

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Schools Forum on 10 July

Minutes of a meeting of the Schools Forum held on Wednesday 22 May 2019 in Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 0805
Concluded 1020

PRESENT

School Members:

Ashley Reed, Brent Fitzpatrick, Bryan Harrison, Deborah Haworth, Dianne Richardson, Dominic Wall, Emma Hamer, Gill Holland, Ian Morel, Kevin Holland, Nicky Kilvington, Nigel Cooper, Sian Young, Sue Haithwaite, Tehmina Hashmi, Trevor Loft, Wahid Zaman

Non School Members:

Ian Murch and Vivienne Robinson

Nominated Sub

Alison Kaye and Jo Lynch

Local Authority Officers:

Andrew Redding	Business Advisor (Schools)
Asad Shah	Committee Services Officer
Dawn Haigh	Principal Finance Officer (Schools)
Marium Haque	Deputy Director Education and Learning
Raj Singh	Business Advisor
Helena Cassidy	Finance Officer
Debbie Cussans	Finance Officer

Observers:

Councillors Pollard and Ward

Apologies:

Carol Dewhirst, Helen Williams, Graham Swinbourne and Sir Nick Weller

DIANNE RICHARDSON IN THE CHAIR

398. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

The following declarations were received:

Brent Fitzpatrick, Dominic Wall, Emma Hamer and Trevor Loft for agenda item 6 "SEMH

and SEND Reviews – Progress Report” (minute 401).

ACTION: *City Solicitor*

399. MINUTES OF 13 MARCH 2019 AND MATTERS ARISING

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

- **Matters Arising – publication of draft meeting minutes:** The Business Advisor reported that the ESFA has published feedback on Forum practices, which it has collected from attending a number of Schools Forum meetings across the country. He reported that we follow already the vast majority of recommendations made about good practice. The feedback does suggest however, that the minutes of Forum meetings should be published, in draft, quickly after each meeting, rather than waiting until the next meeting. This is so that stakeholders and other interested parties can see in real time what the Forum is discussing and the action points. Therefore, it is proposed to begin to publish draft minutes within a week of each meeting for these minutes to then be ratified at the next meeting. Members agreed.
- **Item 388 Page 2 (Stronger Communities Board Nominations):** The Business Advisor reported that a request for nominations from interested Members was sent out as agreed and no responses were received.
- **Item 391 Page 5 (SEND and SEMH Reviews):** The Business Advisor reported that the follow up report requested by Members is presented at Document KI under agenda item 6. The letter from the Chair to the Secretary of State regarding the insufficiency of high needs capital / questioning the national methodology used is currently being drafted and will be actioned.
- **Item 392 page 5 (DSG Matters):** At the last meeting the Forum considered the uncertain position of various grant funding streams. The Business Advisor reported that further details have been published on the Teacher Pay Grant and Teacher Pensions Grant. The DfE has also confirmed that the PE & Sports Premium will continue in the 2019/20 academic year. This means that the only remaining significant uncertainty for immediate budgets up to March 2020 is the September 2019 teacher pay award. We would expect to begin to hear about this from the end of this month. The report under agenda item 7 reminds Members about the uncertainties that still remain on DSG funding after 2019/20.
- **Item 394 Page 6 (Scheme Consultation):** The Business Advisor reported that the consultation has been completed with no responses received (the consultation was on only very minor amendments, including wording amendments). A final version of the proposed amended Scheme, which is the same as the version consulted on, is presented to this meeting. Members were asked formally to approve the adoption of this Scheme from today’s date. Members agreed.
- **Item 396 page 7 (AOB):** The Business Advisor confirmed that the requested report on PFI costs will be presented to the Schools Forum on 10 July.

Resolved –

- (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019 be signed as a correct record.**
- (2) That the Schools Forum agrees the amended Scheme for Financing Schools with this Scheme to be adopted from 22 May 2019.**
- (3) That the Schools Forum agrees for draft minutes of Forum meetings to be published within a week of each meeting and also sent to Forum Members by email. These minutes will then be formally ratified by the Forum at the next meeting.**

ACTION – Business Advisor (Schools)

400. MATTERS RAISED BY SCHOOLS

Two separate matters were raised.

The Chair asked the Deputy Director, Education and Learning, for the Council's plans for the replacement of the Education and Learning Strategic Manager who leaves at the end of the summer term. The Deputy Director confirmed that the Council was currently looking at options; the intention being that this post will be retained within the structure and will be recruited to in a timely way. It is hoped to be able to share further information with schools in the coming weeks. The Chair wished to record the Forum's thanks to the Education and Learning Strategic Manager for her years of service and dedication to Bradford's schools.

Primary Behaviour Centres

The Chair reported to the Forum the communication that has been received from the Headteacher Member representing Maintained Primary Schools setting out her concerns regarding the position of the Primary Behaviour Centres. This communication has been written on behalf of the four centres. The Chair invited the Member, who was in attendance at the meeting, to present her communication. Discussion on this matter extended into agenda item 6.

The Member reported that the Centres have been told by the Council that they will close and that dual registered pupils will not be funded from September; the Centres have not been consulted on this; this change produces a number of immediate vulnerabilities (financial, staffing, recruitment) for the Centres and the host schools; it appears to be assumed that the Centres will either convert to resourced provisions or will close; there are some pupils that do not fall into the permanent exclusion or EHCP categories, currently supported by the Centres, and it is not clear what will happen to these; in addition, there is confusion (and a lack of consistency of message) about any transition of pupils, financial support for the host schools to manage this change, timescales, and the strategy for provision for permanently excluded children going forward. Another Headteacher Member representing Maintained Primary Schools stated that he did not feel that he understands, or has been appropriately consulted on, these changes and that there needs to be fuller discussion on the strategy going forward for provision for primary-phase children that are permanently excluded.

The Deputy Director, Education and Learning, responded to accept that the Member raises some legitimate concerns and that

these need to be addressed quickly. The Council will meet with the Centres to do this (agreed before the headteachers of the four centres meet on 10 June). The Council is moving to the position where provision for permanently excluded pupils is delivered by the PRUs. The Strategic Lead – Admissions added that the plan is for the Centres to convert to resourced provisions if they wish to do so, but that there is no plan to leave the Centres as they currently operate. Funding is currently in place until March 2020 (so it is not planned for the Centres to 'close' at September). One of the key purposes of meetings with the Centres now will be to determine whether the Centres wish to convert to resourced provisions. Another will be to discuss transition.

At the end of the discussion (which was at the end of agenda item 6), Members continued to express concerns about lack of clarity of the Council's plans. The Chair asked that meetings are now quickly arranged to address these concerns and that the outcomes of these meeting be reported to the next Schools Forum meeting.

Resolved – That the actions, as recorded in the minutes, on the matters raised by the Primary Phase Maintained Schools Headteacher Member concerning the Primary Behaviour Centres be taken forward and reported back within the next SEND / SEMH progress update to be presented on 10 July.

401. STANDING ITEM – DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK GROWTH FUND ALLOCATIONS

No allocations were presented and no resolutions were passed on this item.

401. SEMH AND SEND REVIEWS – PROGRESS UPDATE

The Intelligence and Sufficiency Manager and the Deputy Director, Education and Learning, presented Document KI. Appendix 1 (provision diagram) was presented at the meeting.

The presentation reminded Members that the Council is working to ensure the sufficiency of SEND and AP places. Members were also reminded that the assessment of what is a 'sufficient' number is an iterative process. The Council is immediately working to create 354 additional places. Statutory notices relating to these places are to be published tomorrow for consultation and the details of this consultation will be emailed to Forum Members. As in previous updates, the Deputy Director offered her thanks to schools for their very positive interest and contribution to this places development work.

In response to questions asked by Members, the Deputy Director emphasised that the Council is actively working on wider SEND system changes across the District and that places creation needs to be viewed as part of a whole system that is currently being improved. She updated Members on work that is taking place behind the scenes to improve the Council's EHCP assessment processes, which has included increasing the capacity of the assessment team and re-shaping how this works. Panel chairing arrangements have been amended. A revised matrix of need document has recently been consulted on and positively received and is now to be rolled out. The Council is also looking at training to improve SENCOs' understanding of how to use this matrix. Schools will start to see system-wide improvements soon and certainly by September.

Members asked some questions about the detail of the 354 places where the Council responded that this could not be shared

until the publication of the consultation tomorrow. Members also made the following comments and asked the following main questions:

- The Council has done a very good job to create 354 additional places in the context of the lack of capital funding. As a District, we now need to press the DfE very hard on the issue of capital funding and free schools. The Deputy Director agreed with this statement.
- Following from matters raised by schools, the Vice Chair asked whether the Schools Forum could consider a transitional funding plan for the Primary Behaviour Centres to the end of the 2019/20 academic year. The Deputy Director responded that an academic year transition can be considered as part of the discussions with the Centres.
- Can further details be given about the proposed creation of 110 secondary SEMH places? The Intelligence and Sufficiency Manager responded that the proposal for 40 places will be published tomorrow (and anticipated available from September). The proposal for the 70 places cannot be published yet but it is anticipated these could be in place for January 2020.
- There is a continued need for close partnership working with schools. The Vice Chair expressed his concern about the capacity in the immediate short term to 'unblock' a currently 'blocked' AP system. Other alternatives, working in partnership with schools and running in parallel with the Council's plans, need to be considered so that pupils' needs are met in the short term.
- Appreciating that the Council is working quickly to secure additional places and system changes, the Chair emphasised that the impact of all plans on the High Needs Block must be closely considered.
- In the interests of resolving some of the uncertainties expressed by Members at today's meeting, the Chair suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to present a single concise development plan. The Deputy Director emphasised the fast pace of change that is needed to secure immediate improvement but that the Council will dedicate time to resolve issues of communication and understanding.
- Does the new Matrix of Need document have immediate implications for funding? The Deputy Director responded that it only sets out strategies, wave interventions and information on the fully subsidised services available for schools.
- In response to a follow up question about the progress of the already identified development of a new high needs funding model, critical to the success of the system, the Deputy Director stated that this work will be take forward, starting with consideration of an existing best practice model and with the funding of the special school sector. A new model can then be tested and move across to be used for the funding of SEND in mainstream provisions.

Resolved –

- (1) That the information provided in Document KI be noted.**
- (2) That the next update to the Forum on 10 July includes responses to the Forum's discussion as recorded in the minutes.**

ACTION – Deputy Director Education & Learning

402. UPDATE ON MATTERS CONCERNING THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented Document KJ, separating the report into four sections:

- A reminder (from the report tabled to the Schools Forum in March) about the DSG system uncertainty after 2019/20.
- The DfE's SEND & Alternative Provision 'Call for Evidence' and how the Schools Forum wishes to respond to this.
- The initial confirmation of DSG balances held at the end of 2018/19.
- The write off of the deficit balances held by 3 primary sponsored converters to the established primary phase de-delegated fund.

Responding to the presentation of the DfE's SEND and AP Call for Evidence, an Academies Member stressed that our response to this needs to include a strong point about the impact of the withdrawal of services funded by health so that this is understood at DfE level.

Responding to the presentation of balances, the Member representing the Teaching Unions asked about the plan to address the deficit budget of Hanson School and the cost of the support currently being provided by the Trust. Other Members asked follow up questions about the school's financial position, the SLA with the Trust, and the position of the RSC and Elected Members. The Deputy Director explained that the Council is in dialogue with the RSC and that we hope to be in a position to give a more informed update on Hanson School at the next meeting. The Deputy Director explained that school's SLA is agreed with the RSC not the Council but we understand that it has two elements to it; improving standards and performance and the position of the school's budget. The Vice Chair asked Members to register that the position of Hanson School is improving, with standards increasing and pupil numbers growing.

Resolved –

- (1) **That the information provided in Document KJ be noted.**
- (2) **That the Forum agrees for a draft response to the DfE's Call for Evidence on the financial arrangements for SEND and Alternative Provision to be presented on 10 July to help the Forum format its response to this Call for Evidence.**

ACTION – Business Advisor (Schools)

403. SCHOOLS' OUTTURN (REVENUE BALANCES) 2018/19

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented the key messages from Document KL. He stated that the financial positions of most maintained schools at the end of 2018/19 were positive when recognising the challenging financial climate schools have faced. The vast majority of schools continue to take action, including in the use of balances, to manage tight budgets. That the financial climate remains very challenging continues to be evidenced by the 2019-2022 budget submissions that the Council has recently received. The Council is now engaging with individual maintained schools directly on a priority-led basis about their 2019-2022 budget positions.

Responding to this presentation, Forum Members engaged in a discussion about the continuing erosion in the real terms spending power of schools and the impact of this, emphasising that budgets are being balanced by actions that are impacting on standards (increasing class sizes, significantly reduced numbers of support assistants, reducing

pastoral support, reducing ICT). The Member representing Maintained Special Schools reported that she has been asked to record for the Forum that special schools are balancing their budgets at a cost to the quality of the local offer, in particular due to larger class sizes. An Academies Member asked the question 'at what point do schools say enough is enough'? The Business Advisor offered the view that the autumn 2019 spending settlement will be critical to how the Forum's view on this evolves. Members agreed it would be helpful to see if school balances information could be contextualised with the addition of / comparison against staffing / staffing ratios information. The Business Advisor offered that he would look at whether / how this could be done.

Resolved –

- (1) That the information provided in Document KL be noted.**
- (2) That consideration is given to the presentation of key statistics (such as staffing to pupil ratios) alongside school balances information to help inform our assessment of the financial positions of schools and also to highlight the re-structuring action that is being taken by schools in balancing their budgets.**

404. SCHOOLS FORUM STANDING ITEMS

No resolutions were passed on this item.

405. AOB / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Chair reported that Vivienne Robinson (Member representing Early Years Providers) is retiring and, after 9 years of service, is resigning from the Forum following the 10 July meeting. The Chair wished to record the Forum's thanks to her for her outstanding commitment to the Schools Forum and for her valued contribution in particular to the work of the Early Years Working Group over many years.

406. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Please see the published schedule of meetings – the next meeting of the Schools Forum is scheduled for Wednesday 10 July 2019.

The schedule of meetings of the Schools Forum for the 2019/20 academic year is as follows. All meetings are to be held at 8.00 am at City Hall.

- **Wednesday 18 September 2019**
- **Wednesday 16 October 2019**
- **Wednesday 4 December 2019**
- **Wednesday 8 January 2020**
- ***Wednesday 15 January 2020, PROVISIONAL MEETING***
- **Wednesday 11 March 2020**
- **Wednesday 20 May 2020**
- **Wednesday 8 July 2020**

ACTION: City Solicitor

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

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