

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2019

Present: Reverend Mark Bennet (Church of England Diocese), Jonathon Chishick (Primary Schools), Catie Colston (Primary Schools), Jacquie Davies (Pupil Referral Units), Antony Gallagher (Primary Schools), Keith Harvey (Primary Schools), Brian Jenkins (Private, Voluntary and Independent Nurseries), Hilary Latimer (Primary Schools), Councillor Erik Pattenden (Shadow Portfolio Holder: Children, Education and Culture), Janet Patterson (Primary Schools), David Ramsden (Secondary Schools), Graham Spellman (Roman Catholic Diocese), Bruce Steiner (Academies) and Suzanne Taylor (Nursery Schools)

Also Present: Ian Pearson (Head of Education Service), Jane Seymour (Service Manager, SEN & Disabled Children's Team) and Annette Yellen (Accountant for Schools Funding and the DSG), Jessica Bailiss (Policy Officer (Executive Support))

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Jon Hewitt, Sheila Loy, Ian Nichol and Chris Prosser

Absent:

PART I

26 Election of Chairman

Graham Spellman invited the Schools' Forum to nominate and vote on the positions of Chairman for the coming year.

RESOLVED that Bruce Steiner would continue as Chairman of the Schools' Forum for the 2019/20 municipal year.

27 Minutes of previous meeting dated 17th July and 15th June 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17th June and 15th July 2019 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28 Actions arising from previous meetings

The Schools' Forum noted the actions from the last meeting which were either in hand or had been completed.

Jul-Ac1 – both items (election of Chairman and the Membership/Constitution report) were on the Schools' Forum agenda for 14th October 2019.

Jul-Ac2 – Melanie Ellis reported that a section regarding the number of schools predicting a deficit in year two, would be added the Schools' Deficit report for the next Forum in December 2019.

Jul-Ac3 – Jessica Bailiss reported that the forward plan had been updated with the relevant contracts that needed to be considered by the Forum in October 2019 and the relevant Officers had been invited to attend.

Catie Colston referred to the minutes of the Schools' Forum meeting that had taken place in June 2019 (page two, second paragraph) and asked for an update regarding finance training for schools. Melanie Ellis would provide an update at the next round of meetings in November/December.

SCHOOLS FORUM - 14 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

RESOLVED that

- Action Jul – Ac2 be carried forward to the next Schools' Forum meeting in December.
- Melanie Ellis to provide an update on finance training for schools at the next meeting on 9th December 2019.

29 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

30 **Membership**

Jessica Bailiss provided the following updates regarding Membership:

- David Ramsden, Jon Hewitt and Bryan Jenkins had consulted the necessary forums and confirmed that they would continue for a further term.
- There were still a number of vacancies on the Forum, including a maintained primary business manager, a maintained secondary governor and academy positions. The necessary action was being taken to try and fill the positions.

31 **Schools' Forum Membership and Constitution from October 2019 (Jessica Bailiss)**

Jessica Bailiss introduced the report (Agenda Item 7), which aimed to review and where necessary update the membership and Constitution of the Schools Forum. The Schools' Forum was required to review its membership and constitution annually. The last change made to the constitution was in 2018 and since then there had not been any legislative changes requiring a change to the current practice.

Table one showed a breakdown of pupil numbers compared to 2018 by sector and it could be seen that there has been an increase in pupil numbers overall. In July another school had converted to an academy increasing the pupil numbers in the sector. Based on the increase in pupil numbers, particularly in the academy sector, it was proposed that the number of School Members on the Forum was increased by one academy member taking the total membership to 25. This was set out under table 3 of the report.

Jessica Bailiss reported that the constitution had been updated to reflect the proposed increase in membership and recent election activity that had been taking place to elect Governor representatives. These changes were highlighted in the report under section five of the report.

The Schools Forum was invited to approve the membership and the Constitution for the Schools Forum from October 2019.

Jonathan Chishick queried why the term of office was only three years and if this could be increased to four to reflect the term of office for the Council's own elected Members. Ian Pearson stated that that this could be looked into and reported on at the next meeting.

Reverend Mark Bennet referred to academies and that there were variances between Trusts. Some Trusts had Governors and other Directors. Academies were coordinated by Central Government unlike maintained schools and therefore it was possible that governors and directors could sit outside of West Berkshire. Ian Pearson concurred that if there were no local governing boards for academies then these positions could sit outside of the area. This would be taken into consideration going forward.

Catie Colston noted that for academies the Schools' Forum's membership was not phased like it was for maintained schools. She queried if the proportion of academy primary and secondary school members sitting on the Forum was still accurate. Ian

SCHOOLS FORUM - 14 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

Pearson highlighted that the vast majority of academy pupils were in the secondary phase and therefore historically there had not been an issue. Reverend Mark Bennett added that academies were unable to vote on a large proportion of the Schools' Forum's business. The different maintained groups were required to make particular decisions on funding and this was why the split was required. Academies did not have the same split of responsibilities. Catie Colston suggested that the point be noted going forward.

RESOLVED that

- Jessica Bailiss would look into whether the term of office for members of the Forum could be extended to four years.
- The Schools' Forum agreed the Constitution and membership from October 2019, including an increase in the membership by one academy member to reflect the increase in pupil numbers in that sector.

32 De-delegations 2020/21 (Melanie Ellis/Lisa Potts)

Melanie Ellis introduced the report (Agenda Item eight) regarding de-delegation proposals for 2020/21. It was reported that the information needed to go back to the Heads Funding Group (HFG) in November 2019 so that recommendations could be formed. These recommendations would then be considered by the Schools' Forum on 9th December 2019.

RESOLVED that the de-delegation proposals for 2020/19 be added to the work programme for the next meeting of the HFG and Schools' Forum.

33 High Needs Block - Invest to Save Update (Michelle Sancho)

Ian Pearson introduced the report (Agenda Item 9), which aimed to provide an update on the behaviour and PPEP care projects undertaken as part of the Invest to Save initiative.

The report detailed work undertaken, including a new approach called Therapeutic Thinking. This approach had been received very positively by schools. Evaluation results of the training and engagement days undertaken as part of the Therapeutic Thinking project were detailed under section four of the report. The recommendation was for High Needs Block (HNB) to continue investment in this area.

The report has been considered by the Heads Funding Group and although there was support for the Therapeutic Thinking approach, it was felt that the recommendation to fund a three year fixed term post of the Therapeutic Thinking Schools Officer, needed to be considered again once more information was available on the funding of the HNB going forward.

Ian Pearson explained that the project looked at managing behaviour in a different way rather than dealing with the symptoms. Hilary Latimer added that the training provided had asked attendees to consider children displaying behavioural issues as 'unlucky children' and this caused a different approach to thinking.

Gary Upton reported that school trade union members had discussed the concept of Therapeutic Thinking as a behavioural system. Staff had raised concerns about the issue of excusing behaviour rather than explaining. These concerns had been raised from teachers outside of the area. Ian Pearson suggested that the consultation results and feedback from schools on the Therapeutic Thinking Project be taken to the Education Consultation Meeting for discussion. David Ramsden commented that Therapeutic Thinking suggested that Headteachers look at poor behaviour from the child's point of view and he thought that this could have been misinterpreted in some cases. Suzanne Taylor stated that it was important that this was noted if the work was to be rolled out.

Reverend Mark Bennett referred to the concept of invest to save and based on this, it could be more costly to pull funding from the project than to retain it. Ian Pearson

SCHOOLS FORUM - 14 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

reminded the Forum that £100k of funding had been allocated to invest to save initiatives. This money was a one off sum and therefore the Forum would then need to take a view of what projects had provided good value for money and decide if further investment should be made.

David Ramsden queried who was overseeing the process. Ian Pearson reported that at a previous Forum meeting it had been agreed that there should be an Invest to Save Strategy and secondly a post to deliver the strategy going forward.

The Chairman summarised that there was no desire to pull the funding from existing invest to save projects however, going forward they needed to be considered in context of the HNB as a whole, once further understanding on funding for the HNB was known.

RESOLVED that the report was noted and that the recommendation set out in section 2.1 would be considered by the Schools' Forum once more information on funding for the HNB was available.

34 **DSG Budget Overview 2020/21 (Melanie Ellis)**

Melanie Ellis introduced the report, which set out the announcements made in relation to the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG) 2020/21 and the National Funding Formula, along with the proposed timetable for setting the 2021 budget.

Melanie Ellis reported that formula details had not yet been received from the Department for Education (DfE). Melanie Ellis stated that the delay in information would provide less time for the consultation phase and would only allow two meetings of the Heads Funding Group (HFG) and Schools' Forum to review the formula information, rather than three. The draft timetable was set out in section 11 of the report.

Keith Harvey reported that schools had received allocations from the Department for Education for the funding formula and queried how this related to information that would be sent out from the Local Authority. Melanie Ellis confirmed that the Schools' Finance Team sent out indicative formula information, which at this stage was just a guide for schools. Keith Harvey suggested that a clarification email be sent out to all schools.

Jonathan Chishick referred to page 90 of the report under section 4.2 (point 7) which stated that the teachers' pay grant and teachers' pension employer contributions grant would both continue to be paid separately from the National Funding Formula (NFF) and rates would be published in due course. He queried if the 2.75% was included. Ian Pearson reported that the general principal was that teacher pay was uplifted and then a budget was provided to cover this off. Jonathan Chishick stated it was difficult for governors to know if funding would be received or if schools needed to provide funding individually.

David Ramsden stated that the 2.75 referred to by Jonathan Chishick was awarded by the DfE. Ian Pearson stated that the cost per school was dependant on the schools' own pay policy.

Councillor Erik Pattendon queried the timetable for setting all elements of the DSG budget. He asked if 10 days to carry out consultation with schools was enough. Melanie Ellis confirmed that the dates were set based on statutory requirements and therefore there was little flexibility.

RESOLVED that Melanie Ellis coordinate communication with all schools to clarify information sent to schools by the DfE and indicative funding formula information.

35 **Scheme for Financing Schools (Melanie Ellis)**

Melanie Ellis introduced the report (Agenda Item 11), which sought approval of the revised Scheme of Financing Schools. A decision was required only from maintained

SCHOOLS FORUM - 14 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

schools members. The document had gone out for consultation with schools however, no comments had been received.

RESOLVED that maintained school members of the Schools' Forum approved the revised Scheme for Financing Schools.

36 **Schools: deficit recovery (Melanie Ellis)**

Melanie Ellis introduced the report which provided detail of the four schools, which had submitted deficit budgets for 2019/20 and the two schools which had ended the 2018/19 financial year with unlicensed deficit balances.

Four schools submitted a West Berkshire Council Deficit Budget License Application for the financial year 2019/20. All four had licensed deficits in the financial year 2018/19. Two schools had ended 2018/19 with a deficit however had set a balanced budget going forward.

Positively the table under section 3.4, showed that all four schools expected to be out of deficit by 2020/21.

RESOLVED that further information on deficit schools including the information referenced under Action Jul-Ac2 would be brought to the next meeting of the Schools' Forum on 9th December 2019.

37 **DSG Monitoring 2019/20 Month 6 (Ian Pearson)**

Ian Pearson introduced the report, which set out the current financial position of the services funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), highlighting any under or overspends.

Ian Pearson stated that there had been a significant deficit within the High Needs Block (HNB) in the past. In 2019/20 there was a deficit of £2.2 million.

Section 4.5 of the report outlined the quarter two forecast for each of the blocks and section 4.5 provided detail on the HNB. It stated that there was an underspend of £376k for the HNB, but it was important to note that this was against a planned deficit. Positively this underspend in the area had revised the deficit down to £1.6 million but there were another six months to go.

David Ramsden referred to the promise by central Government of £700 million nationally, the following years for high needs services. Ian Pearson advised that although the extra funding for high needs services was positive, it was unknown how much would be allocated to West Berkshire and if any funding would remain once the deficit had been funded.

RESOLVED that that the Schools' Forum noted the report and that further information would be brought to the next meeting of the Schools' Forum on 9th December in line with the recommendation under section 2.1 of the report.

38 **SENDIASS Contract (Thomas Ng)**

Ian Pearson introduced the report, which aimed to update the Heads Funding Group and Schools' Forum on the progress of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service Contract (SENDIASS). The Schools' Forum had to be consulted on contracts with schools, particularly when up for renewal. The SENDIASS Contract was not yet up for renewal and therefore was being presented for information.

It was explained that the SENDIASS contract provided a service for parents rather than schools. It was a service that had to be legally provided and was funded by the High Needs Block. The feedback from parents as highlighted in section 4.1 of the report was

SCHOOLS FORUM - 14 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

very positive. The contract was due to be retendered in 2021 and therefore would be brought back to the Schools' Forum in due course.

David Ramsden queried what the cost of the contract was however, Ian Pearson stated that this was commercially sensitive information. David Ramsden further queried what the timescale was for the tendering process. Ian Pearson reported that generally work on contracts commenced a year in advance and therefore anticipated that work would commence around July/September 2020.

Catie Colston acknowledged that 44 schools had been involved in the consultation on the contract and asked what percentage of parents had responded. Ian Pearson reported that all parents supported by the service were given the option to comment. 18 parents had responded from a total of about 110. It was acknowledged that those unhappy with a service would normally let their views be known.

Jane Seymour confirmed that the service was available to all children with special education needs and not just those with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

39 Forward Plan

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the forward plan.

40 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

41 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 9th December 2019, 5 – 7pm at Shaw House.

42 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 3 and 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the [Local Government \(Access to Information\)\(Variation\) Order 2006](#). [Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers](#).

43 SEN Engaging Potential Contract (Jane Seymour)

(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of a particular person)
(Paragraph 6 – information – information relating to proposed action to be taken by the Local Authority)

The Schools Forum considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 19) which aimed to consult the Schools' Forum on the contract for SEMH provision for 14 secondary age students, currently held by Engaging Potential.

RESOLVED that the contract should be retendered for 2020-23.

Reason for the decision: As outlined in the exempt report.

Other options considered: As outlined in the exempt report.

44 Review Report on Schools' Catering and Cleaning Contracts (Andy Sharp)

(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of a particular person)
(Paragraph 6 – information – information relating to proposed action to be taken by the Local Authority)

SCHOOLS FORUM - 14 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

The Schools Forum considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 20) which presented the findings of a review undertaken into the recent tendering process in relation to the provision of schools meals catering and to provide recommendation to ensure future tendering arrangements are effective.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.18 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature