

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, 13 JULY 2020

Present: Councillor Dominic Boeck (Executive Portfolio: Children, Young People and Education), Jonathon Chishick (Maintained Primary School Governor), Catie Colston (Maintained Primary School Governor), Jacquie Davies (Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher), Antony Gallagher (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Keith Harvey (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Jon Hewitt (Maintained Special School Headteacher), Brian Jenkins (Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Provider Representative), Hilary Latimer (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Councillor Ross Mackinnon (Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance and Economic Development), Maria Morgan (Maintained Nursery School Headteacher), Ian Nichol (Maintained Primary School Governor), Janet Patterson (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Gemma Piper (Academy School Headteacher) and Graham Spellman (Roman Catholic Diocese)

Also Present: Avril Allenby (Early Years Service Manager), Melanie Ellis (Chief Accountant), Ian Pearson (Head of Education Services) and Jessica Bailiss (Policy Officer (Executive Support))

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Reverend Mark Bennet, Sheila Loy, Julia Mortimore, Derek People, Chris Prosser, Jayne Steele, Bruce Steiner and Charlotte Wilson

(Graham Spellman in the Chair)

PART I

15 Minutes of previous meeting dated 15th June 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2020 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 Actions arising from previous meetings

The Chairman drew the Schools' Forum's attention to the actions for the last meeting on 15th June 2020. All actions were completed or were in hand apart from action Jun20-Ac1 and he asked Melanie Ellis to provide a report on this action.

Jun20-Ac1 – Melanie Ellis to provide an update on what the capital funding provided to schools in February 2020 should have been used for: In the 2018 budget, the government announced an extra £400 million of capital funding for schools in England for 2018/19. West Berkshire was allocated £655k, allocated across each eligible institution as a lump sum of £3,000 and a variable amount based on a per-pupil amount of £32.10, weighted by the phase of the pupil. The funding was received in February 2019, which had not left a lot of time to spend the allocation before the end of the year. Melanie Ellis explained that there was a lot of detailed guidance, which would be emailed to members of the Schools' Forum.

RESOLVED that Melanie Ellis would email further detailed guidance regarding how capital funding had been used by schools to members of the Forum.

17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

18 Schools' Forum Membership and Constitution from September 2020 (Jessica Bailiss)

Jessica Bailiss introduced the report (Agenda Item 5), which aimed to review and where necessary update the Membership and Constitution of the Schools' Forum.

It was reported that the composition of the Forum and number of members representing each sector needs to be broadly proportionate to pupil numbers in the district. Table one on page ten of the report showed a breakdown of pupil numbers compared to 2019 by sector and it could be seen the number of number of pupils in each sector had remained broadly the same and therefore no changes were proposed to the structure of the membership.

Jessica Bailiss referred to section five of the report and stated that there were also no changes proposed to the constitution at this time however, members were welcome to suggest any changes. The recommendation was for the Schools' Forum to approve the Membership and the Constitution from July 2020 as set out in section two of the report.

Jonathan Chishick proposed that the Constitution and Membership from July 2020 be approved and this was seconded by Ian Nichol. At the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum approved the Membership and Constitution from July 2020.

19 Schools in Financial Difficulty Bids: Purley and Beenham (Melanie Ellis)

Ian Pearson introduced the report (Agenda Item 6), which aimed to summarise bids that had been received from Beenham Primary School and Purley CofE Primary School to access funding from the Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty de-delegated fund (SFDF).

Ian Pearson explained that the SFDF was contributed to by maintained primary schools only. The criteria that schools could bid against was set out within the report on page 24. Two schools had submitted a bid to the fund including Beenham and Purley Primary schools. Both schools had presented their bids to a virtual meeting of the Heads Funding Group (HFG) and answered any questions raised by headteachers. Included in the report were summaries of the two bids. Both bids had been assessed as meeting the criteria and had been supported by the HFG.

The bid from Beenham Primary school, if awarded, would allow the school to address a settlement resulting from a long term absence of a member of staff and would also enable the school to get out of deficit by the end of the financial year.

The bid from Purley Primary School related to the long term absence of a member of staff. When this bid had been presented to the HFG there had been support for the case however, it had been noted that a subsequent bid might be submitted by the school later in the year to cover the remaining costs once the matter had been resolved.

Keith Harvey referred to the discussion that had taken place at the HFG regarding the two bids and reported that both bids had been supported.

Catie Colston proposed that the Schools' Forum approve the bids and this was seconded by Hilary Latimer. The Chairman invited the Schools' Forum to vote on each of the bids and at the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum approved that the bids from Beenham Primary School and Purley CofE Primary School be approved.

20 The impact of Covid19 on West Berkshire Schools (Ian Pearson)

Ian Pearson introduced the report (Agenda Item 7), which reported on the initial intelligence from schools about the financial impact of Covid-19 on school budgets.

The report had been brought to the Schools' Forum following a request from Reverend Mark Bennet and reported on the impact on schools in terms of revenue funding.

Ian Pearson reported that what the report did was set out a little bit of background information and then looked at the areas of lost income and additional expenditure in more detail. The report linked to Government guidance and what the Government would be willing to reimburse schools for and this was detailed under section 5.3. Areas they were not prepared to reimburse schools for were set out in section 5.2 of the report.

Ian Pearson reported that he had carried out a small piece of research with headteachers regarding their views on potential lost income, potential additional costs and potential savings and this was set out in sections 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 of the report. It was acknowledged that the pandemic was not yet over and therefore Government guidance could potentially change.

Ian Pearson referred to a point that had been raised by schools regarding if what schools could claim for was effected if they had a balance. Ian Pearson explained that the Government had set out that schools that were entering the 2020/21 financial year with a balance, should have that balance protected up to the end of the financial year. However, if the balance was larger at the end of the financial year then the general view seemed to be that the Government would look for some of the additional costs to be met by the school.

There were still issues to be resolved regarding guidance that was being released. Another issue was costs resulting from Covid-19 that fell outside of school budgets for example within the High Needs Block (HNB) and Early Years Block (EYB), both of which were already facing a deficit. Ian Pearson stated that it might be helpful for a one or two reports to be brought to a future meeting of the Forum on these areas.

Catie Colston thanked Ian Pearson for the information and stated that from her understanding it seemed that when looking at money coming and going out it seemed that costs should just about level out. Catie Colston queried what realistic scenario planning could take place to help predict what the position in September might be, for the rest of the financial year. Catie Colston queried if the Council as a whole were able to take a view on this.

In response to Catie Colston's questions, Ian Pearson reported that at the moment the thinking was that all children would be back in to their existing schools in September. It had been thought that schools might need to locate additional accommodation for children to retain smaller groups however, the plan was now for all children to fit back into the original space available. This would avoid some further costs however, there would still likely be increased costs associated with cleaning and this needed to be recognized.

Ian Pearson referred to Catie Colston's query on the Council's view. He stated that in terms of the costs discussed earlier within the report, these were contained within the School's Block and therefore were managed within individual school budgets. There were other costs that could potentially push particular funding blocks further in to deficit and this was a large concern. A cost for the Council included services provided that sat outside the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG). The most costly service that the Council provided for schools was home to school transport. This cost the Local Authority around £3 million and Government guidance was still awaited on this area. If it required further vehicles to ensure school bubbles could be retained, accommodated staggered starts, or increased journeys then it was likely that the related cost would be higher and this would

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be a matter for the Local Authority. Ian Pearson explained that although he did not have a definitive answer to the questions there were a whole range of issues that were related to different funding sources. It was important to monitor what was happening and ensure costing was carried out as the situation progressed.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

21 Early Years Block Budget (Avril Allenby)

Avril Allenby introduced the report (Agenda Item 8), which aimed to update the Schools' Forum on the work of the Early Years Funding Group (EYFG) in preparing a deficit recovery plan for the Early Years DSG block.

Avril Allenby reported that some of the information within the report had been presented to the Schools' Forum previously. The intention had been to bring the initial stages of a deficit recovery plan to the meeting. The Early Years Funding Group (EYFG), which was made up of a range of providers had met for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic on the 6th July and had looked at different scenarios to recover the deficit across three or five years. Robust discussions had taken place and the decision had been taken that further time was required to explore the options available to ensure that the approach was fair and equitable to all types and size of providers. Arrangements around Covid-19 also needed to be considered as part of this process. Therefore an update was only possible at the current time.

Lisa Potts commented that there were a lot of different types of providers to consider as part of this process and a lot of work was taking place behind the scenes.

Catie Colston queried if there were any implications that would be caused from delaying the deficit recovery plan. Avril Allenby confirmed that there would still be a deficit recovery plan in place for the next financial year. It was important to note that the Early Years sector was funded in a different way to schools as many providers also relied on income generation.

Ian Pearson added that there had never been an intention for the deficit recovery plan to commence prior to the end of the current financial year. It was however, important that deficit recovery plans should not be slipped further. Different options would be brought to the next meeting of the Forum and a view would need to be taken on which option was the most viable option. Different options would impact differently upon different providers. A view would also need to be taken on whether the deficit recovery plan should span over three or five years.

Gemma Piper stated she had also intended to raise questions, relating to when the actions for the deficit recovery plan could commence and secondly what time period the recovery plan would span over. She noted that Ian Pearson had covered these points in his previous response. Avril Allenby commented that timescales were already being looked at and it was important that providers were given as long as possible to adapt to any changes and therefore further slippage needed to be avoided.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report and that a deficit recovery report for the Early Years Block would be brought to the next meeting in October 2020.

22 Trade Union Facilities Time - Annual Report for 2019/20 (Gary Upton)

Gary Upton introduced the report (Agenda Item 9), which aimed to inform members of the Schools' Forum of the activities of the teacher trade unions.

Gary Upton reported that teacher trade union's time over the past three to four months had been dominated by Covid-19 however, a lot of positives had come out of this and Gary Upton stated that this was reflected within the report. Time had been spent building positive relationships with employers. A sensible and pragmatic approach would be taken

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to working together when reopening schools and he felt that members of the trade unions were very appreciative of this.

Gary Upton reported that there were pieces of casework taking place however he had tried to highlight in the report that casework and consultation was not the only thing that that was carried out by the unions and a lot of focus was given to building relationships to the point where consultation and casework was reduced. He believed that this was the position with many employers and it was an approach that was well received.

Gary Upton reported that through his consultation with members it was apparent that tools such as Zoom were being used to increase engagement with colleagues across West Berkshire. There was a lot of appreciation for the work taking place by the trade union with SLTs and headteacher representative unions.

Gary Upton stressed that the last few months had been incredibly busy with lots of questions being raised however, the transparent approach taken by schools and the Local Authority had been hugely appreciated by the trade unions and its members.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

23 Forward Plan

The Chairman drew attention to the Forward Plan on page 39 of the agenda and welcomed any comments. It was noted that the next meeting in October 2020 was likely to be a very full agenda.

RESOLVED that:

- Deficit recovery reports for the Early Years and High Needs Blocks would be brought to the next meeting of the Forum in October 2020.

24 Date of the next meeting

Monday 19th October 2020 at 5pm.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature