

**SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD**  
**ON THURSDAY 12 JANUARY 2023**

Membership	Name	Phase	School	HT/Gov	End Date
Maintained	*Luke Bridges	Primary	All Saints CE, N20	HT	30/11/24
Maintained	*Ziz Chater	Primary	Martin Primary	HT	30/11/24
Maintained	*Simon Horne (C)	Secondary	Friern Barnet	HT	18/01/24
Maintained	*Sarah Sands	Primary	Garden Suburb Infants	HT	30/11/24
Maintained	*Anthony Vorou	Primary	St John's CE, N11	Gov	18/01/24
Maintained	*Harvey Freeman	Primary	Hasmonean Primary	Gov	18/01/24
Maintained	*Chaya Posen	Primary	Noam School	HT	07/07/24
Maintained	Vacancy	Primary		HT	
Maintained	*Liz Longworth	Primary	Northside	HT	31/12/24
Maintained	*Sarah Maltese	Primary	St Pauls N11	HT	31/12/24
Maintained	Vacancy	Primary		Gov	
Academy	*Dan Hawkins	Primary	Childs Hill, Claremont Fed	HT	31/12/24
Academy	Clare Wagner	Secondary	Henrietta Barnett	HT	31/12/24
Academy	Sian Morris	Primary	The Hyde Prim. Acad.	HT	07/10/24
Academy	Claire Barnes	Secondary	Ark Pioneer	Gov	31/12/24
Academy	*Marc Lewis (Sub for Gavin Smith)	Secondary	Wren Academy	HT	30/11/24
Academy	*Matthew Stevens	Secondary	Saracens	HT	30/11/24
Academy	Robin Archibald	Primary	Broadfields Academy	HT	30/11/24
Academy	*John Bowra	Secondary	Chris's college Finchley	Gov	18/01/24
Academy	*Violet Walker	Secondary	Queen Elizabeth Girls' School	HT	31/12/24
Special	*Ian Kingham	Special Academy	Oak Lodge	Dp HT	18/01/24
special	Gilbert Knight (VC)	Special Maintained	Oakleigh	Gov	18/01/24
EY	*Ben Hasan	Maintained Nursery	Moss Hall Nursery	HT	07/12/25
EY	*Sarah Vipond	PVI	Middx University Nursery		18/01/24
PRU	Joanne Kelly	PRU	PRUs	HT	18/01/24
Post-16	Vacancy				
Trade Union	*Keith Nason	Trade Union	National Education Union		18/01/24

Non-Members:

\*Cllr Pauline CoakleyWebb, Chair of Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

\*Ben Thomas, Strategic Lead

Neil Marlow, Director, Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS)

\*Karen Flanagan, Director of SEND & Inclusion

\*Sharon Palma, Head of Finance

Ashley Hughes, Investments & Innovation

\*Madiha Bhenick, Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Finance Manager

\*Richard Cox, Interim DSG Finance Manager

\*George Peradigou, Clerk

\*Denotes member present

## 1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Nominations for the position of Chair were invited. Members considered the one nomination received on behalf of Simon Horne.

Upon a show of hands, the Forum **RESOLVED** that Simon Horne be appointed as Chair for the year, or until his successor was appointed.

*Simon Horne took the Chair.*

Nominations for the position of Vice Chair were invited. Members considered the one nomination received on behalf of Gilbert Knight.

Upon a show of hands, the Forum **RESOLVED** that Gilbert Knight be appointed, in his absence, as Vice Chair for the year, or until his successor was appointed.

The Chair stated that, should he decline the position, this item would be revisited at the next meeting.

## **2 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

The Chair introduced Ben Hasan, new Headteacher at Moss Hall Nursery, who was successfully elected to represent maintained nurseries. It was noted that Ben Hasan had previous experience on a school's forum from his previous role in another borough.

## **3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted on behalf of Neil Marlow, Sian Morris, Claire Barnes and Robin Archibald. Harvey Freeman had also sent apologies for lateness.

## **4 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

Luke Bridges declared that he was a union representative for NAHT. No other declarations of interest were declared related to the agenda items to be discussed.

## **5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022, copies of which had been circulated prior to the meeting, were confirmed, and approved by the Chair, subject to the following amendment:

### **6. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Monitoring Forecast Outturn 2022-23**

The second paragraph was amended to read: The latest DSG allocation showed an additional £2.688m. The Forecast DSG reserve at year end as £4.1m with an *underspend* of £1.460m against the Growth Fund.

### **Matters Arising**

#### **4. Budget Working Party**

Members were reminded that the Budget Working Party had been co-ordinated by Sarah Sands, with support from the LA, to help deal with the high number of schools with deficit budget balances. The Chair suggested that an update on the working party's proceedings be given at the next meeting.

Action: Sarah Sands

#### **7. National Funding Formula (NFF) 2023-24**

The Chair requested an update on the £2.3b promised to schools nationally by Central Government in its Autumn statement. Sharon Palma informed Members that, while this was not included in the latest NFF figures, the latest information from the Department for Education (DfE) was that this money would be received by schools by way of grant in April 2023.

Marc Lewis informed members that the DfE had recently published some information on their website detailing how much schools could expect per pupil, which could be used to ascertain an estimate.

### **11. High Needs Budget Update**

Members of the Forum were previously asked to participate in the review via stakeholder interviews, where they would represent their area and phase, and later be involved in the recommendations stage. Nothing had yet been received from Karen Flanagan, who was leading this review.

### **12. Document Uploads**

Keith Nason stated that, although current documents had been uploaded to the website, some past information was still missing. He undertook to send a list of documents to the Clerk, who would then liaise with the Finance Team and upload these.

Action: Clerk

There were no other matters arising.

## **6 SCHOOL'S FORUM MEMBERSHIP**

The Clerk updated the Forum regarding ongoing elections, as follows:

**Maintained Primary School Vacancies:** A notice was due to be circulated by the end of the month notifying the maintained school community of the existing vacancy following Nicola Curtis stepping down from the forum. A further vacancy has been created following the resignation of Kirstie Barrett from Coppetts Wood Primary School, for which an election would be arranged.

**Post-16:** A replay was being awaited from Woodhouse Collage and Barnet & Southgate Collage regarding the existing Post-16 vacancy.

**Maintained Nursery:** Ben Hasan had been appointed to fill the Maintained Nursery School vacancy.

## **7 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) MONITORING FORECAST OUTTURN 2022-23**

Sharon Palma explained that the report contained an update of the 2022-23 DSG forecast outturn as at month 8.

The forecast carried forward balance within the reserve was highlighted. Charges against the reserve amounted to £2.8m, as outlined in the report. After the top-up of £1.44m, the carry forward would read £3.51m.

It was noted that, later in the meeting, proposals would be put forth regarding spending plans for the reserve carry forward.

*Anthony Vourou joined the meeting at this point.*

Ben Hasan stated that he noticed the underspend related to supporting Hong Kong & Afghanistan Refugees. He enquired as to whether this money could be used to permanently house refugee families as opposed to having them stay in hotels. In response, the Chair stated that this was outside of the scope of this report but invited Cllr CoakleyWebb to share any further information on the issue.

Cllr CoakleyWebb stated that her understanding was that the Home Office was co-ordinating this effort directly with hotels. The Home Office had been represented at a recent LA meeting to discuss some of the issues the hotels were having.

Sharon Palma explained that the scope of the refugee funding did not extend beyond supporting the schools who enrolled qualifying pupils mid-year and have missed the census.

The Forum noted the 2022-23 updated forecast.

## **8 BUDGET PROPOSAL 2023-24**

Richard Cox introduced the report, which summarised how the LA was funded for its education functions through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

*Harvey Freeman joined the meeting at this point.*

The report provided detailed analysis of each of the four blocks that made up the DSG and how the funding was broken down. Richard Cox highlighted that there was increased across all four blocks, as follows:

- Schools Block: £19.392m
  - High Needs Block: £6.67m
  - Early Years Block: £1.799m
  - Central School Services Block: £0.103m
- Total: £27.964m

The Chair reminded Members that, as previously stated, these figures were not including the additional £2.3b promised by central government via its Autumn statement.

A proposed Minimum Funding Guarantee of +0.5% meant that every primary and secondary schools would receive at least this percentage increase per pupil through the National Funding Formula (NFF) in 2023/24.

The Forum noted the DSG draft budget for 2023/24 compared to the previous budget as outlined in Table 1 of the report. Sharon Palma reminded members that Barnet was one of the very few LAs which mirrored the National Funding Formula.

### Early Years Block

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 3, which detailed the breakdown for the Early Years Block, where some significant changes were expected. The amount the LA would pay early years providers was due to increase from £5.45 to £5.87 per child. This represented an 8% increase, which was more than the actual funding rate. While the aim was to pass on at least 95% to providers, £5.87 represented 92%. This is because some is kept back to fund Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and other contingencies.

For DfE funding rate for 2year-olds had increased from £6.29 to £6.92 per hour. This included the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector. Sarah Vipond raised concerns that, while the increase was good news, this area was still

underfunded when PVI's were expected to provide high quality, sustainable Early Years provision. In response, Richard Cox stated that this was a central government issue as the LA was passporting on the maximum amount possible.

The new funding arrangements for maintained nursery schools were **AGREED**.

The revised funding rates for 3-4-year old children in nursery provision were **AGREED**.

#### Schools Pupil Led Factor Rates for the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) Submission

Members were pleased to note that the LA's per-pupil funding was due increase by approximately £200 for primary schools and approximately £200-300 for secondary schools.

The 2023/24 formula factor rates used in the APT submission as shown in Table 2 were **AGREED**.

#### Growth Fund

Members were reminded that Growth Fund criteria and Split Site Funding were agreed at the previous meeting. However, the report specified that approximately £2.5m was required in total for the Growth Fund.

A list of growing schools was outlined within the report, which accounted for approximately £1m of the Growth Fund. As the following year was the last year of intake for Ark Pioneer, this would gradually start to drop.

Whilst there was no set date for the conversion of Barnet Hill from an independent faith school to an LA maintained school, an estimated £1.4m was required as contingency in the Growth Fund.

The Growth Fund, amounting to £2.5m in total, was **AGREED**.

#### Support for Schools in Financial Difficulties

In response to a query from Ben Hasan, Richard Cox confirmed that the increases outlined were growth in real terms and not just a reflection of year-on-year comparison.

In response to a further question from Ben Hasan, Richard Cox stated that the Finance Team have been providing targeted support to schools in financial difficulties through various means. The Chair added that the Budget Working Party was a good example of this and was well supported by the LA's Finance Team and the BELS School Improvement Team. Richard Cox also outlined the plan to set up a Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel. He emphasised the importance of both teams being involved as financial difficulties could negatively impact on School Improvement plans.

#### Special School Funding from the High Needs Block

Ian Kingham enquired as to who to contact regarding information sought related to the passporting on of High Needs Block Funding to Special Schools. Karen

Flanagan undertook to investigate this and asked that Ian Kingham contact her describing what information was sought after.

Action: Karen Flanagan

#### Band E Pupil Funding

Dan Hawkins raised the concern that he had a number of pupils within his schools identified as Band E, meaning they had met the criteria for a special school place although they remained in mainstream schools due to a lack of available special school places. He explained that he had found it difficult to access the funding available for these pupils and enquired as to whether this funding would still be available.

In response, Karen Flanagan reassured members that the system was still in place and undertook to investigate the cause of delays in accessing the funding.

Action: Karen Flanagan

### **9 CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB) 2023-24**

The report contained an update of the 2023-24 Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).

Members noted that, compared to 2022-23, the final CSSB for 2023-24 had increased by £0.104m to £2.369m. Where appropriate, the increase in budget had been pro-rated against the 2022-23 budget.

The expenditure lines that comprise the Central School Services Block were noted and **AGREED**.

### **10 DE-DELEGATION AND SERVICES PREVIOUSLY FUNDED FROM EDUCATION SERVICES GRANT**

The report contained an update of the 2023-24 De-Delegation Rates.

It was noted that the rates previously reported were calculated using pupil numbers from the October 2021 census and that the new rates outlined within the report had been adjusted to take account of the updated figures according to the October 2022 census.

Members **Approved** the updated de-delegation rates for 2023-24.

### **11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### Support Staff Cost of Living Payments

Luke Bridges expressed concerns about the LA's one-off bonus payment of £150 to support staff who were working below Band E.

In response to a query, Sharon Palma explained that this money was not coming out of the schools' budget, which was why the Forum had not been asked to approve it.

Sharon and Richard Cox stated that the payments were made according to payroll numbers, meaning it was irrelevant whether staff had more than one role or worked at more than one school.

Luke Bridges stated that he understood that this was being offered to community schools as the LA were the employers, whereas the employers of voluntary aided (VA) schools were the governing boards. However, he felt this was inequality because VA schools, who's staff are on the same pay scales, were serving the same community, and the schools were unable to increase taxation to fund their own bonus payments.

Richard Cox confirmed that this was a Chief Executive decision, which was originally intended for council staff but was later extended to community schools. Keith Nason expressed his dismay at this differentiation of council employees and school staff and reiterated that community school staff were equally council employees.

### Proposed Use of DSG Reserves

The report outlined proposals for the use of DSG Reserves in 2023-24.

Of the £1m previously earmarked for spending on new arrival asylum seekers for 2022-23, it was expected that no more than £0.25m would be spent at year end. Therefore, as the reserve was still healthy, it was proposed to continue this in 2023-24 but reduce the maximum to £750k.

The second proposal was to earmark £1m of DSG reserves to fund therapies for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as these were expected to increase since the threshold for a Statutory Education, Health and Care, Needs Assessment (EHCNA) was lowered, and the age range had increased to 0-25 years.

In response to queries around managing future demand for therapies, Karen Flanagan stated that the LA had precured Whittington Health, a new provider, who had reduced their vacancy rate from 80% to 20%, meaning there were more therapists available, although it may not be evident to schools yet as there was still a backlog.

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) was currently undertaking a review of the north and central London boroughs, and there was likely to be an increase of input from the ICB for therapies in Barnet. Karen Flanagan had also strongly lobbied that Barnet be part of a pilot universal offer. Furthermore, preventative work was ongoing with the ICB to help ensure families were not misusing EHCPs as a gateway to speech and language therapy.

The Forum **AGREED** to the proposed use of £750,000 of DSG reserves to fund new arrival Asylum Seekers and the proposed use of £1m of DSG reserves to fund therapies for children with EHCPs as set out in the report.

*There being no further business for discussion, the Chair brought the meeting to a close.*