

**Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting
27th November 2018
North London Business Park Building 3, Room 464**

Attended	Name	Representing	Type of Member
Members:	Alexander Banks	Wessex Gardens	Primary Community Headteacher
	Anthony Vourou	St. Johns N11	Primary VA Governor
	Caron Rudge	BEYA	Substitute for Annette Long Community Nursery Headteacher
	Curtis Sweetingham	St. Johns N20	Primary VA Headteacher
	Dr. Matthew Stevens	Saracens High School	Secondary Free Headteacher
	Gilbert Knight	Oakleigh	Special School Governor
	Ian Kingham	Oak Lodge	Special Academy Representative
	Jack Newton	Underhill	Primary Community Headteacher
	Jo Djora	The Hyde	Primary Academy Headteacher
	Joanne Kelly	Pavillion	PRU Headteacher
	John Bowra	Christ's College Finchley	Secondary Academy Governor
	Jude Stone	Cromer Road	Primary Community Headteacher
	Keith Nason	National Education	Stakeholder- Trade Union
	Lucy Harrison	The Archer Academy	Secondary Free Headteacher
	Lucy Rodgers	Colindale	Primary Community Headteacher
	Luke Bridges	All Saints N20	Primary VA Headteacher
	Marc Lewis	Wren Academy	Substitute for Gavin Smith Wren Academy
	Nigel Taylor	Childs Hill	Primary Community Governor
	Robin Archibald	Broadfields Academy	Primary Academy Headteacher
	Sarah Sands	Garden Suburb Infants	Primary Community Headteacher
	Simon Horne	Friern Barnet	Community Secondary Headteacher
	Ziz Chater	Dollis Infants	Primary Community Headteacher
Councillors:	Cllr David Longstaff	Chair of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee	
LA Officers:	Ben Thomas	Strategic Lead, Children and Young People	
	Dr. Helen Phelan	Assistant Director, SEND & Inclusion (Cambridge Education)	

	Gaspare Nicolini	Senior Finance Business Partner
	Ian Harrison	Education and Skills Director
	Neil Marlow	Head of School Improvement (Cambridge Education)
	Adam McPhail	School Funding

Observers:	Lynne Evans	Chair of Governors, St. John's N20
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	Did not attend		
Members:	Andrew McClusky	Hasmonean High	Secondary Academy Headteacher
	Annette Long	Moss Hall Nursery	Community Nursery Headteacher
	Ayalah Hirst	IJDS	Primary Academy Governor
	David Byrne	Barnet and Southgate College	14-19 Providers
	Sarah Vipond	Middlesex University Nursery	Nursery Private Providers
Officers:	Claire Gray	School funding manager	

1. Welcome to new members

GK welcomed Lucy Rodgers (Headteacher, All Saints N20), Sarah Sands (Headteacher, Colindale), Jack Newton (Executive Headteacher, Underhill), Alexander Banks (Headteacher, Wessex Gardens), Curtis Sweetingham (Headteacher, St. Johns N20), Ziz Chater (Headteacher, Dollis Infant), Dr. Matthew Stevens (Principal, Saracens), and Lucy Harrison (Headteacher, The Archer Academy).

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Annette Long, Gavin Smith, Ayalah Hirst, and Sarah Vipond. Caron Rudge and Marc Lewis attended as substitutes for AL and GS.

3. Declarations of interest

JN stated that he is also Executive Head of an academy.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

IK stated that on page 4 he asked if the education share of joint placement costs were fair on the education budget.

AB stated he was shown as a Secondary VA Governor on Page 5, but he is a Secondary Academy Governor.

CR stated Annette Long is shown as representing BEYA on page 5; she represents Moss Hall Nursery School, not BEYA.

5. Matters arising

None

6. Items for information

a. Annual report to Schools Forum on School Balances

IH stated that this item is for information only.

7. Items for decision

a. Consultation on the Schools Budget

IH summarised the proposals that were sent to schools for consultation. The consultation documents were issued on 1st November 2018 to headteachers, and chairs and vice-chairs of governing bodies. And were then presented and discussed at:

- The termly Director's meeting with headteachers on 1st November 2018.
- An extraordinary meeting of Chairs and Vice-chairs of school governing bodies on 14th November 2018.
- The meeting of the Secondary Headteachers Forum on 15th November 2018.

There are three proposals which Barnet have put forward to schools, which are:

Proposal 1: A proposal to fund some services, previously funded from the Education Services Grant, from the budget shares of maintained primary and secondary schools.

Proposal 2: A proposal to increase De-delegation from maintained school budgets to continue the school improvement (LNI) service in its current form.

Proposal 3: A proposal to transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

Proposal 1 is a consequence of the removal of the Education Services Grant from the council. The council has lost £2.8m of funding of statutory services to maintained schools, including:

- Statutory and regulatory duties
- Asset management
- Premature retirement and redundancy
- Monitoring national curriculum assessments

The total amount it is proposed to use for funding these services is £1m.

The benefits of the proposals are that the council can continue to provide the statutory services to maintained schools without having to make further cuts to other front-line services that have already faced significant budget reductions. The disadvantages of the proposal are that money is deducted from the budget shares of maintained schools.

If the proposal is not agreed then the council will have to find the £1m requested elsewhere, as well as the £1.5m it already has to find, as the council cannot legally stop funding these services. As budget limits have been set by each service committee, it is expected the savings would have to come from other front-line services in education or children's social care, which already have faced significant cuts in funding.

Proposal 2 asks the maintained schools' representatives to agree to increase the amount of De-delegated funding for the school improvement service from £101,000 to £310,000. The request is to cover the loss of the 'school improvement grant' and enable the school improvement (LNI) service to continue in its current form.

The benefits of the proposal are that it will ensure the continuation of the current non-traded school improvement service, in the event that the DFE school improvement grant ceases in August 2019. The disadvantages are that it means money is deducted from the budget shares of maintained schools.

If the proposal is not agreed, it will be necessary to reduce the budget of the non-traded school improvement service and reduce the council funding for the Learning Network Inspector team to a single post, tasked with carrying out the core statutory functions envisaged by the DFE, with significant reliance on the use of data, as the resource is unlikely to be sufficient to allow for regular visits to schools.

Proposal 3 is due to an overall shortfall in the High Needs Block nationally as a result of demographic growth, the increasing complexity of needs and the impact of the government's SEN reforms. Across 27 London Boroughs there is an overall overspend on High Needs budgets of £55.7m. These pressures have impacted on Barnet's High Needs budget this year, which is now forecasting an overspend despite £1.2m of savings having already been achieved. Further measures have been agreed but the impact will not be felt until 2019-20. The transfer from the Schools Block is therefore needed to remove the deficit and to prevent cuts in provision and support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Schools Forums in 14 London Boroughs have agreed such a transfer already.

The benefits of this proposal are that it is designed to avoid cuts to funding or services for SEN pupils and/or ongoing overspend in the High Needs budget. The disadvantages are that it would mean less money will be distributed to schools through the school funding formula, albeit the money will mainly be re-allocated to schools as SEN funding.

If the proposal is not agreed, there will need to be direct cuts in SEN funding. This is likely to be for top-ups or other direct funding of provision in schools, or cuts in therapy services or specialist inclusion services. The council does not have the discretion to refuse to fund individual pupils with EHCPs, but it would mean schools getting less money or less support for these pupils.

IH stated that the voting for proposal 1 was for maintained primary, secondary and special schools and PRUs only, voting for proposal 2 was for maintained primary and secondary schools only, and that voting for proposal 3 was for all voting members of the Schools Forum.

The meeting then moved on to questions and discussion about all three proposals.

JD stated that her understanding was that only 0.5% HN transfer can happen without secretary of state approval. LE asked for clarity between the DSG and the Schools Block, and what is moved. IH stated that there are 4 blocks in the DSG, the Schools Block, the High Needs Block, the Early Years Block and the Central Services Block, and to move money from the schools block requires the agreement of the Schools Forum. GK added that more than 0.5% can be moved, but it needs Secretary of State approval.

SS asked whether the school improvement grant is continuing. IH stated that the council have asked, and that there has not yet been confirmation of it continuing past July 2019. LE asked why the responses to proposal 2 were presented as separate primary and secondary responses, and stated she didn't think they were voting separately. IH stated that it was reported in this way to inform the Schools Forum how each phase had voted, because DfE guidance requires separate decisions on primary and secondary dedelegation from the primary and secondary maintained school representatives respectively.

JD asked where Cambridge Education factors in on these proposals, and that she is unclear about what they are bringing to the council. IH replied that the contract between Barnet and Cambridge Education was established as a strategic partnership to maintain the quality of school services and the council's relationship with schools whilst also achieving savings to the council of £1.885m by 2019-20. BT stated that the Cambridge Education savings proposals are being presented to the Children, Education and Safeguarding, Committee on Thursday. In response to a question about what happens if the proposal is not agreed, IH said that, if proposal 2 was not agreed, then it was expected there would be a contractual discussion between the council and Cambridge Education about a reduction to CE's budget, which would then mean the only way to maintain the LNI service would be by establishing it as a traded service.

RA asked if proposal 3 was reversible, IH said all three proposals were for one year and, if the council wants to continue beyond that, it would have to come back to the Schools Forum for approval.

IK asked if there was any further plan regarding how the savings will be found if Proposal 3 was not agreed, asking if there would be a minimum funding guarantee type arrangement for special schools. IH replied that 95% of the High Needs block

goes to schools, and it is inevitable that any budget shortfall would result in less funding going to schools for SEN pupils. GN confirmed that MFG applies to the overall funding for special schools. GN also added that if schools get into deficit then a recovery plan is needed.

ML asked how recovery plans would sit within the National Funding Formula, where the council has no control over school funding. IH stated that full NFF won't come in until 2021-22 at the earliest as the DfE has announced that current arrangements for local funding formulae would continue until 20-21. ML then asked if there was a limit to how much control Barnet would have until then, IH said it was limited, as the DfE defined the factors that can be included in each LA's school funding formula. KN asked about the ISS contract, IH stated that it has increased its take up and is required to pay Cambridge Education an agreed amount each year, which contributes to the savings CE has to achieve.

SH asked about proposal 1, stating that Academies are paying for central schools services, and if there was a comparison with what Barnet are asking for. GN stated that Academies were paid ESG of £66 per pupil per annum, whilst Barnet's current proposal is asking for £32 per pupil per annum from maintained schools.

LE asked if there are schools in deficit, or expecting to, who have voted No to the proposal, what the impact would be on them, and if they could opt out of it. IH replied that the Schools Forum vote carries for all schools, and that schools cannot opt out. CS asked if there was a plan for the expected budget deficits for schools. IH replied that the council will work with the schools affected, supporting them to develop recovery plans, with licensed deficits for up to 3 years where appropriate.

KN asked if this meeting has been called as a result of the overall council's deficit. GN stated that the DSG is ringfenced, and has nothing to do with the council's deficit. IH added that it is also due to the DfE's removal of the council's £2.8m of ESG funding

SH added that most members are aware that this is due to a reduction in central government funding, and that the council's problem was what to do about it. JD added that the Schools Forum has always been about giving the most back to the most schools, but there needs to be forward planning for schools which will be in trouble. JN stated that he doesn't see any other way of bridging the HN budget without educating children locally; he also added that the decision is very difficult, but that Local and Central government needs to be challenged as the current system is not sustainable. He stated that for his school, voting No would mean fast forwarding into deficit. ML stated that academies have had to put up with no ESG funding for a while, and it had been the council's decision to carry on funding maintained schools after the ESG was cut.

ZC asked about the implications of applying to the Secretary of State, IH replied that the council may refer Proposals 1 and 3 if the Schools Forum rejects them, but the council wants to carry on with them anyway. LB asked if there are guidelines on whether the Secretary of State will accept such proposals or not. GN stated that there does not seem to be a particular set of guidelines, and some Local Authorities had been approved, and others denied.

LB stated that he felt application to the Secretary of State wasn't a fair way to decide the transfer of DSG monies, and that it wasn't transparent. Cllr Longstaff stated that this had been raised with central government. KN asked about the timescale behind the application. IH stated that the application has to be made by 30th November and a response is expected by early January at the latest, to allow the LA time to finalise its proposals for school budgets, which must be submitted to the DfE (ESFA) by 21 January. RA asked if the council has already decided on applying if there was a No vote. IH said no, councillors would consider the proposals, the outcome of the consultation with schools, the decisions of the Schools Forum and the various representations from headteachers and governors at the meeting of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee on Thursday evening. Asked if officers would be recommending referral to the Secretary of State if the Schools Forum turned down proposals 1 and 3, IH confirmed they would.

SS stated that the Learning Network Inspectors (LNIs) were excellent and were essential when they are needed, and asked what would happen if the service was to be reduced. IH stated that the LNI service was a safety net, which provides a service to all maintained schools, and steps in to provide essential support when needed. NM added that it is impossible to state what the implications of reducing the service would be. He also added that the LNI is the only service which has had 100% satisfaction ratings for the last 2 years.

JD stated that she has concerns about the equalities impact, and that if children attend schools which have a lower budget they may get a lower standard of education, and that we could be affecting the most vulnerable children in the borough. JD asked if the school improvement grant were to come back, would a vote be held to say how it would be used. IH stated that the grant referred to in the consultation document is for statutory improvement duties for maintained schools. JD asked if the Schools Forum had ever voted on them, IH stated that it would not have been voted on as there is guidance from the DFE, defining what it can be used for. JD requested if the minutes could be checked.

It was then agreed to move to voting on the three proposals:

Proposal 1: A proposal to fund some services, previously funded from the Education Services Grant, from the budget shares of maintained primary and secondary schools.

Proposal 2: A proposal to increase De-delegation from maintained school budgets to continue the school improvement (LNI) service in its current form.

Proposal 3: A proposal to transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

Voting:

Proposal 1 - Maintained primary, secondary and special schools and PRUs only

For 2; Against 10; a majority against the proposal.

Proposal 2 - Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools only

Maintained primary: For 8; Against 2; a majority in favour of the proposal.

Maintained Secondary: For 1; Against 0; a majority in favour of the proposal.

Proposal 3 - All Voting Members

For 8; Against 12; a majority against the proposal.

8. AOB

None

9. Dates of future meetings

It was noted that the meetings scheduled for 11 December and 7 February were being cancelled and instead there would be a meeting on Tuesday 15th January 2019.

Further meetings:

Tuesday 7th May 2019

Thursday 11th July 2019

(Venues for future meetings to be confirmed)