

Schools Forum meeting held remotely on Wednesday 8 July 2020

To view the archived recording of this meeting, please see here:

https://bradford.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/495466

Commenced 0805, Adjourned 0925
Reconvened 0930, Concluded 1015

PRESENT

School Members

Ashley Reid, Brent Fitzpatrick, Bryan Harrison, Carol Dewhirst, Dianne Richardson, Dominic Wall, Graham Swinbourne, Emma Hamer, Helen Williams, Ian Morrel, Sir Nick Weller, Nicky Kilvington, Nigel Cooper, Sian Hudson, Sue Haithwaite and Trevor Loft

Nominated Sub School Members

Alison Kaye

Non School Members

Ian Murch

DIANNE RICHARDSON IN THE CHAIR

Local Authority Officers

Andrew Redding	Business Advisor (Schools)
Asad Shah	Governance Officer
Dawn Haigh	Principal Finance Officer – Schools
Marium Haque	Deputy Director, Education and Learning
Niall Devlin	Strategic Manager, Integrated Assessment
Rachel Phillips	Strategic Manager, Admissions and Exclusions
Emma Hamer	Strategic Manager, Sufficiency and Intelligence

Apologies

Kevin Holland

478 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Dominic Wall, Sue Haithwaite, Trevor Loft and Emma Hamer disclosed interests for agenda item 9 “SEND and Alternative Provision Review - Update”. Emma Hamer also disclosed an interest for agenda item 10 “Update on Matters Concerning the DSG”.

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480. MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2020 & MATTERS ARISING

The Business Advisor (Schools) reported on progress made on “Action” items:

- **Page 2 Falling Rolls Fund:** A request was made to reconvene the Forum’s sub-group on place planning. This was paused due to COVID-19. We wish now to reconvene the group early in September and we will send an email around asking interested members to attend a remote meeting.
- **Pages 2 & 3 SEND and AP:** An update on these matters is presented under agenda item 9.
- **Page 5 DSG Update:** A further update on DSG matters is presented under agenda item 10.

Resolved –

- (1) **That progress made on “Action” items and Matters Arising be noted.**
- (2) **That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2020 be signed as a correct record.**

481. MATTERS RAISED BY SCHOOLS

An Academies Member requested that the minutes of the confidential item from the 11 March agenda, relating to the funding of health services in schools, be circulated and that an update on this matter be added to the September agenda. This was agreed.

The Vice Chair asked for information to be presented on the number of EHCPs by mainstream school / academy as well as the numbers of requests for EHCPs. There was some discussion on this request (in the context of the Forum’s remit). The Strategic Manager, Integrated Assessment, suggested that it is most appropriate to present this information to the SEND Partnership, with this then published on the Council’s local offer website for wider access. The Strategic Manager said that he would arrange for this information to be discussed with the SEND Partnership in September.

Resolved –

That the confidential minutes relating to agenda item 14 from the 11 March 2020 meeting be shared with Schools Forum Members and that an update

on this item be added to the 16 September 2020 meeting agenda.

ACTION: *Business Advisor (Schools)*

482. STANDING ITEM - DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK GROWTH FUND ALLOCATIONS

No new allocations were presented.

No resolutions were passed on this item.

483. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP - CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The Business Advisor (Schools) reported that, as per the Forum's agreed management procedures, the terms of office of the Chair and Vice Chair are for 1 year and both positions are now up for renewal. Members were asked to approve the proposed approach (by email) for the collection of nominations and for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Schools Forum for 2020.

Forum Members did not have any comments and did not ask any questions.

Resolved –

That the established approach (by email) be followed for the collection of nominations and for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Schools Forum for 2020/21.

ACTION: *Business Advisor (Schools)*

484. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented a report, Document LO, which provided an update on the Forum's membership composition.

An academies member asked why there aren't any governor (trustee) memberships in the academies sector. The Business Advisor explained that, unlike for the maintained sector under the Schools Forum Regulations, the Local Authority cannot prescribe the type of membership for the academies sector; this is for the academies to agree. This is something perhaps then that the academies members may wish to look at.

Resolved –

That the contents of Document LO be noted.

485. CONSULTATION - SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented a report, Document LP, which asked Schools Forum members representing maintained schools to agree to conduct a

short consultation with maintained schools on proposed amendments to the Scheme for Financing Schools. These amendments have been triggered by the DfE's refreshed guidance for local authorities, which was published on 1 April 2020.

The Vice Chair asked why consultation is necessary when the DfE is effectively directing the change. The Business Advisor explained that, although this is a required change, it is not a directed revision (in the sense that the exact wording must be placed within Schemes) and therefore, the Regulations require consultation albeit that this consultation should be very straightforward.

Resolved –

That a short consultation be undertaken with maintained schools on amendments to the Scheme for Financing Schools as proposed in Document LP. The Schools Forum be asked make a final decision on these amendments at the meeting to held on 16 September 2020.

ACTION: Business Advisor (Schools)

486. SEND AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION - UPDATE

The Deputy Director, Education and Learning, together with the Strategic Manager, Integrated Assessment, the Strategic Manager, Admissions and Exclusions and the Strategic Manager, Sufficiency and Intelligence, presented Document LQ. This report included response to the SEND places development information requested at the last meeting (Appendix 1), as recorded in the minutes. An update was provided verbally on Alternative Provision. SEND Places Creation (Appendix 1)

Following the presentation of Appendix 1, Forum members made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- A point of clarification was made, that Beechcliffe Special School is not an SEMH provision.
- Are the additional numbers at Co-op Academy Southfield to be completed January 2020 or April 2020? The Strategic Manager, Sufficiency and Intelligence, responded that phase 2 of development will be completed at January 2020 and phase 3 by April 2020. Interim arrangements will be in place for the autumn term, which includes Co-op Delius and Chellow Heights retaining some year 6 children in the autumn term.

An academies member, on behalf of Southfield and the Co-op Trust, made a statement in regards to the development of places at Southfield and these interim arrangements. He explained that there have been unavoidable delays due to COVID-19. 27 children will transition to Southfield in September. A further 21 children will transition in January 2020, rather than in September, subject to four new classrooms being completed. He expressed his gratitude to Delius and Chellow Heights for their management of these interim arrangements across the autumn term.

- Whilst recognising the impact of COVID-19 on increasing the occupancy of newly created places in the summer term, the Chair expressed her disappointment that so many new places are still to filled. She asked what the barriers are to occupying these places. The Strategic Manager, Integrated Assessment, responded to explain that there is some delay in the data, where children and young people have been placed in these new settings but have not yet come on roll (due to COVID-19). He stated that the occupancy of these places at September will increase. This was reinforced by comments from the Strategic Manager, Sufficiency and Intelligence. He also stated that newly created places are filled incrementally in a managed way to ensure successful delivery.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Manager for his response. She added that, in speaking to schools, one of the barriers being suggested to her in relation to resourced provision is that there aren't places available in the correct year groups. The Chair asked whether this is recognised as a barrier. The Forum engaged in a discussion about the restrictions within the 2014 code of practice, the importance of parental preference as a factor in placement and the extent to which the Authority can introduce an element of central strategic organisation. The Strategic Manager agreed that there does need to be an element of centrally planning and stated that the Authority is trying to improve this.

- The Vice Chair, referencing the pressure that comes into mainstream provision from an increased number of pupils on roll with EHCPs, asked whether a mainstream provision can be declared as 'full' (in the sense that the mainstream school cannot admit more children with EHCPs). The Strategic Manager explained that it is difficult to declare a mainstream provision as full in this way. He added that the Authority is currently developing some training to deliver to schools (and SENCOs) on the law related to EHCP consultations.
- Referring to the Deputy Director's comments at the last meeting, about developing a 'diverse' SEND places offer in Bradford, the Chair asked what the Authority's strategy is for the development of new SEND Free School provision. The Deputy Director responded that this continues to be considered, but in the context that a new free school is not an immediate solution. We also need to ensure that it is the right school, with the right demographic and with the right sponsor. The Strategic Manager, Sufficiency and Intelligence added that a new free school is not 'off the table' and the Authority will be considering an application when a new wave opens (there currently isn't a wave open).
- Is the Authority planning to develop more places for September 2021 and is further places development affordable within the High Needs Block? The Strategic Manager, Sufficiency and Intelligence, responded that more places are being planned but that we soon will have 'saturated' our existing estate. The Business Advisor (Schools) explained that much of the affordability position will be influenced by the High Needs Block settlements over the next couple of years. He added that we need to balance the cost of additional places with continuing to uplift the values of top up funding to ensure that providers are appropriately funded as their costs increase, and so affordability

will need close monitoring.

Alternative Provision

The Strategic Manager, Admissions and Exclusions, reported that the Authority is seeking to commission 165 places in total for permanent exclusion provision and is currently notifying individual providers of this intention.

The Deputy Director, Education and Learning reported that the Authority is having on-going discussions with the DfE about the position of District PRU and its academy order and that we are pushing the DfE for its decision, which is overdue. She reminded members that the Authority is ceasing its commissioning of places at 31 August 2020. Our discussions about this provision going forward from September have been curtailed by the delay in the DfE's decision on the academy order. We hope to share further information with the Forum and schools in September.

The Chair asked about the position of the working group that is meeting to consider alternative provision matters. The Strategic Manager, Admissions and Exclusions explained that a meeting of this group will be scheduled for early in the autumn term. The Chair asked whether this group is open to non-Forum members and it was clarified that this is.

Resolved –

That the contents of Document LQ be noted.

487. UPDATE ON MATTERS CONCERNING THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented a report, Document LR, which provided an update on a number of matters relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant.

In his presentation, the Business Advisor highlighted three main points of interest:

- The initial confirmation of DSG block balances brought forward from 2019/20.
- Some further work carried out by the Authority looking at the approach to the calculation of formula funding adjustments for permanent exclusions in the academy sector. The Authority has an initial proposal to consider, on which we will now consult directly with academy trusts. The Authority will come back to the Forum in September or October for a final view.
- Initial consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on the DSG and on schools, academies and other providers. This report seeks to introduce key themes and to identify points to continue to monitor. Further updates on these will be presented from September.

The Business Advisor explained the main areas of financial impact and that the area of most concern, in terms of immediate budget impact over the summer term, has been the loss of income streams. Loss of income may

continue as a significant issue from September.

The Business Advisor, supported by the Strategic Manager, Sufficiency and Intelligence, also in particular highlighted concern around the sufficiency of the DfE's national financial support mechanisms in place for early years providers - nursery schools and the PVI sector. Two immediate issues are that the DfE's exceptional costs fund does not extend to nursery schools nor PVI providers (supporting additional costs associated with cleaning and social distancing) and the CJRS is set to reduce and then cease in October. The CJRS is the main mechanism currently supporting loss of income. We will need to further consider these issues as we move into autumn following full re-opening. The Forum may be asked for a view on local support measures for early years. The Forum may also find that it is approached more widely by schools, academies and other providers for financial support and so may need to agree its general position in relation to such requests.

The Forum's discussion that followed the presentation of this report focused on the impact of COVID-19. Members made the following comments:

- That the DfE's national school exceptional and additional costs fund is very limited. For example, it does not provide for reimbursement of additional cleaning costs unless there has been a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case at the school. The Deputy Director, Education and Learning, stated that this does not help schools when the government's own advice is that the best prevention is increased cleaning and hygiene. She added that the Authority has regular conversations with the DfE and is trying to get across the message (unsuccessfully so far) that schools, academies and other providers, will incur significant additional costs in preparation for opening in September and then on an on-going basis. The Strategic Manager, Sufficiency and Intelligence, also highlighted that the Authority continues to lobby the DfE regarding the exclusion of early years providers from the national reimbursement scheme.
- That there have been issues relating to the CJRS (furloughing) in the way this has been interpreted for agency staff, which are still to be resolved. The Business Advisor, with caveat, stated his understanding that the CJRS was now closed to new claimants.
- That the Authority must not lose sight of the provision of meals for vulnerable children. The Deputy Director reported that the Council has just agreed the funding of a summer holidays food scheme, including for children that are not eligible for FSM but who's families are facing hardship.

Resolved –

That the contents of Document LR be noted.

488. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA AND DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2021/22

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented a report, Document LS, which

provides an update on matters relating to the future development of National Funding Formula and the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant as well as an update on local formula funding review work.

In his presentation, the Business Advisor highlighted the possible delay, due to COVID-19, in the DfE's national EHCP / SEND / AP system review and what this might mean for our local formula funding review, in particular review of our SEND Funding Floor mechanism for 2021/22. This is something that the Forum will be asked to consider further in the autumn.

Regarding the FFWG meetings, Forum members indicated that they are comfortable with these meetings being held in small groups in large rooms rather than trying to progress these meetings remotely.

Resolved –

- (1) That the contents of Document LS be noted.**
- (2) That Forum Members be invited to attend a 'Formula Funding Working Group' session, on Tuesday 29 September (8am), Wednesday 30 September (8am) or Tuesday 6 October (8am).**

ACTION: Business Advisor (Schools)

489. SCHOOLS FORUM STANDING ITEMS

No further information was presented under this agenda item.

No resolutions were passed on this item.

490. AOB / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

No AOB items were put forward.

No resolutions were passed on this item.

491. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Schools Forum is Wednesday 16 September 2020.

Resolved –

That the planned meetings for the 2020/21 academic year be approved as follows:

- **Wednesday 16 September 2020, 8am**
- **Wednesday 14 October 2020, 8am**
- **Wednesday 9 December 2020, 8am**
- **Wednesday 13 January 2021, 8am**
- **Wednesday 20 January 2021, 8am (PROVISIONAL MEETING)**

- **Wednesday 10 March 2021, 8am**
- **Wednesday 19 May 2021, 8am**
- **Wednesday 7 July 2021, 8am**

FROM: Parveen Akhtar
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City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Committee Secretariat
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Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Schools Forum.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER