was some local flexibility for allocating this funding.
- (iii) In response to a question it was confirmed that schools would need to find the September 2020 pay increase from existing resources.

The other changes included:

- The use of the 2019 update for the IDACI index;
- The minimum pupil funding set at £4,180 for primary, £5,215 for KS3 and £5,715 for KS4 pupils. These figures included the baselining of the pay and pension grants currently provided to schools;
- The ability to set a minimum funding guarantee and no cap required for schools gaining through the formula.

- (iv) The options for the local formula were to continue with the current arrangements or move to the NFF. The modelling had shown using the 2019 dataset both options were affordable. The two models impacted on individual schools differently.

Following the feedback from last's consultation, the Education Resources Group felt the option which should be consulted upon was the move to the NFF. The Group considered that schools had had two years to plan for this change.

The Forum supported the views of the Education Resources Group the move to the NFF had been in the offing for some time, there was not any need to include the alternative modelling in the consultation.

RESOLVED to note the school funding arrangements for 2021/22 and to consult schools on moving to the NFF without providing alternative modelling.

Action: Sangeeta Brown

(d) Scheme For Financing – Directed Revisions

RECEIVED the Scheme For Financing 2020/21: Directed Revisions Report, which outlined the revisions directed by the Government in relation to financing maintained schools, as well as giving an update on the number of schools in deficit.

NOTED:

- (i) The DfE recommendations were set out in the report, along with timescales for compliance. The DfE had also imposed additional requirements for schools in relation to surplus and deficit balances.
- (ii) The new national requirement was for all schools with a deficit balance above 5% to submit a DRP with their budget plans. There was a local requirement for maintained and special schools

with balances in excess of 6.5% to submit requests to retain those balances and all schools in deficit to develop and agree a deficit recovery plan.

(iii) Nationally all schools with a deficit balance above 5% were required to submit a DRP with their budget plans. If they failed to do so the Local Authority was required to report them to the DfE.

(iv) In response to a question it was stated that last year 14 schools in the borough were in deficit across all sectors.

RESOLVED to note the position.

6. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Schools' Annual Audit Report 2019/20

RECEIVED the Schools Annual Audit Report 2019/20, which outlined the key findings of the audits carried out at maintained schools over the course of the year.

REPORTED that positive opinions issued had fallen to 33% from 78% the previous year and negative opinions had risen to 67% from 23% the previous year. The Schools' Forum representatives from maintained schools were asked to share the findings with their schools.

NOTED:

- (a) The report highlighted a need to tighten financial management of schools and to ensure appropriate controls were in place.
- (b) It was important to ensure governors completed the register of business interests. The Chair asked if there had been appropriate training, for example for school business managers. In response, it was stated that more workshops were planned this year, but attendance was variable. It was suggested that it might be necessary to make some of the training mandatory in future.
- (c) The letter attached to the report had been sent out to schools and that schools would receive follow-up visits as appropriate.
- (d) Maintained schools were required to complete the Schools Financial Value Statement (SFVS) each year and have appropriate financial controls in place.

RESOLVED to note the position and that representatives would share the findings with their schools.

Action: Mrs Brown

7. WORK PLAN

RECEIVED the updated Work Plan 2020/21.

RESOLVED to agree the updated Work Plan 2020/21.

Action: Mrs Brown

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

NOTED there was no other business to discuss.

9. FUTURE MEETINGS

(a) Next Meeting

NOTED the date of the next meeting was Wednesday 9 December 2020 at 5.30pm. This meeting will be a virtual meeting.

(b) Future Meetings

NOTED the dates of future meetings as set out on the agenda.

10. ITEMS TO REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL

NOTED there were no items to remain confidential.