

Meeting

Schools FORUM

Date and time

Thursday 30TH MARCH, 2023

At 4.00 PM

Venue

Virtual MEETING - ONLINE

To: Members of Schools FORUM (quorum 3)

Chair:

Vice Chair:

David Longstaff

Substitute Members

Lewis

In line with the Constitution's Public Participation and Engagement Rules, requests to submit public questions or comments must be submitted by 10AM on the third working day before the date of the committee meeting. Therefore, the deadline for this meeting is Date Not Specified at 10AM. Requests must be submitted to School Funding Team schoolfunding@barnet.gov.uk

You are requested to attend the above meeting for which an agenda is attached.

Andrew Charlwood – Head of Governance

Governance Service contact: School Funding Team schoolfunding@barnet.gov.uk

Media Relations Contact: Tristan Garrick 020 8359 2454 Tristan.Garrick@Barnet.gov.uk

Assurance Group

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If you are attending the meeting either in person or online, you understand that you may be picked up in recordings made by the public or the Council.

Order of Business

Item No	Title of Report	Pages
1.	Welcome to new members	
2.	Apologies	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
4.	Minutes of Previous meeting	3 - 18
5.	Matters arising	

Facilities for people with disabilities

Hendon Town Hall has access for wheelchair users including lifts and toilets. If you wish to let us know in advance that you will be attending the meeting, please telephone School Funding Team. People with hearing difficulties who have a text phone, may telephone our minicom number on 020 8203 8942. All of our Committee Rooms also have induction loops.

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If the fire alarm sounds continuously, or if you are instructed to do so, you must leave the building by the nearest available exit. You will be directed to the nearest exit by uniformed custodians. It is vital you follow their instructions.

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Once you are outside, please do not wait immediately next to the building, but move some distance away and await further instructions.

Do not re-enter the building until told to do so.

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

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- *Richard Cox, Interim DSG Finance Manager
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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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:

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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.

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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, whose 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 precluded 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.

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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 procured 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.

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