

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOLS FUNDING FORUM
CEME,
18 May 2017 (8.30 - 11.35 am)**

Present:

Representative Groups

Head Teachers: Emma Allen, Special
Margy Bushell, Primary
Kirsten Cooper, Primary
David Denchfield, Primary
Malcolm Drakes, Primary
Bill Edgar, Secondary
Nigel Emes, Primary
Chris Hobson, Primary
Simon London, Academy
Eileen Hinds, AP Academy

Governors: Sheila Clarke, Primary

**Non-School
Representatives:** Joanna Wilkinson, Early Years/PVI Sector

Trade Unions: John Giles, UNISON
Ray Waxler, NUT

Emma Ferry, SEND Review Project Manager was also present for part of the meeting.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OR OBSERVERS

Apologies were received from Gary Pocock, Keith Williams, Bernard Gilley and Maria Thompson.

It was noted that this was Ray Waxler's last meeting and that John Delaney would be taking over.

2 TO AGREE THE NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2ND MARCH 2017

The notes of the meeting held on 2 March 2017 were before the Forum for agreement. It was noted that Joanna Wilkinson had been present at the meeting.

The minutes were otherwise agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

School Budgets 2017-18 (minute 47) – A letter had been sent from London Councils in response to the consultation which included the views of Havering and a letter sent by schools from 14 local authorities from outside London. It was **AGREED** that there should not be a separate letter sent on behalf of the Forum.

Schools in Deficit (minute 51) – The identification of an additional budget to write off the deficits of schools that were becoming sponsored academies was progressing. Criteria for write-off would be developed at a future meeting of the Forum.

4 **SCHOOLS FORUM REPRESENTATION**

It was noted that Sheila Clarke's school was converting to Academy Status and from that date she would no longer be eligible to serve on the Funding Forum as governor representative of LA maintained schools.

The Forum was in line with guidance in terms of the number and type of its members but there needed to be a re-balancing between representatives of maintained schools and Academies. Options were presented which included reducing the numbers of Maintained schools' representatives or increasing representatives of Academies. There could also be a reduction in the number of trade union representatives of teaching staff from two to one.

It was intended that a balance be achieved in representation between primary and secondary representatives per pupil and between maintained schools and academies taking into consideration the likely increase in academy conversions. To this end Option C was recommended which proposed a decrease of two primary Maintained school representatives (one Head teacher and one governor) and an increase of one Primary Academy representative (a governor).

With regard to the proposal to reduce teachers' trade union representation from teacher RW commented that it was increasing difficult to find people to take on facility time and there was therefore likely to be reduced participation by the Unions on the Forum. Teaching staff did not put themselves forward for these roles.

DA advised that Forums in other local authorities only had one Union representative and it was noted that all teaching Unions also attended the conditions of service working party.

It was **AGREED** unanimously to adopt option C of the report before the Forum regarding the revised representation on the Forum.

It was **AGREED** to reduce representation of Unions on the Forum from two places to one, by a majority of 9 votes to 3.

5 **DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT – YEAR END BALANCE 2016-17**

It was noted that the carry forward balance related to the 2017-18 year rather than as stated in paragraph one of the report. The £0.5 million for transition to the national funding formula would continue to be held.

Some of the £300k reserve for additional resource provision had been spent and a new ARP was due to be opened shortly. Early years had shown a small underspend that would be reallocated back into that funding block. The £79k underspend for high needs had also been put back into the 2017/18 block.

The schools block funding was only available to fund activities as shown in the report. The pupil growth fund allocation had been used to fund expansions in primary schools. Funding would also be needed as cohorts from previous years moved through the system. Allocations had also been made for bulge class funding and to meet infant class size regulations. A £210k underspend for schools with falling rolls would be reallocated to the 2017/18 budget in anticipation of expansion in the secondary sector.

The overspend on de-delegated budgets was principally due to a high number of teachers being on maternity leave and further details on this would be brought to a future meeting of the Forum.

A Forum member felt that there was not sufficient funding to support children with SEN in early years' settings and needs were not sufficiently addressed prior to starting at primary school. These issues would be picked up in the LA review of its SEND strategy.

It was **AGREED** that the allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant in financial year 2017-18 be undertaken as detailed in the report to the Forum.

6 **SECTION 251 BUDGET STATEMENT 2017-18**

The Section 251 statement detailed the annual planned spend for children's services and would be used by the Department for Education as well as published on the Council's website. Key points were that the overall budget for education and children's services was £249m of which £37m was for children's social care and £213m for education. Of the £213m, £183m was allocated directly to schools and early years' providers.

The published figures represented the decisions made by the LA and Schools Funding Forum during the year on matters such as de-delegation,

and central retention (e.g. for pupil growth). Approximately £730k or 5% of the early years' budget was retained centrally.

The high needs budget included top up funding for maintained schools and academies and the cost of provision at non-maintained and independent schools for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (total £13m). It also included the cost of alternative provision.

The attention of the Funding Forum was drawn to two new sections of the s251 statement: "central provision within schools' budget (former ESG retained duties)" and "central provision funded through maintained schools budget". The former showed the costs held against £589k of the DSG that were previously funded from a central Education Services Grant and the latter, the opportunity to charge the costs of some central functions to the budgets of maintained schools (this was not used in 2017-18).

The total schools budget of £206m reconciled with the grant received shown elsewhere on the statement.

The statement also showed the planned expenditure on central Education functions such as School Improvement, Education Welfare, Educational Psychologists and Home to School Transport. The total for central education functions was £6.7m of which £2.3m was for transport and £500k for pension commitments. Children's' and Young People's Services were shown as follows: Sure Start Centres and Early Years: £1m, Children Looked After: £15m, Safeguarding: £13m, Family Support Services: £4.7m, Services for Young People: £1.8m.

Table 2 showed the funding allocated to LA maintained special schools and AP settings of which Corbets Tey was the only one. The increase in 6th form places was noted which because of more local provision was beneficial for the budget.

The Early Years Table detailed the hourly base rate for early years' providers of £4.39, the hourly deprivation factors and included an estimate for take up of the additional 15 hours from September giving an overall budget of £11.5m.

The Forum received the Section 251 budget statements.

7 PUPIL GROWTH FUND - PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO CRITERIA

Officers explained that primary schools could be disadvantaged by the Local Authority's duty to ensure sufficient school places for every child. It was noted that in most cases the PAN of a school could not be reduced even if pupil numbers were significantly lower than this due to the need to ensure sufficient capacity. Schools therefore had to budget for an additional class but were not allocated any funding for this. In some cases, schools could

be supported, if appropriate, by the Pupil Growth Fund, Falling Rolls Fund and funding allocated for schools in financial difficulties.

It was therefore proposed to amend the criteria for use of the Pupil Growth Fund for use in exceptional circumstances. This would allocate additional funding when a primary school's request for a reduction in PAN was not agreed by the LA and it was still necessary to continue to organise classes to the forms of entry required by the PAN. Concern was raised that the current expansion strategy could compound problems of schools in financial difficulty. Officers responded that space capacity was required by DfE and parental preference was also an issue. Political factors associated with school expansions also needed to be considered. It was noted that some expansions would not be filled but schools that had expanded should not be allowed to suffer financially. It was confirmed that there were only two schools with low year groups moving through that might benefit from this amendment.

The amendment to the criteria for use of the Pupil Growth Fund (as shown in the report to the Forum) was **AGREED** unanimously.

8 **TRADE UNION FACILITY TIME**

The trade union facility time working group had recommended to the Forum a reduction in the charge per pupil. It was noted that the working group had not yet considered the returns submitted by the NASUWT on how facility time was used. The current charge of £3.50 per pupil would, in any case, require a reduction in the facility time provided due to the 1% pay award and employer pension and NI contributions.

There was now more buy-in from Academies but some Academies were still not paying the charge, such as those run by external MATs. It was proposed that any reduction in the rate would take effect from 1 September 2017 although Forum members felt more lead-in time was needed. It was emphasised by the NUT representative that the facility time charge was not optional for schools and that the provision of facility time was a statutory requirement.

It was confirmed that the Schools Funding Forum did support facility time and that it was only the amount of this and the cost to schools that was being questioned. The outgoing NUT representative felt that his replacement would find the role very difficult to perform, even on current levels of facility time.

The Forum voted on the revised rate for facility time as follows:

£3.50 per pupil (current rate) – 0 votes
£3 per pupil – 4 votes
£2.50 per pupil – 6 votes
£2 per pupil – 0 votes

The Forum also voted on the implementation date of the new rate as follows:

January 2018 – 0 votes

April 2018 – 8 votes

September 2018 – 5 votes

It was therefore **AGREED** that the trade union facility time rate should be £2.50 per pupil with effect from April 2018.

9 **STRATEGIC REVIEW AND PLANNING OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION**

As part of a Government review of SEND provision and funding, local authorities were required to refresh their SEND strategy and look to fill any gaps in provision etc. A strategic plan had therefore been drawn up for high needs provision. There would be additional capital of around £2.5 million available over the next three years for SEND provision in Havering.

Havering's vision was to expand Special Schools and also re-designate Special Schools. Agreement had also been given for a new 60 place SEND free school. Investment was also being made in existing SEND provision by increasing the number of ARPs and in workforce development. Officers added that the high needs block was worth a total of around £20m and the Forum would be consulted on how this was best allocated.

There were pressures on high needs and on early years' special needs provision. It was planned to establish a group to look at these areas that would meet before the end of the current academic year. By September 2017, it was planned that a final draft of the strategy refresh would be available that could be consulted on more widely. Representatives would be invited to sit on the task and finish group from Hall Mead, Redden Court and RJ Mitchell schools which had SEND specialisms as well as other schools and providers.

Proposals would be brought to the next meeting, based on affordability. It was suggested that alternative provision available at the Olive Academy should also be considered. It was agreed that any comments or requests to be on the task and finish group should be sent via e-mail.

The Forum noted the report.

10 **ACADEMY CONVERSIONS AND SPONSORS**

The Forum noted that Marshalls Park School became an Academy on 1 April 2017 as part of the South West Essex Community Education Trust.

11 **NEXT MEETINGS**

Officers would advise the date of the next meeting in due course.

12 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business raised.

13 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

It was agreed that the public should now be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public were present during those items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Chairman