

MILTON KEYNES' SCHOOLS FORUM

Acorn House, 381 Midsummer Boulevard
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2016 AT 3.00 PM

PRESENT:

Primary School Representatives

Christine Ryan – Lavendon School

Primary School Governors

Francis Grant – Great Linford School

Antony Moore – Giles Brook School

Secondary School Representatives

Tracey Jones – Lord Grey School

Michael Manley – St Paul's Catholic School (**Chair**)

Academy Representatives

Neil Barrett – Stephenson Academy

Michelle Currie – Walton High

Glen Martin – Shenley Brook End

Ian Tett – Oakgrove School

Academy Governors

John Howe – Denbigh School

Dave Moulson – Ousedale School

Special School Representative

Finlay Douglas – White Spire School

Nursery School Representative

Debbie Wells – Moorlands Nursery School

Early Years Representative

Lynne Johnson - Pre School Learning Alliance

Post 16 Sector

Lindsey Styles – Milton Keynes College

Church of England Diocese

Kieran Salter – Diocesan Authority – St Mary and St Giles C of E Junior School

LA OFFICERS:

Michael Bracey – Corporate Director - People

Natasha Hutchin – Deputy Finance Manager

Penni Powers – Finance Manager - Children and Families

Nicky Rayner – Service Director – Children and Families

OBSERVER:

Bob Seaman – Northamptonshire County Council

CLERK:

Sue Puddifoot – Governor Support - Children and Families

SF 580 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Item 1

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies in advance had been received by the clerk from:

Lizzie Bancroft – Loughton Manor First School
Glenn Booth – Rickley Park
Jonathan Budd – Primary PRU
Natalie Fowler – Knowles Nursery School
Janet Haines – Oldbrook School (alternate for Kirk Hopkins)
Paul Hussey – Bradwell Village Primary School
Ian Northover – Heronshaw School
Anita Richards – NUT Divisional Secretary
Jake Yeo – Bushfield School

Apologies had also been received from the new Lead Member, Councillor Zoe Nolan.

The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate.

SF 581 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 2

Michelle Currie declared that although she represented a secondary academy, she was also Chief Executive Officer of MKET (Milton Keynes Education Trust) and therefore had an interest in all areas due to the variety of schools in the trust.

SF 582 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

There were two matters arising from the action points:

SF 573 – Membership and constitution. The clerk had made the necessary amendments.

SF 578 – National Funding Formula consultation. Paul Hussey had sent the comments made by Schools Forum members in response to the consultation.

Additionally, Penni Powers informed Schools Forum that given the uncertainties around the national direction of travel for high needs funding there would not be any changes to special school funding this financial year. Colleagues were thanked for engaging in the funding consultation. Letters would be written to special schools to confirm this position.

SF 583 MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTION (Michael Bracey)

Item 4

Michael Bracey outlined the main changes proposed to the current constitution:

Section 4.1 – In the context of the national funding consultations and the Education for All Bill, it was proposed that some changes were made to the constitution to ensure Schools Forum remained fit for purpose during the next few years. It was noted that the future of the Schools Forum was not entirely clear, but that it may be retired during the period 2018-2020, depending on government policy and decisions.

Rather than run elections twice a year, the proposal was to run one round of elections in the autumn and create a list whereby when a vacancy arose, the list would be used to fill the position. Therefore, membership would be frozen and current members would be asked to stay until the future role and purpose of a Schools Forum was made clearer.

It was also noted that, wherever possible, one representative from groups of schools would be a member but this would not now prevent there being more than one member from such groups or trusts, should this not be possible.

Section 5.13 - It was also proposed that the High Needs, Early Years and Schools Reference Groups were not named in the constitution and that sub-groups would be established as necessary, giving the Schools Forum more flexibility over the coming years.

Comments on the proposals were requested and the following points made.

- Freezing posts was sensible as it took some time to understand and get on board with the work of Schools Forum
- Have a formal review in six months to address any further changes or there may be a clearer steer on the future by this time
- Confirmation that this involved the end of term of office section being removed
- Decisions on meetings of sub-groups to be taken as clarity around areas of funding arose

There were no objections to freezing the membership, which was agreed and would be reviewed in January 2017. Nominations would be requested in the autumn for members.

Action MB/SP

Further discussion on the constitution took place with requests that proposed growth be included in section 2.3 as some members felt they should be consulted on expansions and new schools' funding before these were implemented, not after. It was important to know the impact of growth. Therefore, it was agreed to add at 2.3(e) 'Consultation on future school development' and the exiting point (e) to become (f).

Section 3.1 (b) included church representation (from the two diocesan authorities) in addition to other Forum members who may also represent church schools. Michele Currie pointed out that there was potential to have a disproportionate number with church interests and was, in her

opinion, discriminatory against other faith schools.

School Forum requested that the relevant regulations be checked and these are reproduced below:

(2) Subject to paragraph (3) and regulation 4(4), the authority may appoint additional non-schools members to their forum to represent the interests of other bodies.

(3) Prior to making any appointment under paragraph (2), the authority must consider whether the following bodies should be represented on their forum—

(a) the Diocesan Board of Education for any diocese any part of which is situated in the authority's area;

(b) the Bishop of any Roman Catholic Diocese any part of which is situated in the authority's area;

(c) where there are any schools or Academies within the authority's area that are designated under section 69(3) of the Act(b) as having a religious character (other than Church of England or Roman Catholic schools), the appropriate faith group in respect of any such school or Academy.

It was pointed out that the role of the Diocese was different from the role of schools and represented a wider interest of education generally.

Further discussion would take place after members were able to take the regulations into consideration.

The constitution was changed as proposed.

SF 584 PROVISIONAL DSG OUTTURN 2015/16 (Natasha Hutchin) *Item 5*

The purpose of this report was to inform Schools Forum of the provisional outturn position on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Natasha Hutchin explained that the originally set budget had an estimated zero balance for the end of the year. The actual position was a deficit of £321k. The last monitoring report had forecast a deficit of £340k and the variations were detailed in the report. There was concern as when the 2016/17 budget was set there had been a predicted surplus (£220k) to carry forward.

The underspend on de-delegated budgets of £530k would be carried forward and used for the purposes for which they were originally allocated.

Movements across areas were detailed in Table 2 with the main variances being:

Early Years funding was significantly lagged and due to growth in take up, additional funding of £285k was expected, based on the January 2016 count.

ISB – non domestic rates bills and the growth in Early Years take up had resulted in an in year overspend.

Central spend variances in growth and High Needs were noted and there

was a positive position on the Early Years central spend.

Schools Forum noted the provisional outturn position.

SF 585 RESPONSES TO THE NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION (Penni Powers)

Item 6

Penni explained that the purpose of this item had been to discuss the responses to the DfE consultation and start to consider collective and individual responses to the second stage, which was not yet available.

Due to the current political situation, it was difficult to predict when and if the second stage of the consultation would happen, however Schools Forum and individual schools should be ready to make their response.

Schools Forum members discussed the situation, mentioning the following points:

- The National Funding Formula may not start until the next parliament
- Changes to the Schools Block were likely to be first with changes to the High Needs Block following later
- Referring to item 5 in the summary, if Milton Keynes did not trigger any fringe allocations, this would result in a reduction of some 7% in the budget
- Milton Keynes kept little central funds in comparison with other local authorities
- Concern about the amount of spend on High Needs, especially if movement between the Schools Block and High Needs Block was stopped, although this would affect all local authorities
- Were Milton Keynes comments in line with others?
- Growth was one of the main issues

SF 586 SECTION 251 BUDGET STATEMENT 2016/17 (Natasha Hutchin) *Item 7*

The purpose of this report was to inform Schools Forum of the Budget Statement provided to the DfE under Section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The return included all expenditure on children and was used in benchmarking data and statistics. The format was standard for all local authorities.

Schools Forum noted the statements.

SF 587 MAINTAINED SCHOOL BALANCES AT 31 MARCH 2016 (Penni Powers)

Item 8

The purpose of this item was to inform the Schools Forum of the level of revenue balances held by maintained schools at 31 March 2016.

It was pointed out that the Local Authority did not hold any financial

information on academies, therefore this was not included in the report.

The summary showed that net balances of maintained schools had decreased by £412k from £12.353M to £11.941M. There were two schools with a deficit budget at the end of 2015/16.

Schools had applied £1.268M of revenue to fund capital expenditure in 2015/16 and without this contribution to capital, revenue balances would have increased by £856k.

Annex 2 detailed an analysis of school balances, including those retaining excess surplus balances; those over 100% of the maximum recommended. However, the excess surplus balances clawback no longer applied locally.

Schools Forum noted the report.

SF 588 SCHOOL BUDGET SETTING 2016/17 AND LICENSED DEFICIT REQUEST (Natasha Hutchin) *Item 9*

The purpose of this report was to inform Schools Forum of schools budget plans submitted by schools and the two schools that were requesting licensed deficit budgets.

Schools should have submitted their budget plans by 1 May 2016 and 19 schools had not met this deadline, however there were some extenuating circumstances in four cases. All budgets had now been received.

The two licensed deficit requests would be taken to the Local Authority on 19 July 2016 as a delegated decision and comments from Schools Forum would be circulated at that meeting.

Schools Forum members asked several questions and made the following comments:

As Stantonbury Campus was still in deficit and would become an academy on 1 September 2016, would the Local Authority still pick up this deficit? Michael Bracey confirmed that the regulations stated this would be the case.

It was confirmed that the DSG could not be charged (as maintained secondary school representatives had not voted to create a financial contingency) and therefore the Local Authority would be responsible for the deficit.

It was explained that representations had been made to the DfE on this matter. Conversations had taken place on relinquishing some land to cover some of the deficit; however this had been rejected by the Regional Schools Commissioner. Members asked what the position would be if the Local Authority did not license the deficit.

It was agreed that the points raised would be followed up and advice taken on legal ramifications should the licensed deficit not be approved by the Local Authority.

Schools Forum did not recommend the approval of this licensed deficit and asked if there was a risk of it increasing.

It was confirmed that finance officers had been working closely with the school and it had benefitted from some £750k of redundancy support over the last five years. Details of its falling roll had been included in previous Schools Forum papers.

Regarding Knowles Nursery School, a request for a £35,557 licensed deficit had been made and a two year recovery plan had been submitted.

It was pointed out that part of the contributory factors was that both maintained nursery schools had received £20k reductions in their lump sums over the last two years. Both had been working closely with the Local Authority and the request was relatively small.

Comments were made regarding the viability of small schools.

Members head that the plan from the school was robust and the debt should be cleared within three years, as required in the Scheme for Financing Schools. The school had over 100 pupils and was expected to take more two year olds in future. There was a degree of uncertainty in connection with the proposed 30 hour offer. Hence, there were several contributory factors to the current situation.

Michael Bracey left the meeting at this point to attend another appointment.

Regular financial monitoring would continue. It was noted that the Local Authority was working with other schools that were close to deficit budget positions to support them to balance their budgets and it was the individual governing board's responsibility to balance their budget and to monitor it during the year to ensure it remained in balance.

Schools Forum noted the position in relation to 2016/17 budget plans and the comments would be circulated for delegated decisions.

SF 589 SCHOOLS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY CONTINGENCY (Penni Powers) *Item 10*

The purpose of this report was to consider if an allocation from the schools in financial difficulty budget should be made to Wyvern School. The vote on this item was restricted to primary maintained school representatives.

Schools Forum were reminded that maintained primary schools had de-delegated some funding for a contingency to support those in financial difficulty.

Wyvern School's request related to an error that occurred when recording the numbers eligible for free school meals in one of the tables on the census which resulted in a shortfall of funding for 46 pupils at £797.47 per pupil, totalling £36,684. The number of eligible FSM pupils at the school continued to increase during the year.

The amount in the contingency was some £392k and no request had been made since 2011. The contingency was held specifically for this type of incident.

Schools Forum sought some clarification regarding the circumstances which led to this situation. The error had been made in the October census and the deadline for amending the census had now passed with no opportunity to reclaim retrospectively via the funding formula. The school had already made staffing changes in response to budget constraints and the funding would be used to support this specific group of pupils.

The relevant paragraph from the guidance on the Scheme for Financing Schools (Annex 1) was considered:

"Payments from contingency are not intended to support, promote or reward weak, poor or inappropriate school financial management. Payments are intended to support particular and unique school circumstances, which could not reasonably have been foreseen or avoided, and where no other financial support is available."

RESOLVED:

Maintained primary school representatives of Schools Forum agreed that £36,684 be distributed to Wyvern School from the schools in financial difficulty contingency.

In favour	3
Against	0
Abstentions	0

SF 590 BUDGET POSITION 2016/17 (Natasha Hutchin)

Item 11

The purpose of this item was to advise Schools Forum of the latest Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation for 2016/17 and the latest budget monitoring position for 2016/17.

It was reported that there were no changes in the allocation from when the budget was set, however, final data was awaited. An increase in the deficit from £99k to £493k was forecast. This deficit would be carried forward to 2017/18.

It was also noted that the APT return had identified that the budget would be £240k greater than that needed to fund all the school budget shares and this had been allocated to the brought forward balance to reduce the variation.

Table 2 detailed the significant forecast variations; £97k of income from Early Years Pupil Premium which had thought to be ring-fenced and would need to be paid back, however it had been confirmed that this balance would not be returned and could be released into overall balances. The ISB had included an estimated 2% inflation rate for business rates, which was higher than needed and this had resulted in an underspend of £44k. There had been a delay in growth fund payments. The net position was a £394k variance.

Schools Forum discussed aspects of growth and High Needs spending as the increase in High Needs pupil numbers continued. It was suggested that there was a need to have a contingency plan in place, taking into consideration the uncertainty of the Stage II National Funding Formula consultation.

Schools Forum noted the level of DSG for 2016/17 and the latest outturn position.

SF 591 GROWTH FUND ALLOCATIONS 2016/17

Item 12

The purpose of this report was to receive an update on the expenditure from the growth fund in 2016/17 and note the provisional position for 2017/18.

The budget had been set in January 2016 and there had been one change in primary and one change in early years provider; 30 places had originally been commissioned at Oakgrove but a further class was required and Greenleys First School would be opening a nursery in January 2017. This would create an overspend as money had only been set for those schools listed in Annex 1.

Schools Forum members discussed the situation and asked if all the information needed was available. Pupils could be accommodated within a two mile radius. Were all other schools full? Double funding should be avoided. The Chair referred members to the discussion that had taken place by the Schools Reference Group and that the current growth criteria did not take account of where the pupils came from. It was suggested that this should be included in a review of the growth fund criteria for 2017/18 so that the same mistakes were not made.

Action – SRG

The difficulties for forecasting where children would be were outlined and school place planning would ensure the supply of places in a timely fashion and it was noted that there would always need to be capacity in the system as not all pupils arrived in September, especially in areas where building work was taking place.

RESOLVED:

Schools Forum approved an additional payment from the 2016/17 growth fund to the identified qualifying school.

In favour	8
Against	0
Abstentions	5

RESOLVED:

Schools Forum considered a payment to a new early years provider from the early years central expenditure growth fund.

In favour	9
Against	0
Abstentions	4

SF 592 UPDATE FROM SUB-GROUPS OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM *Item 13*

The minutes of the meetings of the sub-groups were noted:

High Needs Reference Group – 24 May 2016
Early Years Reference Group – 9 June 2016
Schools Reference Group – 14 June 2016

It was noted that there was still a vacancy for a primary member on the Schools Reference Group and Antony Moore agreed to take this role.

The next meetings of the groups would be held as follows:

High Needs Reference Group – Tuesday 20 September 2016 at 1.00pm
Early Years Reference Group – Thursday 22 September 2016 at 9.30am
Schools Reference Group – Tuesday 27 September 2016 at 1.00pm

The next meeting of the Business Management Group would be the pre meeting held on Wednesday 21 September 2016 at 3.00pm.

SF 593 FORWARD PLANNING *Item 14*

Issues to be considered by the Schools Forum for the coming year are detailed below:

13 October 2016

- Election of Chair and Vice Chair
- De-delegation
- Financial outlook/Budget setting 2017/18
- Budget Monitoring

1 December 2016

- Budget Monitoring
- Financial outlook/Budget setting 2017/18
- Annual Report on Early Years provision
- Annual Report on Alternative provision
- Annual Report on High Needs provision

12 January 2017

- Budget Monitoring
- Final DSG Settlement for 2017/18
- Schools Budget 2017/18
- Agree final primary and secondary unit rates 2017/18

SF 594 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Item 15

All meetings 3pm – 5pm

Thursday 13 October 2016
Thursday 1 December 2016
Thursday 12 January 2017

The meeting closed at 4.45pm