

Note: This is a briefing note, which has been written following the Schools Forum meeting that was held on 6 July 2022. This meeting went ahead, with the agreement of the attending members, as an informal ‘briefing’ only, because the meeting was not quorate. No resolutions were made and no decisions taken. The minutes of the meeting held 18 May 2022 are moved forward to the next meeting to be held on 14 September for review / approval.

Briefing Note on the Informal Schools Forum meeting held on Wednesday 6 July 2022

Commenced 08:00, Concluded 10:05

RECORD OF MEETING ATTENDEES, APOLOGIES AND ABSENCES

Schools & Academies Members

IN ATTENDANCE

| Member | Membership Group |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Dianne Richardson (Chair) | Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher |
| Ian Morrel (Vice Chair) | Maintained Secondary Schools – Headteacher |
| Graham Swinbourne | Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher |
| Kathryn Swales | Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher |
| Richard Bottomley | Academies Member – Alternative Provision Academies |
| Victoria Birch | Academies Member |
| Wahid Zaman | Academies Member |

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

| Member | Membership Group |
|-----------------------|---|
| Ashley Reed | Academies Member |
| Bev George | Maintained Nursery Schools – Governor |
| Brent Fitzpatrick OBE | Academies Member |
| Carol Dewhirst OBE | Academies Member |
| Dominic Wall | Academies Member – Special School Academies |
| Emma Hamer | Maintained Primary Schools – Governor |
| Heather Lacey | Academies Member |
| Helen Williams | Academies Member |
| Lyndsey Brown | Maintained Special Schools - Headteacher |
| Mathew Atkinson | Academies Member |
| Michael Thorp | Academies Member |
| Nicky Kilvington | Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher |
| Sian Hudson | Maintained Nursery Schools – Headteacher |

NOT IN ATTENDANCE (WITHOUT APOLOGIES RECEIVED)

| Member | Membership Group |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Andrew Morley | Academies Member |
| Deborah Howarth | Academies Member |

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Kirsty Ratcliffe | Pupil Referral Unit (maintained) |
| Melanie Saville | Academies Member |
| Sir Nick Weller | Academies Member |

Non-Schools Members

IN ATTENDANCE

| Member | Membership Group |
|----------------|--|
| David Johnston | Officer Representing Vulnerable Children |
| Tom Bright | Teaching Unions |

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

| Member | Membership Group |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| | |

NOT IN ATTENDANCE (WITHOUT APOLOGIES RECEIVED)

| Member | Membership Group |
|------------------------|---|
| Gillian Simpson-Morris | Representative of Early Years PVI Members |
| Junaid Karim | Council for Mosques (Bradford) |

Substitute Members present at the meeting as a Member (not as an Observer)

| Substitute Member | Membership Group |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Alison Kaye | Academies Member |

Substitute Members present at the meeting as an Observer (not as a Member)

| Substitute Member | Membership Group |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | |

Local Authority Officers present at the meeting

| Officer | Position |
|----------------|--|
| Andrew Redding | Business Advisor (Schools) |
| Asad Shah | Committee Secretariat |
| Dawn Haigh | Principal Finance Officer (Schools) |
| Niall Devlin | Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion |
| Sarah Flockton | Sufficiency Officer |

40% of the School Forum's membership (filled membership positions) must be present for a meeting to be quorate. This meeting was not quorate, as only 34% of members were present (10 out of 29 currently filled membership positions).

At the beginning of the meeting, the Schools Forum recorded its thanks to Dianne Richardson, for her longstanding commitment to, and involvement in, the Schools Forum, as a member, Vice Chair and Chair. Dianne retires from the Schools Forum after this meeting.

The Schools Forum also recorded its thanks to Dominic Wall, for his longstanding commitment to, and involvement in, the Schools Forum as a member and as a former Chair. Dominic also retires from the Schools Forum after this meeting.

1. Minutes of the 18 May Schools Forum Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting 18 May 2022 have been moved forward for review / approval at the next meeting to be held on 14 September. The following was reported for information:

- **Item 622 (Schools Forum Membership):** An update on this was presented under agenda item 6.
- **Item 625 (SEND Review and Capital Settlements):** The Forum resolved that the Chair writes to the Secretary of State, to express concern that Bradford could potentially be excluded from the new wave of SEND free schools (on the grounds that our DSG account is currently in surplus). The Business Advisor reported that, with the agreement of the Chair, this resolution was superseded by the publication of the criteria and application process for the Free School Wave, on 10 June. The application process allows all local authorities to express their interest and to put forward their evidential cases for a new SEND free school.
- **Item 626 (High Needs Block Surplus Balance Discussion Update):** An update on this was presented under agenda item 10.

2. Matters Raised by Schools

It was reported that no matters have been raised.

3. Standing Item – DSG Schools Block Growth Fund Allocations

The Business Advisor reported that no allocations are presented to the Schools Forum for approval.

4. Schools Forum Membership Update

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented **Document ON**, which provided members with an update on the Forum's membership, continuing from the report (Document OI) that was presented on 18 May.

The Business Advisor reported that, following the recent process, Ian Morrel is confirmed as Chair, and Ashley Reed is confirmed as Vice Chair, of the Schools Forum for the 2022/23 academic year.

The Forum members present did not ask any questions, and did not have any comments, on this report.

5. Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn (Balances) 2021/22

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented **Document OO**, which provided the initial confirmation of carry forward balances held within the Dedicated Schools Grant at the close of the 2021/22 financial year.

The Forum members present did not ask any questions on this report. Comments on the High Needs Block balance were recorded under agenda item 10.

6. Schools Block 'Hard' National Funding Formula Consultation

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented **Document OP**, which provided a briefing on the DfE's latest consultation on the transition to the 'hard' National Funding Formula in the Schools Block, which was published on 7 June 2022. The deadline for responses to this consultation is 9 September 2022. The Business Advisor explained that the Authority will submit a response to this consultation over the summer, which will be shared with the Forum on 14 September.

The Business Advisor informed the Forum that the DfE has also just this week launched a consultation on Early Years Block funding for 2023/24. He reported the headline that, following the approach that the DfE proposes, Bradford would see only a 1% increase in Early Years Block funding rates in 2023/24. He stated that this proposed level of increase is very disappointing, especially when assessed against the growth of provider costs.

The Chair asked what role Forum members have in making school and academy colleagues aware of the hard National Funding Formula changes. The Business Advisor responded that the Authority will lead on communicating these changes, at the level of detail that is appropriate, but that Forum members should use all opportunities that they have, when speaking to colleagues, to highlight that changes are coming and to encourage colleagues to watch out for the communication of these, especially via consultation publications and Bradford Schools Online.

The Chair asked whether the move to a more consistent definition of Notional SEND will have implications for Bradford. The Business Advisor responded that this move may have significant implications, both for mainstream schools / academies as well as for the High Needs Block. It is not yet possible however, to assess these implications. We await further guidance (possibly later this month within the Schools Block operational guidance) on changes that may be directed for 2023/24.

7. Formula Funding Development 2023/24

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented **Document OQ**, which provided an overview of local formula funding review priorities for the 2023/24 financial year across the Schools Block, the Early Years Block and the High Needs Block.

In presenting the report, the Business Advisor explained that we are likely to find the 2023/24 DSG and formula funding cycle to be challenging, across all 4 DSG blocks, due to the overall level of the DSG settlement we anticipate we will receive, and the relative position of this settlement against growth in costs.

The Forum members present did not ask any questions, and did not have any comments, on this report.

8. Update on the High Needs Block

The Business Advisor (Schools) introduced Document OR, which provided an update on the plan for the High Needs Block surplus balance and the development of new additional specialist places.

The Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion, within his responses to member's questions, stated that the Authority will 'apply' for an SEND free school (the first stage being the submission of an expression of interest). Regarding the development of specialist places, the Chair asked whether the Authority could provide timescales for the 242 places that are listed in the report. The School Organisation and Sufficiency Manager responded that these schemes are at different stages of development. A number of these places are expected to be available during 2022/23 and for the beginning of the 2023/24 academic year. The Authority estimates that all the places will be available by the end of the 2023/24 academic year. It was also clarified that places in a new SEND Free School, if we are successful, will come in addition to the 242 listed in the report. The Business Advisor added that we need to consider carefully the extent to which we continue to create specialist places, in the context of the demographic trends in Bradford, the direction of travel of the national SEND Review, and the affordability of new places within our High Needs Block settlement going forward.

Regarding the update that was presented on the High Needs Block surplus balance, Forum members asked the following questions and made the following comments:

- Though the advice is that additional funding (if agreed and if affordable) cannot be delegated to schools and academies via the Schools Block until the 2023/24 cycle, a member representing maintained primary school headteachers asked why we cannot allocate additional element 2 funding to schools now? The Business Advisor responded that the £6,000 element 2 threshold is a nationally set figure, which we would need ESFA permission to deviate from, and that, as we reported at the last Forum meeting, we have 'moved on' from considering further enhancing element 2 and top-up funding at this time. The member responded that the Authority and Schools Forum should be working to relieve the pressure that is currently on schools and that an opportunity to do this is being missed. The Chair and the Business Advisor both responded to summarise the current position regarding the balance, and the rationale behind this. It is recognised that members may hold different views about this position, and about the cautious approach that is being taken.
- Responding to the plan for the allocation of £920,000 of the balance across 3 areas, the Vice Chair asked how these strands fit within the post-Ofsted action plan, who is the lead that will ensure that these strands have impact and where does health fit into this? The Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion, responded that a focus on early intervention and inclusion, which these 3 strands support, is an important aspect of our post-Ofsted action plan and that accountability for this investment ultimately sits with him. The response to the Ofsted report will be signed off in September. Health, and other partners, are accountable for their actions and investment to the SEND Strategic Partnership Board. The Assistant Director reported that additional funding is being allocated from health and from social care, which the Board is monitoring. Regarding the £920,000 investment from the High Needs Block, he explained that we are seeking at this time to take a targeted, proportionate and staged approach, in the context of the worsening of the forecasted High Needs Block position, where the impact of initial investment can be reviewed before any further investment is made, and where

measures can be expanded and extended. The Assistant Director emphasised that there is already significant additional funding being allocated to schools and academies, in support of children and young people with SEND. Since 2019, for example, our number of EHCPs has increased by 41%, with accompanying top-up funding.

- The member representing the teacher trades unions asked for clarification on the trading status of the skills team, and whether this team is accepting new referrals (because he has heard that the team is not). The Assistant Director responded to clarify that the skills team is not currently traded and that referral services are running as normal. The Authority is currently running a pilot with 6 schools, which is aimed at assessing how services can be more impactful. A briefing for headteachers on this service will be presented in September. The member responded to emphasise that the Authority must ensure that the impact of investment (to continue a current service) is clearly assessed.
- The Assistant Director reported that the Council's Executive, at yesterday's meeting, approved investment from the Council's budget to increase the size of Children's Services assessment teams. The Chair responded that investment in capacity is very welcome news.

9. Schools Forum Standing Items

Nothing further was reported.

10. AOB / Future Agenda Items

No items were raised.

11. Next meeting

Please see the published schedule of meetings – the next Forum meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 14 September.