

Minutes of a Meeting of the Schools Forum

Monday, 9 June 2014

Shaw House Church Road Newbury RG14 2DR

Present:

Councillor David Allen	Council Member, Shadow Portfolio - Children & Young People, Education, Youth Service, Culture & Leisure	Shadow Portfolio Holder for C&YP
Patricia Brims	Governor Brimpton School	Primary Schools
Sarah Brinkley	Headteacher John O'Gaunt School	Secondary Schools
Jeanette Clifford	Governor St Bartholomew's School	Academies
Jacquie Davies	Headteacher Alternative Curriculum	Pupil Referral Units
Paul Dick	Headteacher Kennet School	Academies
Mary Harwood	C of E Diocese of Oxford Representative	Church of England Diocese
Jackie Hegg	Substitute	Further Education
Kate House	Headteacher The Ilsleys	Primary Schools
Brian Jenkins	Proprietor Jubilee Day Nursery	PVI
Carolynn Loosen	Schools' Funding Officer	Finance Officer
Derek Peuple	Headteacher Park House School	Academies
Chris Prickett	Headteacher Streatley Primary School	Primary Schools
Elaine Ricks-Neal	Joint Principal Adviser for School Improvement	Education Officer
Graham Spellman	RC Diocese of Portsmouth Representative	Roman Catholic Diocese
Suzanne Taylor	Headteacher Hungerford Nursery School	Nursery Schools
John Tyzack	Governor Falkland Primary School	Primary Schools
Claire White	Finance Manager (Schools)	Finance Officer
Charlotte Wilson	Headteacher Trinity School	Academies
Fran Williams	Schools' Accountant	Finance Officer

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:

Cathy Burnham	Social Inclusion Manager	Education Officer
Nathan Butler-Broad	Headteacher Spurcroft School	Primary Schools
Fadia Clarke	Deputy Principal Newbury College	Further Education
Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Finance Manager (Children & Young People)	Finance Manager - C&YP
Jon Hewitt	Headteacher The Castle School	Special Schools
Peter Hudson	Governor Mortimer St Johns Infant School	Primary Schools
Catherine Morley	Headteacher Theale Primary School	Primary Schools
Councillor Irene Neill	Executive Portfolio - Children and Young People, Youth Service, Education, Safeguarding	Executive Portfolio Holder for C&YP
Ian Pearson	Deputy Corporate Director (Communities) & Head of Education Service	Education Officer
David Ramsden	Headteacher Little Heath School	Secondary Schools
Clive Rothwell	Governor John O'Gaunt School	Secondary Schools
Eileen Selsey	Governor Park House School	Academies
Keith Watts	NUT	Union Representative
Stacey Williams	Headteacher Reintegration Service	Pupil Referral Units

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PART I

2. Minutes of previous meeting dated 3rd March 2014

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March were approved.

Action

3. Actions arising from previous meetings

Item 7 – High Needs Budget Proposals 2014/15

The reports from Jane Seymour on the funding implications of the SEND reforms, changes to the top up bands from September 2014 and investing in West Berkshire's high needs provision will be presented at the meeting on 14th July.

Item 8 – Pupil Referral Unit Budget & Funding Proposals 2014/15

The mid-year review of the PRU funding arrangements has been added to the work programme for the meeting on 8th December.

Item 14 – Trade Union Facility Time

The report on the use of the budget 2013/14 and the funding proposal for 2015/16 has been added to the work programme for the meeting on 14th July.

All other actions have been completed.

Action

4. Declarations of Interest

Mary Harwood declared an interest in Item 6 relating to school balances as she is also a governor at Beenham Primary school.

Action

5. Membership

There remains a vacancy on the Schools Forum for a Primary School Business Manager Representative. The Schools' Forum Clerk has contacted the joint chairs of the Primary Heads Forum and offered to run an election on their behalf. All other posts are currently filled.

ACTION: Election to be held to fill the Primary School Business Manager vacancy.

Action

C Loosen

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6. School Balances 2013/14

Claire White presented a report on the school closing balances 2013/14.

Overall the schools' closing balances 2013/14 were £152k lower than their closing balances 2012/13. The reduction in closing balances is particularly evident in the primary and secondary phases; primary school balances reduced by £508k and secondary school balances reduced by £542k (mainly due to John O'Gaunt's deficit).

SCHOOLS CLOSING IN DEFICIT

Three schools submitted deficit budgets in 2013/14 John O'Gaunt, Parsons Down Junior and the Willows, however only John O'Gaunt actually closed with a deficit (£113k).

Four schools who had not submitted a deficit budget in 2013/14 closed the year in deficit; Beenham (£13k), Bradfield (£1k), Bucklebury (£14k) and The IIsleys (£21k). It is expected that Beenham and Bucklebury will set balanced budgets in 2014/15.

SCHOOLS CLOSING WITH AN EXCESS SURPLUS

Three schools have closed with an excess surplus balance: Hampstead Norreys (£5k), Westwood Farm Infants (£9k) and Westwood Farm Juniors (£3k).

The Schools' Forum examined the explanation from each school for their surplus to decide whether they were satisfied or whether the excess balance panel would need to be convened.

DECISION: The Schools' Forum accepted the explanations from the three schools and decided to take no further action.

ACTION: Each school to be informed of the Schools Forum decision.

It was noted that the special schools and PRUs closed with significant surplus balances, although they are outside the claw back scheme. Claire White explained that this is the first year operating with place plus top up funding and that their funding is volatile on a month to month basis.

ACTION: Claire White to look at what other LAs do and determine what should be a reasonable excess surplus balance threshold to place on these schools.

Action

C White

C White

7. Update on DSG Budget for 2014/15

Claire White provided an update on the DSG Budget for 2014/15. Since the last Schools' Forum meeting both the high needs funding for 2014/15 and early years funding for 2013/14 has been confirmed. This means that the Schools' Forum now need to agree any changes to the budget

Action

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2014/15 as a result of changes to the funding.

SCHOOLS BLOCK

None of the budget on the de-delegated fund for primary schools in financial difficulty (£115,680) was used, but it should be retained only for maintained primary schools.

DECISION: The Schools Forum agreed to carry forward the primary schools in financial difficulty de-delegated funding from 2013/14 to 2014/15.

This takes the total over spend on the schools block 2014/15 to £166k. The option is to either budget to over spend the DSG or meet it from the high needs contingency.

DECISION: Budget an over spend on the schools block.

EARLY YEARS BLOCK

The 2013/14 funding has been confirmed and is £5,590 higher than estimated. The funding for the financial year 2014/15 will remain provisional until May 2015 as the funding is based on 5/12 of the January 2014 census and 7/12 of the January 2015 census. The early years funding is currently a shortfall of £96k with a proposal that the difference will be deducted from the early year's contingency budget.

DECISION: Reduce the early year's contingency budget from £355k to £259k.

HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

The short fall in the high needs block 2014/15 is £722k.

The forecasting of high needs expenditure at month 10 on which the budget set for 2014/15 was based was significantly lower and reduced the under spend to be carried forward from £1,518k to £1,000k a movement of £518k. Forecasting needs to be more robust in the high needs block at month 10 to enable more accurate budget setting.

In addition there were of adjustments from the DfE for 2014/15 resulting in an overall reduction of £204k. These adjustments included an additional £291k in national headroom funding, a reduction of £56k due to 'ineligible places', which is currently being appealed and a mismatch between the funding received from the EFA for place funding and the place funding recouped by the EFA and paid direct to the providers.

DECISION: It was agreed that the shortfall is deducted from the high needs contingency budget reducing it from £1,501k to £779k.

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ACTION: Amendments to be made to the DSG 2014/15 budget as set out above. | C White

8. Funding for Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty

Claire White presented the report on the Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund. | **Action**

No bids were received in 2013/14 and it was agreed under item 7 to carry the funding forward to 2014/15.

One bid has been received so far this financial year from The IIsleys Primary School which was presented to the Heads Funding Group (HFG) by the Headteacher and the Finance Officer.

The bid is for £38,667 and follows the restructure of the administration roles in order to balance the budget going forward.

The HFG are supporting the bid which would mean that the school is financially viable going forward, and that to not support the bid would leave the school in deficit for a number of years unless short term staffing cuts were made.

DECISION: The maintained primary phase members of the Schools' Forum approved the bid.

ACTION: Payment to be made to The IIsleys Primary School.

C Loosen

9. Scheme for Financing Schools 2014/15

The consultation on the proposed revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools closed on 23rd May. | **Action**

No relevant consultation responses were received. Some elements of the scheme are a statutory requirement and therefore cannot be changed.

DECISION: The Scheme for Financing Schools was approved by the Schools' Forum.

ACTION: The Scheme for Financing Schools is to be circulated to the schools and posted on the website. | C Loosen

10. **School Funding Arrangements for 2015/16**

Claire White presented a report on the school funding arrangements 2015/16, including the timetable for the 2015/16 school formula submission.

The latest information is that the DfE arrangements 2015/16 document will not be received until the end of the Summer Term. Therefore the initial recommendations which will be central to the Heads Funding Group and Schools' Forum agendas at the meetings in early July may have to be made based on principal.

There has also been a consultation on how an additional £350m should be allocated to the lowest funded local authorities. In the exemplification contained in the consultation which is based on 2012 data West Berkshire could receive £300k. Although the actual amount West Berkshire will receive is unknown the Schools' Forum can make recommendations on how to allocate any funding that is received.

Other considerations for changes to the 2015/16 formula include the use of the sparsity factor and use of an exceptional premises factor for rents and joint use of leisure facilities, although this would require Secretary of State's approval.

It is recommended that there are no changes made to the local formula other than allocating the additional funding and adjusting any factors where there is a view that the funding is not reaching the schools it is intended for in a fair and equitable way.

ACTION: Schools' Forum members provide Claire with their opinions on the allocation of the additional DSG funding and adjustments to local formula factors before 20th June in order to be included in any modelling for HFG consideration.

Action

All

11. **DSG Outturn 2013/14**

Ian Pearson and Shannon Coleman-Slaughter were not available to present the DSG Outturn 2013/14 report. The final DSG outturn 2013/14 was an under spend of £1,507k compared to the forecast at month 10 of £2,150k. The schools block was over spent by £24k, the early years block was under spent by £530k and the high needs block was under spent by £1,000k.

Action

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12. School Financial Value Standard - Annual Report 2013/14

Laura King was not at the meeting to present her report. The Schools' Forum members had questions on whether training included the areas for improvement / actions, particularly where these are the same as the previous year, the number of schools attending the SFVS training and whether has Laura fed back to the schools regarding the quality of their SFVS submissions.

ACTION: These questions will to be taken up with Laura on the Schools' Forum behalf.

Action

C White

13. Vulnerable Children's Grant - Annual Report 2013/14

Cathy was not at the meeting to present her report, so the Schools' Forum members agreed that they would contact her direct if they had any further questions.

Action

Meeting closed at 6.00 pm

Date of next meeting: 14th July 2014
Time: 5.00pm
Venue: Shaw House