

MILTON KEYNES' SCHOOLS FORUM

Acorn House, 381 Midsummer Boulevard
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2016 AT 3.00 PM

PRESENT:

Primary School Representatives

Lizzie Bancroft – Loughton Manor First School
Christine Ryan – Cold Harbour C of E School

Primary School Governors

Francis Grant – Great Linford School
Janet Haines – Oldbrook School (alternate for Kirk Hopkins)
Paul Hussey – Bradwell Village Primary School (**Chair**)
Antony Moore – Giles Brook School
Jake Yeo – Bushfield School

Secondary School Representative

Tracey Jones – Lord Grey School

Secondary School Governor

Paul Herbert – St Pauls Catholic School

Academy Representatives

Neil Barrett – Stephenson Academy
Michelle Currie – Walton High

Academy Governors

John Howe – Denbigh School
Dave Moulson – Ousedale School

Special School Representative

Finlay Douglas – White Spire School

Nursery School Representative

Natalie Fowler – Knowles Nursery School

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

Northampton Catholic Diocese

Michael Manley – Diocesan Authority

Trade Union Representative

Anita Richards – NUT Divisional Secretary

LA OFFICERS:

Michael Bracey – Corporate Director - People
Natasha Hutchin – Deputy Finance Manager
Caroline Marriott – Head of Delivery SEN and Disability
Penni Powers – Finance Manager - Children and Families

OBSERVER: Bob Seaman – Northamptonshire County Council

CLERK: Sue Puddifoot – Governor Support - Children and Families

SF 595 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Item 1

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies in advance had been received by the clerk from:

Jonathan Budd – Primary PRU
Ian Tett – Oakgrove School
Glen Martin – Shenley Brook End

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

Ian Northover – Heronshaw School and Lynne Johnson - Pre School Learning Alliance were absent.

SF 596 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.

Anita Richards declared an interest in the de-delegation item (6).

SF 597 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

There were the following matters arising from the minutes:

SF 583 – Membership and constitution. Clarification was requested on the freezing of membership posts. Michael Bracey confirmed that there would be a waiting list for when vacancies occurred through resignation from membership and that current membership would not expire but continue until a member chose to leave or moved on.

SF 591 – Growth Fund Allocations 2016/17. Michelle Currie questioned the places available and that students could have been accommodated elsewhere. It would be helpful if Schools Forum had information on vacancy rates. Michael Bracey stated that this information would be provided in future.

Action – MB

SF 598 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR*Item 4*

No other nominations had been received and both Paul Hussey and Michael Manley were willing to continue as Chair and Vice Chair respectively.

Schools Forum duly **elected** Paul Hussey as Chair and Michael Manley as Vice Chair for the ensuing year.

SF 599 MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTION (Michael Bracey)*Item 5*

Michael Bracey confirmed that the constitution had been amended as agreed at the last meeting.

Applications for Schools Forum vacancies had been requested and four formal nominations had been received:

- Andy Squires, Headteacher, Denbigh School
- Jane Edwards, Headteacher, Heronsgate School
- Linda Coveney, Headteacher, Kents Hill School
- Paul Herbert, Governor, St Pauls Catholic School (S)

Therefore, as Paul Herbert was the only maintained secondary applicant, he had taken the maintained secondary place and was welcomed to the group.

Further representations from the three academy candidates had been requested to enable the academy sector to decide on who would fill their two vacancies, as outlined in the 'Schools Forum operational and good practice guide'. It was noted that all three academy applicants represented schools or groups of schools, which already had members on Schools Forum.

Michelle Currie drew attention to the extract from the regulations included in the minutes of the last meeting and the fact that there were two representatives from the Dioceses which distorted the representation from faith establishments. This was discussed at some length and it was suggested that representation be encouraged from different groups of people or groups of schools rather than representation from the two Dioceses. However, it was pointed out that the Dioceses made significant contributions to schools each year and it would be extremely unusual for a Schools Forum to exclude such membership. It was also suggested that members be included with regard to their expertise. Representation from the Dioceses on various groups had been disappearing over time and with the future demise of Schools Forum, formal representation would probably cease. Discussion then centred on who constituted 'the authority' who appointed non-school members to Schools Forum and if the Diocese members could be co-opted back. However it was felt there was no mechanism for this and 'the authority' referred to the Leader of Milton Keynes Council.

At this point, Christine Ryan declared that she was now a Headteacher of a Church of England primary school.

The Chair stated that if there were strong feeling on the representation of faith schools on Schools Forum, then members should write to the Local Authority directly to ask them to reconsider.

Finally, a correction was made to 4.1 of the constitution where the last paragraph would now read:

Wherever possible, only one representative from each school or formalised group of schools such as federations or multi academy trusts, will be members of the Schools Forum.

SF 600 DE-DELEGATION (Michael Bracey)

Item 6

The purpose of this report was to give maintained primary school members of Schools Forum the opportunity to agree to de-delegate funding during the 2017/18 financial year for the specific purposes outlined in the report (see table in section 2.1).

Behaviour support services:

RESOLVED:

That maintained primary schools members agreed to de-delegate £301k funding from the deprivation allocation (IDACI) for behaviour support services

In favour	6
Against	0
Abstentions	1

Facilities time:

Schools Forum asked what the arrangements would be if this was not funded by de-delegation. It was explained that it would be schools' responsibility to have facilities time for teaching and support staff and they would have to make their own arrangements. This had been discussed at a recent Radcliffe Group of Schools Headteachers' meeting and facilities time for teaching staff would be encouraged however, it was felt that time for support staff did not give value for money. It was questioned why there was more funding being de-delegated for support staff than for teaching staff when they should get the same representation. Attention was drawn to Annex 5 which explained that there was some carry forward underspend in relation to teaching staff which meant less funding was required to be de-delegated. The annex also showed the actual value of the budgets for each of these services.

There was concern that this was a large cost when school budgets were being reduced.

RESOLVED:

That maintained primary schools members agreed to de-delegate £48k funding from the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) for total facilities time.

In favour	6
Against	0
Abstentions	1

Support for minority ethnic pupils:

RESOLVED:

That maintained primary schools members agreed to de-delegate £123k funding from the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) for support for minority ethnic pupils.

In favour	6
Against	0
Abstentions	1

Contingency:

It was noted that there had been no claims on the contingency other than the £36k requested at the last meeting. However, the outlook was challenging and the number of schools known to be in financial difficulty was around 15 so there may be an increased risk to call on this contingency fund this year. No further funding was required to be de-delegated for 2017/18 as the underspend from the previous year would be utilised.

RESOLVED:

That maintained primary schools members agreed to continue to hold de-delegated funding from the underspend from the previous year for contingencies.

In favour	7
Against	0
Abstentions	0

Administration of free school meals eligibility:

It was pointed out that some parents struggled to access the online Citizen Portal to enable them to determine eligibility for free school meals and pupil premium, however no negative feedback had been received and the system was smart phone friendly. Parents already had to use online facilities for approval of other benefits.

RESOLVED:

That maintained primary schools members agreed to continue to hold de-delegated funding from the underspend from the previous year for administration of free school meals.

In favour 7
Against 0
Abstentions 0

Also, maintained secondary school members were given the opportunity to agree to continue to hold de-delegated funding for the following item (no further funding was required as there was anticipated to be a carry forward from 2016/17):

RESOLVED:

That maintained secondary schools members agreed to continue to hold de-delegated funding from the underspend from the previous year for administration of free school meals.

In favour 2
Against 0
Abstentions 0

SF 601 BUDGET MONITORING 2016/17 (Natasha Hutchin)

Item 7

The purpose of this item was to advise Schools Forum of the latest Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation for 2016/17 and the period 6 budget monitoring position for 2016/17.

Natasha stated that the final Early Years funding allocations had not had a significant effect and would be picked up in the next monitoring report.

Overall, the deficit on the DSG had increased to £1.1M, significantly greater than when the budget was set. Table 2 highlighted the reasons for the variances.

A contingency had been set aside for rates revaluations and there had been one at Jubilee Wood. It was unlikely there would be any further revaluations so this budget was now being reported as an underspend.

There had been significant movement in the Independent Special School budget due to the number of placements and increasing costs. There was a risk that there could be movement later in the financial year regarding top-up funding due to the continuing changes and movements within special schools.

Growth payment phasing may need to change but this wouldn't affect the DSG overall, just the deficit carry forward at the end of this financial year.

Schools Forum referred to the £802k overspend in High Needs and asked if costs of existing places had gone up or reduced and how many new places there were and enquired as to what sort of needs were being catered for. Caroline Marriott explained that needs were known and due to the significant value of some complex high needs placements, an overspend of such value could represent just 4 or 5 placements and therefore it only took a few significant need placements to unbalance the budget.

Discussion continued on patterns of need over time. The predominant current group was ASD and learning needs but last year the profile was more mixed.

Forum also asked if funding was split between Social Care and Education, which it was in some cases but the figures presented to Forum were just the education part.

Members were reminded that there were largely only two places where savings could be made; High Needs and Growth Funding. Pressure on the High Needs budget would continue; both for the older year groups and those receiving EHC plans and where parents may request provision for longer. It was indicated that the average place in a special school was good value.

Discussion continued on the types of placements made, both residential, day, 52 week and emergency cases. Trends could not be extrapolated as profiles frequently changed. Complexity of need would increase as medical science improved. The High Needs Reference Group would continue to work on the situation so that Schools Forum were aware of what the issues were.

Action – HNRG

The level of overspend on the central spend for administration and appeals would be analysed and tracked. Forum were concerned there was no detail behind the figures presented.

There were savings made on the Independent Special Schools budget last year, which showed how varied the situation could be and contributed to the reason for the overspend in 2016/17 as the budget had been reduced based on placements at that time (with an allowance for growth).

Michael Bracey stated that the Local Authority spent a lot of time and effort looking into placements, which were monitored carefully. Social Care placements and individual problems could not be budgeted for in advance.

Comments were made that there were few areas where there could be financial control. High Needs allocations from Central Government were not adequate and in an ideal world would cover costs. In acknowledging that the complexity of need would probably increase, it was suggested that mainstream colleagues may have to contribute and this expectation needed to be raised.

The team of dedicated case workers would continue to work to fund placements as cost effectively as possible.

Whilst noting that trends could not be extrapolated, one common thread was that it was getting harder to secure placements due to risk. Adding local provision at lower cost may be an answer as most current provision

was at high cost. However, Milton Keynes may be too small to provide therapeutic, residential and different specific facilities. Complex needs operated with a high degree of risk, otherwise there would be more providers. The approach was always to place as locally as possible.

Schools Forum asked if other local authorities were facing the same problems. There were residential partnerships operating and there was a need for a High Needs Children's Home with teaching facilities. Child placements were specific to individual needs and this was difficult. One size did not fit all.

It was noted that of the 54 active placements, 22 were the most expensive totalling £3.526M for the year.

The Chair thanked Forum members for their contributions.

Schools Forum noted the level of DSG for 2016/17 and the latest outturn position as reported for period 6.

SF 602 SCHOOL BUDGET PLANNING 2017/18 (Penni Powers) *Item 8*

The purpose of this report was to give Schools Forum members an initial opportunity to review how the estimated 2017/18 DSG, including the use of balances, was allocated across schools and academies by way of the funding formula and central early years and high needs budgets.

The report included an overview and update on government announcements so far. Section 5.1 indicated that the Schools Block would be increased to reflect the movement of the Education Services Grant into the DSG, although the regulations were not yet issued, they were expected in the autumn for agreement in January 2017.

Section 5.2 indicated that the High Needs Block had been increased by £0.67m for transfer of funding from the post 16 budget, but it was anticipated that this would have a nil effect in the short term.

Section 5.3 outlined that additional funding for the 30 hour free childcare entitlement will increase the hourly rate to a national average of £4.88 and will be equalised for all providers.

Section 5.4 referred to the national funding formula, which was anticipated to be introduced in April 2018. Phase two of the consultation was expected in the autumn.

It was proposed to bring the budget back into balance by March 2018. Annex 1 gave more detail of how this could be achieved, including reducing all formula factor rates by 1.5%. It was noted that there were very few budgets that could be altered to make the budget balance.

It was noted that the schools census had taken place on 6 October 2016.

The risks which may affect the forecast outturn were independent school placements, and pressure on high needs top-up funding.

One area of funding that could be removed was the mobility factor (£170k currently allocated via this factor), as this was not proposed to continue in the national funding formula. The primary lump sum movement towards £130k would continue, with the funding released being re-invested in the primary AWPU.

It was asked if pupils were being funded twice by using the mobility factor in new schools but none of the schools receiving mobility payments were growth schools. It was the Schools Forum's view that this factor could be removed as there were now high amounts of pupil premium.

It was noted that, in special schools, the first five additional places over their allocated place numbers were unfunded.

There would be a data collection exercise regarding high needs places in November 2016. Annex 2 was a schedule of current high needs places. It was pointed out that there may be many early years pupils being assessed with increasing complex high needs which may not appear in this table as it only included places in special schools and departments.

It was commented that the Schools Block was, in effect, funding the High Needs Block. However, it was also noted that a rebase lining exercise had taken place earlier this year and that whilst demographic growth had been added to the Schools Block, this hadn't been reflected in the High Needs Block.

It was asked if the 1.5% reduction would go back up once the deficit were covered, however the initial aim was to minimise the deficit position wherever possible and there continued to be pressure on the DSG. Further clarification on figures would be given in December 2016, although the full picture would not be known until January.

School Forum asked why, if the growth trajectory was upwards, was the 2018/19 budget showing a reduction in Growth Fund. It was explained that growth funding was front loaded so payments made over the three, four or five years would drop out over time and pupils would be funded through the formula. Further detail would be provided in January 2017 and a breakdown of numbers and how this related to place planning was requested.

It was commented that pupils did tend to appear and disappear over the summer break and it may be that savings could be made in not having tiny classes in some new schools. Also clarity on the National Funding Formula was required to plan as there may be little areas of control.

Special school trends and numbers over funded places were also discussed as data was out of step with national figures.

Caroline Marriot pointed out that numbers indicated there was physical space but not necessarily in the right places. Pupils also arrived all the time, not just in September. There followed a discussion on data and places.

Additional High Needs money may be coming in and the take up of the 30 hour free childcare entitlement was uncertain.

Concern was expressed that if the 1.5% cut could not be re-instated, schools would be under significant pressure.

It was asked if the budget had to be balanced and although it was not a requirement, the aim was to remove the deficit within three years.

Penni Powers explained that it had been Cllr Miles' view that the budget should be balanced and the opinion of the new lead member, Cllr Nolan would be sought. Michael Bracey also pointed out that in the last two weeks of the summer term, 117 children had required school places with 60% from outside the EU.

The vast majority of pupils were in mainstream schools so the reduction of 1.5% would put many schools in a difficult position with some already beginning the redundancy process. This would be disastrous when schools were under pressure to improve exam results.

Schools Forum noted the issues arising from budget planning for the Schools Budget for 2017/18 and future years and endorsed the initial proposals to balance the budget.

SF 603 EARLY YEARS FUNDING CONSULTATION (Natasha Hutchin) *Item 9*

The purpose of this item was to receive the draft consultation on the proposed changes to the Early Years local Funding Formula to be implemented from April 2017.

The minutes of the Early Years Reference Group on 15 September 2016 highlighted the discussion on the DfE consultation and the local consultation to providers was included as Annex 2.

The main change directed by the policy was the removal of the lump sum and quality factors from the existing formula.

It was proposed to use the Early Years Reference Group to engage with providers for feedback and the consultation would be used to inform discussion at their next meeting.

Action - EYRG

There would be a further national consultation for maintained Nursery Schools and proposed transition funding for two years following the removal of their lump sum.

Schools Forum approved the draft consultation to be sent out to Early Years providers and other key stakeholders in the autumn term, with the results to be brought to a future meeting.

SF 604 SECTION 251 OUTTURN STATEMENT 2015/16 (Natasha Hutchin) *Item 10*

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

Natasha Hutchin explained that this was a government return that all local authorities must complete and publish.

Schools Forum noted the statements.

SF 605 UPDATE FROM SUB-GROUPS OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM *Item 11*

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

Early Years Reference Group – 15 September 2016
Schools Reference Group – 27 September 2016

The next meeting of the High Needs Reference Group would be on 8 November 2016.

SF 606 FORWARD PLANNING *Item 12*

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

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

23 March 2017

- Budget Monitoring
- Detailed arrangements for High Needs pupils
- Scheme changes

29 June 2017

- Provisional Outturn DSG
- LA Maintained School Balances at 31/3/2017
- Section 251 Budget Statement
- Schools Budget Setting
- Schools in Financial Difficulty Contingency
- Monitor use of Pupil Growth Fund

12 October 2017

7 December 2017

All meetings 3pm – 5pm

The meeting closed at 5.00pm