

Minutes of the Schools Forum

Saracens High School

10th October 2019

Attended	Name	Representing	Type of Member
Members:	Alexander Banks	Wessex Gardens	Primary Maintained - headteacher
	Gilbert Knight	Oakleigh	Special Schools - Governor
	Ian Kingham	Oak Lodge	Special Academy – Deputy Head
	Keith Nason	National Education Union	Stakeholder – Trade Union
	Marc Lewis	Wren Academy	Substitute for Gavin Smith
	Anthony Vorou	St John’s N11	Primary Maintained - Governor
	Sarah Sands	Garden Suburb Infants	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
	Simon Horne	Friern Barnet	Secondary Maintained - Headteacher
	Ziz Chater	Dollis Infants	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
	Jo Kelly	PRU	PRU
	Robin Archibald	Broadfields Academy	Primary Academy - Headteacher
	Matthew Stevens	Saracens High School	Secondary Academy - Headteacher
	John Bowra	Christ’s College Finchley	Secondary Academy - Governor
	Curtis Sweetingham	St John’s N20	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
	Annette Long	Moss Hall Nursery School	Maintained Nursery - Headteacher
	Luke Bridges	All Saints N20	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
	Nigel Taylor	Child’s Hill	Primary Maintained - Governor
LA Officers:	Ian Harrison	Education & Skills Director	
	Gaspare Nicolini	Senior Finance Business Partner	
	Gareth Evans	Finance manager (Schools)	
Did not attend	David Longstaff (Apologies Received)	Chair of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee	
	Jo Djora (Apologies Received)	The Hyde	Primary Academy Headteacher
	Jude Stone (Apologies Received)	Cromer Road	Primary community Headteacher
	Lucy Harrison	The Archer Academy	Secondary Free Headteacher

	Lucy Rodgers (Apologies Received)	Colindale	Primary Community Headteacher
	Andrew McClusky	Hasmonean High School	Secondary Academies
	Gavin Smith	Wren Academy	Secondary Academies
	Sarah Vipond (Apologies Received)	Middx University Nursery	PVI Nursery Providers

1. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

Ian Harrison explained the paper which suggested that in order to minimise the number of vacancies and to enable existing Members of the Forum to continue (subject to expiry dates), the total number of primary/secondary representatives on the Forum should be 19, the breakdown of which is available on the paper. The acceptance of this proposal leaves 3 vacancies (1 x Secondary Maintained, 1 x Secondary Academy/Free School, 1 x 14-19 Provider). Representatives from the sectors with vacancies will be invited to nominate a candidate for membership. The paper also set out proposed arrangements for filling vacancies, e.g. when a member's term of office expires.

Recommendation from the paper: Members are asked to approve the proposed changes to the membership of the Schools Forum set out in the paper and the proposed arrangements for dealing with vacancies.

The recommendation was unanimously approved.

2. SCHOOLS FORUM TERMS OF REFERENCE

Ian Harrison explained the paper which informed the Forum of the updates within the Schools Forum Terms of Reference. These updates incorporate changes made by the Department for Education on its document Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forums-operational-and-good-practice-guide-2015>

Marc Lewis requested a clarification on the voting rights of substitutes. It was explained substitutes were permitted to vote when representing an absent member (as opposed to if they are just observing and the actual member is also present).

Keith Nason sought clarification that substitutes need to be from the same category of member; this was confirmed.

The LA agreed to circulate a list of members and substitutes of the Schools Forum, and also to publish this in the School Circular.

Recommendation from the paper: Members are asked to confirm the acceptance of the latest Terms of Reference as shown in Appendix 1 of the published paper.

The recommendation was unanimously approved.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Ian Harrison explained that as this is the first meeting of a new academic year, it is required that members propose and elect the Chair and Vice-chair for September 2019 – August 2020.

A nomination, which was seconded, was received for Gilbert Knight for Chair.

A nomination, which was seconded, was received for Simon Horne for Vice-Chair.

No other nominations were received. The members unanimously voted for the nominees above and as such they were elected.

Ian Harrison handed the meeting over to the re-elected Chair Gilbert Knight.

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received for Gavin Smith (Marc Lewis attended as substitute), Councillor David Longstaff, Jo Djora, Jude Stone, Lucy Rodgers and Sarah Vipond.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Keith Nason indicated a willingness to leave the room while the Forum was discussing the de-delegation item, as one of the items related to Trade Union Duties.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were unanimously agreed to be a true and accurate record of the last meeting.

7. MATTERS ARISING

None.

8. 2019/20 DSG UPDATED ALLOCATION AND BUDGET MONITORING

Gaspare Nicolini explained the paper, which showed the updated DSG allocation using actual census numbers for the Schools and Central Blocks, and the January 2019 Early Years pupil numbers. The table in the paper shows the Month 5 forecast position. High needs forecast was stated as being on the pessimistic side and expected to reduce.

No questions or comments were received from the Forum.

Recommendation from the paper: Members noted the forecast DSG position for 2019-20.

9. CONSULTATION RESPONSE - SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Gaspare Nicolini explained the paper, which stated that in the previous meeting it had been agreed that the LA would consult with schools on amendments to the Scheme for Financing Schools. The LA received no responses from schools. GN stated that this revealed a training need for Headteachers, School Governors and school finance staff in relation to the Scheme, and its importance as a document which outlines the relationship between the schools and the Local Authority.

Keith Nason requested that Schools Forum Members who were headteachers, governors or school finance staff should also be invited to the training. This was agreed.

Simon Horne offered apologies that no school had responded.

10. CONSULTATION RESPONSE - SICKNESS AND MATERNITY ARRANGEMENTS

Gaspare Nicolini explained the paper, which stated that the Local Authority consulted on changes to the Sickness Absence and Maternity Leave Pooling Arrangements. The consultation proposed to either cease the arrangements, or fully recover the administration costs of £30,000 in order to continue to provide this service.

Robin Archibald asked how much this would affect schools. Gaspare Nicolini explained that there were numerous specialist providers in the open market much more able to offer an enhanced product. This was not the case when the pooling arrangements were created.

Recommendation from the paper: Members are asked to note the Council's decision for the absence scheme to cease at the end of March 2020.

The decision was noted by the Forum.

11. LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA FOR 2020/21

Ian Harrison explained the paper, which outlined the council's decision in 2017, following consultation with schools and the Schools Forum, to introduce the National Funding Formula, with protection against losses through the use of the Minimum Funding Guarantee. This decision was implemented in 2018-19 and again in 2019-20. The original recommendation on the paper was to approve consultation regarding implementation in 2020-21. However, Ian Harrison stated that as there are no proposals to change the current approach, there is no actual need to consult, and if the Schools Forum agrees, the proposals will continue for 2020-21.

Marc Lewis asked about the recent Government announcements, which stated that each secondary school pupil would attract funding of at least £5,000. As the figure is traditionally higher than £5,000 per secondary pupil for London, will it be uplifted for schools in the capital?

Ian Harrison said it would not be adjusted but that the London cost factor is included in the Area Cost Adjustment of the National Funding Formula.

The Forum agreed unanimously to continue to use the National Funding Formula, with protection through the Minimum Funding Guarantee for 2020-21, without the need for consultation.

Recommendation from the paper: Members noted the proposed approach to the local funding formula.

12. 2020/21 FORMULA FACTORS - CRITERIA FOR AGREEMENT

Ian Harrison explained the paper, which stated that some factors of the funding formula have to be agreed annually by the Schools Forum. Specifically, these are Split Sites and the Growth Fund.

The published paper outlines the current criteria for schools to attract split sites or growth funds, and it was not proposed to change these criteria.

Jo Kelly asked about split sites for PRUs; Ian Harrison explained that PRUs are funded from a different block and were not part of this funding formula.

Ziz Chater asked about funding for falling rolls. Gaspare Nicolini explained that it was possible, according to the DfE, but that it depended on the reasons the roll was falling. Provision can be made if falling rolls are known to be temporary, but not if they are part of a long-term trend.

Recommendation from the paper: Schools Forum is asked to agree the existing split-site criteria.

Recommendation from the paper: Schools Forum is asked to approve the existing Growth Fund criteria for 2020-21.

The recommendations were both unanimously approved.

13. 2020/21 CENTRAL BLOCK ITEMS - AGREEMENT LINE BY LINE

Gaspare Nicolini explained the paper, which outlined several items within the Central Block which need to be agreed by Schools Forum.

Specifically, the Forum needs to approve the amounts set aside for School Admissions (£0.401m), Schools Forum Administration (£0.035m), Copyright Licensing (£0.377m) and Retained Duties for All Pupils (£0.896m). The figures for Copyright Licensing and Retained Duties for All Pupils are indicative only, and final figures will be presented to the Forum in January 2020.

In addition to this, the paper explained that Central Block also funds historical commitments of £0.468m; this also needs to be agreed by the Forum.

Recommendation from the paper: Schools Forum is asked to agree the figures for ongoing responsibilities in principle, and to note that revised figures will be presented to the Forum in January and Schools Forum is asked to agree the figure for historical commitments of £0.468m.

The Forum agreed the figures firmly for Schools Admissions (£0.401m) and Schools Forum Administration (£0.035m), neither of which is due to change.

The Forum agreed the figures for Copyright Licensing (£0.377) and Retained Duties for All Pupils (£0.896) in principle, and noted that final figures will be presented to the Forum in January 2020.

The Forum agreed the figure for historical commitments of £0.468m

All agreements were unanimous.

14. 2020/21 DE-DELEGATION ITEMS - AGREEMENT BY SECTOR

Ian Harrison explained the paper, which outlined the items which the LA was requesting are funded via de-delegation of maintained schools' budget shares. De-delegated items only apply to maintained primary and secondary school budgets, and as such only representatives of these sectors may vote on the recommendation.

The items requested were Behaviour Support, Narrowing the Gap, Trade Union Duties, Additional Schools Improvement Service, and a Schools Contingency.

The amounts requested for Behaviour Support (£3.01pp – primary only), Narrowing the Gap (£9.55pp – primary, £16.34pp – secondary) and Trade union Duties (£1.66pp – primary, £1.02pp – secondary) were unchanged from the amounts requested in 2019/20.

It was proposed that the rates for Additional School Improvement Support for Schools be reduced to £4.06pp (primary) and ££2.10 (secondary). Ian Harrison explained that the rate was increased in 2019-20 to make a provision in case a £0.200m school improvement grant was not received from the DfE. As the grant was in fact subsequently received, there will be an underspend in the dedelegated budget in 2019-20 which will roll forward into 2020-21 and can be used to offset the dedelegated amount required in 20-21; thus the rate can be reduced in 2020-21 to the level set in 2018-19.

The paper indicated two options for Schools Contingency. The LA proposed option 2, which would provide £0.200m for school redundancies for schools in financial difficulty. This would increase the contribution to £8.63pp (primary and secondary). Ian Harrison explained that, in fact, the following paper would propose to reduce the funds requested to replace the ESG grant by the same £0.200m, so the LA is actually requesting the same amount of money, for the same purpose, just from a different source. IH explained the rationale behind this was that by using de-delegated funds, the LA has more flexibility in funding redundancies, and isn't tied in to only supporting those redundancies that are 'statutory' (i.e. the result of a local authority decision to close a school).

Recommendation from the paper: The Schools Forum is asked to approve by phase, the continuation of de-delegation of the following items for 2020-21.

Voting was conducted by sector, with the results tabled below.

		Primary			Secondary		
De-Delegation	£ per pupil	Yes	No	Abstain	Yes	No	Abstain
Behaviour Support	£3.01 (primary)	6	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Narrowing the Gap	£9.55 (primary) £16.34 (secondary)	6	0	0	1	0	0
Trade Union Duties	£1.66 (primary) £1.02 (secondary)	6	0	0	1	0	0
Additional School Improvement Services	£4.06 (primary) £2.10 (secondary)	6	0	0	1	0	0
Option 2: School Contingency, including redundancy costs for Schools in Financial Difficulty	£8.63 (primary & secondary)	6	0	0	1	0	0

Schools Forum voted to continue to fund all of the de-delegated items presented, with an increase to the School Contingency to cover redundancy costs for Schools in Financial Difficulty.

15. 2020/21 CONSULTATION ON FORMER EDUCATION SERVICES GRANT

Ian Harrison explained the paper, which outlined a request from the LA for the Forum to agree funding for services previously funded by the ESG. If agreed, the funding would be taken from the budget shares of maintained schools.

The proposal would mean that the Council can continue to provide statutory services to maintained schools without having to make further cuts to other front-line services that have already faced significant budget reductions.

Ian Harrison stated for 2019-20 a request had been made for £1.000m to be charged to maintained school budgets for services formerly funded from the ESG, alongside proposals to transfer 0.5% (£1.200m) of the Schools Block to the High Needs block and the proposal to increase the amount of de-delegation for school improvement services. Following consultation, the Schools Forum agreed the increased de-delegation for school improvement but rejected the other two proposals. The LA withdrew the proposal to transfer money from the Schools Block, because of an allocation of an extra £0.964m in DSG funding per year for 2 years. The LA referred the ESG proposal to the Secretary of State for Education who supported the LA's proposal.

For 2020-21, the LA was proposing to reduce the amount to be charged to maintained school budgets from £1.000m to £0.700m. £0.200m of this reduction related to redundancies, and it was proposed that this should be funded through increased de-delegation for contingencies. The other £0.100m saving reduction related to council efficiency measures.

If agreed, this proposal would mean a deduction from budgets of approximately £23.22 for maintained primary and secondary schools. The final figure would be available once 2020-21 pupil numbers are known.

Ian Harrison explained that the choice the Forum faced was to agree to the proposal now, or to agree that the proposal should go to consultation. He stated that, should the request for funding be again turned down following consultation, the LA would have no choice but to appeal again to the Department for Education. Gaspare Nicolini felt that likelihood of the appeal succeeding was stronger this year compared to the successful appeal last year due to a) the funding requested being for a lower amount and b) the fact total school balances increased last year.

Recommendation from the paper: Schools Forum are requested to approve the proposal for 2020-21 to charge the cost of services formerly funded from the ESG to the budgets of maintained schools, but at a reduced level of £0.700m.

Eligible members of School Forum voted 7:1 in favour of approving the proposal.

16. 2020/21 DISAPPLICATION REQUESTS

Ian Harrison explained this paper, which outlined the requirement for local authorities to set a Minimum Funding Guarantee for 2020-21 of between +0.5% and +1.84%.

As in previous years, the LA proposed an exception to this for all-through schools and to request the DfE to approve 'disapplication' for three schools from the MFG to ensure that previous Primary Schools expanding into secondary (St Mary's and St John's) are not disadvantaged by having the MFG for extra secondary pupils based on primary pupil funding and so that previous Secondary Schools expanding into Primary (London Academy and Wren Academy) do not unfairly benefit from the MFG protection for extra primary pupils (by being based on secondary funding rates). The disapplication request will give the LA permission not to apply the MFG to these schools.

Recommendation from the paper: Schools Forum is asked to note the MFG range for 2020-21 and the disapplication request.

The Forum noted the recommendation.

17. FORWARD PLAN - SCHOOL FUNDING

Gaspare Nicolini presented the table which showed the forward plan for schools funding. He pointed out that a meeting with the DfE for Friday 11th October was missing from the table and that there would be a further schools funding announcement any day from the DfE.

The Forum noted the table.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

19. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meetings are scheduled for:

Tuesday 10th December 2019 and

Tuesday 14th January 2020.

Venues to be confirmed.

The meeting finished at 5.30pm