

Decisions of the Schools Forum

13 January 2022

Members Present:-

Name	Representing
Claire Barnes (CB)	Secondary Academy - Governor
Kirstie Barrett (KB)	Primary School - Headteacher
John Bowra (JB)	Secondary Academy - Governor
Luke Bridges (LB)	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
Ziz Chater (ZC)	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
Nicola Curtis (NC)	Primary Maintained - Governor
Harvey Freeman (HF)	Primary School - Governor
Dan Hawkins (DH)	Primary Academy - Headteacher
Simon Horne (SH)	Secondary Maintained - Headteacher
Joanne Kelly (JK)	PRU – Headteacher
Ian Kingham (IK)	Special Academy - Deputy Head
Gilbert Knight (GK)	Special Maintained - Governor
Marc Lewis (ML)	Secondary Academy – for Gavin Smith (Headteacher)
Annette Long (AL)	Maintained Nursery - Headteacher
Liz Longworth (LL)	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
Sarah Maltese (SMa)	Primary School - Headteacher
Sian Morris (SMo)	Primary Academy - Headteacher
Keith Nason (KN)	Trade Unions
Chaya Posen (CP)	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
Sarah Sands (SS)	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
Matthew Stevens (MS)	Secondary Academy - Headteacher
Clare Wagner (CW)	Secondary Academy - Headteacher
Violet Walker (VW)	Secondary Academy - Headteacher
Councillor Longstaff	David Lead Member for Children’s Services
Ian Harrison (IH)	Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning, BELS
Paul Durrant (PD)	Head of Finance, Children’s Services
Gareth Evans (GE)	Finance Manager (Schools), Finance – Children’s Services
Sabrina Burrell (SB)	Senior Business Support Officer, BELS (Minute Taker)

1. TRAINING SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

IH started the meeting with a short training session. The presentation slides would be sent to all members following this meeting [circulated on 14.1.22].

SS referred to the working group of headteachers that Helen Phelan had agreed to convene to discuss banding and top-up funds. She asked if the Schools Forum has the power to decide on the level of funding for different bands. IH said that the working group can look at it and the Forum can discuss it but responsibility for managing the High Needs budget and the level of top-up payments rests with the local authority. Reports on the High Needs budget and on High Needs Commissioning are due to come to the Schools Forum at the next meeting or during the summer term.

SH said the Forum discusses a range of issues and asked IH to indicate some of the key issues discussed at Forum meetings. IH indicated that the Forum has had discussions on the overall level of High Needs Funding, the pressures on the High Needs budget, the Specialist Places Plan, funding of maintained nursery schools and the National Funding Formula

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR & VICE CHAIR

IH invited nominations for the Chair. GK nominated SH and this was supported by SS.

As there were no other nominations IH declared SH elected as Chair.

IH thanked GK for everything that he has done as previous Chair at this forum for the last few years as one of the most successful schools forums in terms of participation and in terms of engagement with key issues. SH added his thanks to GK for all his work and leadership of the Schools Forum.

SH took over the chair and invited nominations for Vice-Chair. He nominated GK. GK indicated he was happy to accept the position.

As there were no other nominations, SH declared GK elected as Vice-Chair

3. WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

SH welcomed new members. SH stated that each School Forum meeting has to have a quorum, which is 40% of the membership. As there are now 26 members, the quorum is 11.

New Members introduced themselves:

- Kirstie Barrett – Headteacher at Coppetts Wood Primary School
- Liz Longworth – Headteacher at Northside Primary School
- Sarah Maltese – Headteacher at St. Paul's N11 Primary
- Dan Hawkins – Headteacher at Child's Hill and Claremont Primary Federation.
- Claire Wagner – Headteacher at Henrietta Barnett School
- Claire Barnes – Chair of Governors at Ark Pioneer
- Violet Walker – Headteacher at Queen Elizabeth Girls' School

Nicola Curtis – Chair of Governors at Frith Manor Primary School

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Robin Archibald

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

KN declared he is one of the Union representatives who are released from teaching to carry out union duties, which is part-funded through dedelegation but he does not personally gain.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes were agreed. There were no matters arising that are not dealt with in the rest of the agenda.

7. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

GE provided an update on the changes to membership of the Schools Forum agreed at the previous meeting. Eight new members have been appointed and there is now just one vacancy, which is the place for a 16 to 19 provider, which has been vacant for a while.

MS pointed out that the report showed an asterisk next to his name, indicating Marc Lewis as a substitute. It was noted that this was an error and the asterisk should have been against Gavin Smith (head of The Wren Academy).

The report was noted.

8. 2021-22 DSG MONITORING

GE presented the report, which showed the current forecast for the DSG for the current year. The forecast is for an increase in the DSG reserve by £1.715m overall by the end of the financial year. The overspend in the high needs block of £1.026m is a reduction in the overspend forecast at the last meeting. There is an underspend in the growth fund of £2.7m. The net underspend of £1.715m will increase the DSG reserve carried forward at the end of the financial year from £3.244m to £4.959m.

The report was noted.

9. 2022-23 BUDGET PROPOSALS

GE presented the paper. It showed in paragraph 1.7, Table 1, what the indicative DSG income to the local authority is for the financial year 2022/23. The top part of the table shows DSG in the current year (2021/22) and the bottom part shows the indicative figures for 2022/23.

The high needs block is based on a national formula based on various factors, including population factors and some historical elements.

The early years block figures will be updated throughout the course of the financial year. The funding for three- and four-year-olds is increasing by £0.17 per hour. The council is proposing to pass that on in its entirety by increasing the base rate by 16 pence an hour and the deprivation rate by £0.01 an hour. For two-year-olds, the rate increases by 21 pence and again will be pass on in full.

The report mentions lump sums for maintained nursery schools, which are dealt with under item 12 below.

Table 2 (paragraph 1.14) shows the proposed school pupil-led factor rates in the National Funding Formula (including the area cost adjustment for Barnet as an outer London Borough). It is proposed to adopt these factors and to apply a Minimum Funding Guarantee at the maximum amount of +2%.

The report also shows the proposed funding levels and criteria for the growth fund and split-site allocations.

The council is required to submit its formula funding proposal to the DfE by 21 January using the DfE's 'Authority Proforma Tool' (the APT). This provides the DfE with details of the proposed formula whilst also calculating individual pupil-led school budgets.

It was agreed:

- *To note the 2022/23 draft indicative budget as shown in Table 1.*
- *To note and agree the 22/23 formula factor rates to be used in the APT submission (National Funding Formula rates) as shown in Table 2.*

To note and agree the Growth Fund criteria and amounts and the Split Site criteria and funding set out in the report

10. 2022-23 CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK

IH stated that Members of the forum who were here in October will recall seeing an almost identical report and the same for the dedelegation paper (item 11) and the reason why both have come back is because, although we agreed the central services block and the dedelegation at the last meeting, the budgets shown were estimates based on the previous year's pupil numbers and we said we would bring these reports back with the updated figures.

GE presented the report and said the figures have now been amended to take account of the October 2021 census figures, which change some of the figures by a marginal amount.

It was agreed to approve the expenditure lines that comprise the Central Services Block

11. 2022-23 DE-DELEGATION AND FORMERLY ESG FUNDED SERVICES

GE presented the paper. and said the figures have now been amended to take account of the October 2021 census figures, which change some of the figures by a marginal amount.

IH reported that the DfE is proposing to stop paying the school improvement grant to local authorities, which will mean that the statutory school improvement service, which includes the team of Learning Network Inspectors, will need to be funded through increased dedelegation. The grant is being phased out in 22-23 with a 50% cut but this loss of ca.£200,000 can be covered by a carried forward reserve arising from the increased dedelegation in 2019-20 when there was uncertainty over the continuation of the grant but subsequently the grant was paid, so the extra dedelegation money was not needed. The DfE consulted on the proposal to cut the grant and the vast majority of local authorities and schools that responded were against the cut, but the DfE has now said they are going ahead anyway. It will mean a loss of about £400,000 in 2023-24, which will need to be covered through increased dedelegation if the service is to be maintained at its current level.

It was agreed to note the revised rates per pupil based on adjustments relating to the October 2021 census

12. ADDITIONAL ITEM: PROPOSED USE OF CARRIED FORWARD DSG BALANCES

IH presented the paper.

As reported earlier, we are forecasting an end of year carry forward of £4.959m, which represent an in-year of about £1.7m in the carried forward reserves. The reserves are usually allocated to the High Needs block, as a contingency in case of further budget pressures and overspend. This is because we know about the massive problems and pressures on the high needs block and we have been shown to be right about that because of the overspends on high needs over the last couple of years, which have drawn on some of those balances carried forward.

However, given the increase in the high needs block and given the fact that the carry forward is going up by £1.7m, it is now proposed to redistribute some of that carry forward to schools and settings.

It would be wrong to put extra funding into the core funding formulae, as if we try to do it again the following year, we might not be able to afford it.

The paper sets out proposals for allocating £1.579m on a one-off basis as follows:

One -off lump sums for Maintained Nursery Schools	£400,000
One-off supplement to the hourly rate for 3- and 4-year-olds	£175,000
<u>New arrivals (Hong Kong and asylum seeker hotels) up to:</u>	<u>£1,000,000</u>
<u>Sub-total</u>	<u>£1,575,000</u>

A detailed explanation of the reasons for each proposal is set out in the report.

AL asked how the consultation on the lump sum payments for maintained nursery schools will happen. IH said the council will produce a short consultation document and send it to schools and settings with a link to an online survey. This will start as soon as possible after the proposal is also considered by the council's Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee next week and it has to finish by the end of February because we have to submit the early years funding formula by the end of February.

SH suggested that a special meeting to consider the proposals may not be needed. He suggested that the lump sum proposal only needs to come back to the Forum if there is a very negative response to it. He suggested that the details of the proposal to fund schools for support for children of Hong Kong migrants and of families living in designated asylum seeker hotels could be developed by the council and subject to consultation with the chair and vice-chair and one other member of the Forum. Sarah Sands agreed to be the other member consulted.

It was agreed:

1. To approve the proposed use of carried forward DSG balances as set out in the report, subject to consultation with Early Years providers in respect of the proposal for lump sum allocations to maintained nursery schools.
2. To approve the proposed approach to Early Years Funding as set out above and to approve the proposals for lump sum payments to maintained nursery schools in principle, subject to consultation with Early Years providers on the proposed lump sum payments for Maintained Nursery Schools.
3. To approve the proposed approach to funding new arrivals as set out in the report.
4. That the proposal for the lump sum payments does not need to come back to a special meeting but should be considered agreed unless there is a very negative response to it through the consultation.
5. That the proposed methodology for calculating payments to schools in respect of new arrivals may be agreed by the council subject to consultation with the chair and vice-chair of the Schools Forum and Sarah Sands.

13. AOB

The format for Schools Forum meetings was discussed (whether online or face to face).

GS raised concerns over whether members of the public can attend the meetings if they are held online. IH stated that the agenda is published on the public part of the Council website under the committee meeting agendas. So the public can access the agenda. IH said that some wording can be added to the website where the agenda is published, advising people how they can join the online meetings.

SH proposed that Schools Forum meeting should be online until the end of the summer term when the format should be reviewed.

It was agreed that Schools Forum meetings should be online until the end of the summer term and should then be reviewed