

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday 19 June 2018

10.00am to 12.00noon

Barking Town Hall, Committee Room 2

Present: School Representatives

Primary School Representatives

Scott Halliwell (Joint-Chair)

Jayne Meech

Gill Massar

Julie Phillips

Paramjit Roopra

Jo Preston

Richard November

Michael Corcoran

HT, Southwood Primary

HT, Village Infants

HT, William Bellamy in place of **Martin Nicholson**, HT, Grafton Primary

HT Godwin Primary

HT, Northbury Primary

HT, Gascoigne Primary in place of **Brian Fox**, HT, Roding Primary

HT, Valence Primary

HT, St. Joseph's Barking and St. Joseph's Dagenham in place of Daniel Craft);

Academy / Free Schools

Andrew Roberts

HT, Riverside School

Academy Special School Representative

Roger Leighton (Joint Chair)

Chief Executive, Partnership Learning

Special Needs Representative

Susan Ball

HT, Trinity School

Secondary School Representative

Ges Smith

Janis Davies

HT, Jo Richardson Community

HT, Sydney Russell – Academies

Governor Representatives

David Dickson

HT, Eastbury Community School

Head of Alternative Provision

Annie Blackmore

HT, Mayesbrook Park School / PRU

Non-School Representatives

John Trow-Smith

Early years Representative

Trade Union Representative

Dominic Byrne

John McGill

NUT

NASUWT

Also present: Jane Hargreaves - Commissioning Director of Education
Pat Harvey - Senior Professional, High Needs Block and Minute Clerk
Pat Vayghan Local Authority - Minute taker
Katherine Heffernan - Group Manager – Finance and Investment
Shaj Sivadasan – Principal Accountant, Schools

MINUTES

Mr Scott Halliwell (SH) chaired the meeting. There was no agenda or previous minutes at the meeting and it had been emailed to Ms Nichola Young (NY), but she was on annual leave at that time. The previous agenda items would be followed for consistency and SH updated the meeting with actions from previous meeting.

Mr David Dickson (DD) suggested that having different versions of papers causes confusion. One email with everything would be better. Noted there had been a change with finance staff.

Noted

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chris Harrison	HT, George Carey Primary
Brian Fox	HT, Roding Primary
Claire Scott	HT, St. Peter's Primary
Daniel Craft	HT, St. Peter's Primary (<i>left LA</i>)
Yvonne Kelly	14-19 Representative
Nichola Young	Local Authority minute clerk

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2018 were confirmed as an accurate record. Noted no minutes were included in correspondence email to members. Action NY next meeting.

Action NY

3.2 Actions from 20 March 2018 as summarised by SH:
Action: to review the constitution which is in the report, end of year balances, in the report. Update on Early Years, which is in the report. Recommendation: look at criteria following rolls, also in the report. Options on the High Needs block, which is in the report. All matters arising are covered

4. REPORT FROM THE GROUP ACCOUNTANT - FINANCE

2.0 Dedicated Schools Grant 2017-18 Outturn Position

- 2.1 Ms Katherine Heffernan (KH) presented the report:
Noted accounts closed for 17/18 and position on the DSG overall underspend against the budget and underspend on early years due to lower census numbers than expected.
- 2.2 Noted some DSG reserve will be used to support overspend on High Needs Block. Paragraph 2.2 reports pressures and need for action to address the overspend.
- 2.3 School block – underspend due to unused growth fund and may continue into 18/19. This will be monitored and depending on the needs for new places 500K of the underspend may be used to support schools depending upon numbers.
- 2.4 Noted overall DSG carry forward is just over 3million and KH commented that not a very large amount in comparison to c250m DSG in total. KH also commented that the High Needs overspend will use all the reserves to meet High Needs pressures.

- 2.5 **Schools Forum noted final uncommitted DSG (balances) of £3.047m. decision (i)**

Noted

- 2.6 Mr John Trow-Smith (JTS) commented that the early years clawback of 500k is a relatively low estimate due to the reduced census and might impact upon settings. KH replied that rates will be reviewed next year and possibility of new rates dependent upon census and providers will be notified mid-February as part of setting Early Years formula at January Forum.

Action KH

3.0 School Balances Appendix 8 estimates Oracle Schools

- 3.1 Appendix 8 details quarter 3 reported estimates of school balances. An update for the next meeting will be reported. Noted that a few schools needed to go into their balances so there was a net reduction in balances across Barking and Dagenham. Noted that a number of schools holding a reserve below 3% of their budget and the climate is getting more difficult for schools.

- 3.2 Noted another planned meeting of the Finance Monitoring Group on 9 July.

Action KH

- 3.3 KH asked forum what kind of support is helpful to schools in reporting terms and how aware governors are. Ideas of support and any comments would be helpful with governors' concerns.

- 3.4 Mr Roger Leighton (RL) commented that it would be useful for governors to understand overall national picture, an update to say in effect this pressure is non-specific to do with the school probably not and there does not appear to be anyone to save you. Still unclear about teachers' pay rise, national insurance, pension costs etc., The national picture is not positive and no rescue package just around the corner. Schools both locally and nationally have been taking very difficult decisions. Schools' should be planning to get back into balance as soon as possible rather than the cliff edge.

- 3.5 SH commented that local factors are particularly challenging with Early Years falling rolls in Reception and KS1. Schools need to make an individual case by case basis. If schools can manage over next two years, forecasts for local issues around pupil numbers is positive with a possible increase in future. Schools need to manage on funding allocations but keep an eye on the future, and do not take hasty action. A message from building and capital team particularly in Barking, numbers will increase in relatively short period of time. Noted that schools should manage each financial year carefully particularly next two years.

- 3.6 DD commented for schools involved in building projects to take the monies out of school balances and report directly to make governors understand. KH replied that finance will endeavour to take money and liaise with capital team.

Action KH

- 3.7 SH commented that the management of the school budget is so important now due to no surplus to use in some schools. £7.5m balances over a small number of schools support that.

- 3.8 KH updated the meeting that finance is considering applications for further requests for assistance for loans. Schools should be submitting school budget by 30 June. By that point any requests for loans must be supported by clear evidence and that it must be paid DfE advice 3 years or less.

- 3.9 Noted the fund 500k and may increase to 800k to 900k dependent upon repayments of previous loans.
- 3.10 SH confirmed the reporting of school balances update in autumn term, school applications for loan support July, reporting back to Forum in the autumn, and final reporting to Forum in October.
- 3.11 **Noted, Schools' Forum note the draft school balances position for 2017-18 £7.507m decision ii.**
- 3.12 Noted, **Schools' Forum note school requests from the Schools Facing Financial Difficulty Fund will be referred for approval in the Autumn Term decision iv**

4.0 Dedicated Schools Grant budget update

- 4.1 KH updated a small increase in DSG 2018/19 on High Needs block and change in Early Years funding later in year due to census reduction in early years.

5.0 Falling Rolls

- 5.1 SH updated the meeting that the falling rolls sub group had met with Andy Carr, Group Manager Education, and Lisa O'Dwyer, Manager Admissions Team, 3 or 4 times to look at the allocation numbers for Reception September 2018. Approximately 8 schools saw a drop in Reception class -. some in Barking area, some around central and Goresbrook area, some around east side. In looking at the reductions there are usually approximately 180 requests that are late. Some families do not apply by January date. A number of schools going into summer with significant vacancies in Reception but expected to fill up. The census is hard to predict and another concern for primary schools. Noted that a temporary arrangement is usually made to reduce PAN but Andy and Lisa will have to make a more formal arrangement this year to the schools' adjudicator.
- 5.2 Ms Jane Hargreaves (JH) updated the meeting that this year there will be more formal arrangements to support schools managing these reductions.
- 5.3 SH confirmed that the group had met in July and that the birth rate is expected to rise 10%.
The falling rolls fund is to look at support for falling rolls in 2018/19 and 2019/20, as the last five years has been about growth. At the moment the decline is concerning primary schools in Barking and Dagenham. Noted the DfE Guidance was reviewed on this and criteria set and growth model, support is £68,000 one-off payment in September. The falling rolls is suggested as a similar model and funding.
- 5.4 SH confirmed two options available:
Option 1 the 5% or more fall in numbers for a school excluding schools with bulge classes.
Option 2 look at PAN and percentage of vacancies in schools' place changes over last few years because of the growth.
- 5.5 SH commented that more realistic is would be to look at a reduction where there has been a 5% reduction on roll, but School Forum to decide.
- 5.6 Noted a fund of 300k available, and current model reports 5 schools 340k.
- 5.7 SH asked if everyone was happy to agree to provide some support? It would help primary schools.
- 5.8 Noted members were happy to the concept of it, and it would be for 1 year only (2018/19) and would be reviewed 18/19 census.
- 5.9 KH confirmed that the criteria were based upon DfE guidelines only good or outstanding schools, significant reduction in numbers and that the school needs

financial assistance, balances below 3%, evidence in support and applications to be considered by Finance Monitoring Group.

- 5.10 **Noted Schools' Forum approve the establishment of a falling rolls fund 300k *decision v.***
Approved
- 5.11 **Noted Schools' Forum approve the recommended criteria for falling rolls *decision vi.***
Approved
- 5.12 **Noted Schools' Forum approve the lump sum payment of 68k *decision vii***
Approved
- 5.13 **Noted Schools' Forum approve option 1 for 1 financial year with a review for 19/20 *decision viii***
Approved

6.0 High Needs Block

- 6.1 Noted, Local authority does not recommend option 1 because that will result in continued overspending of High Needs Block which will use all DSG reserves, a larger transfer from schools' block to High Needs Block which may result in less funding for schools in next year's funding allocation.
- 6.2 Noted the need to make it public that we are being robust and decisive in option 2.
- 6.3 DD updated the meeting that John Cruddas putting up for parliamentary debate before summer break. Any evidence from schools we are taking action would be useful in support.
- 6.4 Ms Annie Blackmore (AB) commented with reference to that there is a letter going out to the Schools Minister. Councillor Carpenter signed on behalf of Barking and Dagenham and 39 local authorities in support that the High Needs Block is simply insufficient.
- 6.5 Ms Pat Harvey (PH) updated the meeting of the sub working group meeting 07 June and two options for Forum to consider. Reporting pressures £2.2m to £2.5m overspend and actions trying to alleviate some of the pressures by trying to manage the overspend.
- 6.6 Option 1 was to do nothing and continue overspend and using DSG reserves.
- 6.7 Option 2 was to start review of alternative provision, previously this was parked due to the Education Select Committee undertaking a review, but nothing positive to feedback or implement, so start review. One of the AP initiatives was to charge schools who place children there but are funded as per census. Proposed 2% or 4% savings discussed at last Schools Forum 2% was initially approved with a review in June and reporting back to forum. Currently working with legal on SEN Top up payments and reductions. There will be a further update. Likely we will have to formally consult with schools, providers, and parents. A few local authorities have been subjected to judicial reviews. Post 16 panel meeting to be established similar to pre-16s panel meeting, Dowry funding budget to move to panel meetings budget. Ongoing work continuing with the out of borough placement and residential placements. Last four years approximately 1.5 million savings. ARPs places under review and vacancies or unfilled places. Option 2 savings will be a part year effect in September. In January, Schools Forum approved to earmark money from schools' block which is 750k switch or transfer to alleviate pressures in High Needs block. With the ARP places funding pressure there are growth needs pressures and level of need of children in the local authority identified with autism. Other suitable provisions may be established in support.

- 6.8 A review place meeting with regard to SEN numbers and ARPs, and we may redesign vacant places in one provision which is speech and language to autism, in establishing another ARP in September.
- 6.9 DD updated the forum that a meeting is scheduled at Eastbury with himself, PH and Joy Barter(JB) to do more strategic work looking at needs and numbers. Reporting more strategic work over next five years to make sure everything more efficient and getting better deal for the children with better staff and making sure this is happening.
- 6.10 PH continued to update about census if we do not record our SEN numbers correctly. DfE look at census, so our funding is not reflecting the correct census data if incorrectly recorded by schools. Working with census team in advance of October census.
- 6.11 SH confirmed that ARP vacant places does not include those ARPs with 1 or 2 vacancies, it refers to ARPs with significant vacancies and for example the last 3 years and one ARP with 15 vacancies (150k).
- 6.12 Noted that LBBB are significantly underfunded that cannot be forgotten and reinforce looking at pressures over three years.
- 6.13 JH updated that Andy Carr is leading a piece of work at the moment. Co-ordinating in terms of our planning. There will be areas of need cannot define over 3-5 years. B&D very strong commitment to the ARP model but look at affordability. Pressure with provisions but pressures in primary and secondary ARPs and special schools. No places. The School Investment Team are aware biggest priority support capital type of refurbishment and changes with children in the mainstream with SEN.

6.14 **School Forum approve option 2 *decision ix***

Approved

- 6.15 Noted to report back to Autumn School Forum on nominations or proposed chair of High Needs Working sub group meeting after discussion and proposal of Sue Ball ***decision x***

Decision deferred

7.0 Early Years 30-hour childcare update

- 7.1 KH updated Barking and Dagenham take up not just a local problem. There is lower take up nationally. To continue support and awareness the Council has produced 40 second video streamed in Post Offices and on social media pages. B&D have funding for 3 capital projects.
- 7.2 Noted Childcare Choice website difficult website for parents and support required. It was suggested for JB to support.

Action JB/RD

- 7.3 SH commented that more schools looking for September to offer 30 hours provision.

- 7.4 JTS requested a list of schools taking this offer up from September.

Action JB/RD

8.0 Draft Constitution and Terms of Reference

- 8.1 KH updated that the composition largely follows DfE model constitution and composition of Forum is reviewed every year, and this will be presented to next meeting with further elections.
- 8.2 DD suggestion 3-19 representative.

Action KH

- 8.3 KH suggested to split academy and free schools into primary and secondary and this may become necessary for future years.
- 8.4 Noted to review constitution and report back to Forum in autumn meeting.

Action KH

- 8.5 SH commented that under NFF there will be changes and may not be a School Forum.
- 8.6 Noted chair is entitled to make casting vote, and due to two co-chairs, whomever is delivering the meeting will have the casting vote.

Noted and for inclusion in Constitution KH

- 8.7 **School Forum approved draft Constitution and noted this to be represented at the next meeting in October.**

Approved and to be represented KH

9.0 Future work plan

- 9.1 Noted which of the co-chairs is delivering each time, include with the date of the next meeting.

Action KH/NY

- 9.2 Proposed date of 23 October is half term, proposed week before 18 October

Action KH/NY

- 9.3 15 January 2019 noted and room booking required.

- 9.4 19 March 2019 noted and room booking required.

- 9.5 18 June 2019 proposed 23 June 2019 subject to room booking.

Action KH/NY

10.0 Any other business

- 10.1 Members of School Forum had previously raised concerns around national funding formula and discussed with JH and KH, a proposed working sub group is to be established in September. It was requested for an independent person and PH to attend.

Action PH

- 10.2 Looking for nominations for the sub group and nominations were: Roger Leighton; Julie Phillips; May be Brian Fox; Jayne Meech, David Dickson to confirm and John McGill volunteered.

- 10.3 Members to contact JH or KH if interested and date to be set in September, January, March and June.

- 10.4 Subject to re-elections RL will chair the October meeting (subject to elections and room booking)

Action NY to book meeting room/invites

The meeting closed at 11:25am