

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Schools Forum on 11 January 2023

Schools Forum meeting held remotely on Wednesday 7 December 2022

To view the archived recording of this meeting, please see here:
<https://bradford.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Commenced 08:15
Concluded 10:40

RECORD OF MEETING ATTENDEES, APOLOGIES AND ABSENCES

Schools & Academies Members

IN ATTENDANCE

Member	Membership Group
Ian Morrel (Chair)	Maintained Secondary Schools – Headteacher
Ashley Reed (Vice Chair)	Academies Member
Heather Lacey	Academies Member
Wahid Zaman	Academies Member
Amanda Slaney	Academies Member
Mathew Atkinson	Academies Member
Melanie Saville	Academies Member
Helen Williams	Academies Member
Brent Fitzpatrick OBE	Academies Member
Victoria Birch	Academies Member
Richard Bottomley	Academies Member – Alternative Provision Academies
Bev George	Maintained Nursery Schools – Governor
Sian Hudson	Maintained Nursery Schools – Headteacher
Emma Hamer	Maintained Primary Schools – Governor
Kathryn Swales	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher
Jonathan Nixon	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher
Lyndsey Brown	Maintained Special Schools - Headteacher

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Member	Membership Group
Michelle Farr	Academies Member – Special School Academies
Nicky Kilvington	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher

NOT IN ATTENDANCE (WITHOUT APOLOGIES RECEIVED)

Member	Membership Group
Andrew Morley	Academies Member
Michael Thorp	Academies Member
Kirsty Ratcliffe	Pupil Referral Unit (maintained)
Graham Swinbourne	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher

Non-Schools Members

IN ATTENDANCE

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

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Member	Membership Group

NOT IN ATTENDANCE (WITHOUT APOLOGIES RECEIVED)

Member	Membership Group
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
Niall Devlin	Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion
Asad Shah	Committee Secretariat
Marium Haque	Deputy Director, Education and Learning
Dawn Haigh	Principal Finance Officer (Schools)
Jonty Holden	Principal Finance Officer (Schools)
Sue Lowndes	Assistant Director, Education and Learning (item 13)
Andrew Redding	Business Advisor (Schools)

40% of the School Forum's membership (filled membership positions) must be present for a meeting to be quorate. This meeting was quorate, with 70% of members present (19 out of 27 currently filled membership positions).

In introducing the meeting, the Chair explained:

- This is the meeting immediately preceding the main annual recommendations and decisions meeting to be held on 11 January. There aren't any 2023/24 related decisions to be taken at this meeting. The only decision item is agenda item 5 - Growth Fund allocations for the 2022/23 financial year.
- The main purposes of this meeting are to:
 - Ensure that members have sufficient information on which to make their recommendations on the allocation of the DSG and formula funding

arrangements for 2023/24 on 11 January. This is the last opportunity that members have to ask for clarification / further information.

- Review the feedback received from the consultations on mainstream and high needs formula funding arrangements.
 - Highlight that the DfE has not yet announced the Early Years Block settlement for 2023/24, meaning that we cannot yet go out to consultation. But we have provided an update under agenda item 6.
 - Consider the DSG's forecasted spending position for 2022/23.
 - Consider further information on high needs, including the SEND Sufficiency Statement.
 - Consider further information on centrally managed funds.
- Members therefore, under each agenda item, should consider whether they feel they have sufficient information and if not, identify areas for clarification.

640. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

The following members declared interests for agenda item 5 (Growth Fund allocations): Ian Morrel, Helen Williams, Ashley Reed and Amanda Slaney.

Emma Hamer, Richard Bottomley and Ian Morrel declared interests for agenda items 9 (High Needs Block consultation) and 12 (SEND Sufficiency Statement).

641. MINUTES OF 12 OCTOBER 2022 & MATTERS ARISING

The Business Advisor (Schools) reported on progress made on "Action" items from the 12 October meeting. He reported that:

- Item 634 (Schools Block consultation) – The consultation document was published and the consultation period closed on 29 November. This is picked up under agenda item 7.
- Item 635 (High Needs Block consultation) – The consultation document was published and the consultation period closed on 29 November. This is picked up under agenda item 9. Members requested some modelling of the SEND Funding Floor proposal. This is also presented under agenda item 9 (Appendix 1).
- Item 637 (Central DSG items) – This is picked up again under agenda item 13. We forwarded the Forum's requests for communication and training on Fischer Family Trust to the relevant Bradford Council team.

The Business Advisor then reported the following:

- At the last Forum meeting, there was some discussion about the impact of the current financial climate on the growth of schools in deficit, and there was a request for information on trends. Whilst we can keep the Forum informed, including in our annual report (in May) on maintained school balances, it is not felt to be appropriate to present information at detailed level about individual maintained schools' current financial forecasts, and the Council does not hold any information in respect of academies. We also do not yet have a view about maintained schools' 2023/24 financial year budgets (we do envisage that the 'financial pressure' from inflation and 2022 pay awards will be more fully expressed within these budgets). With these caveats, regarding the current 2022/23 financial year forecasts for maintained schools: we currently have 76 schools. Of these, 2 held revenue deficit balances at March 2022. 3 forecasted to hold revenue deficit balances at March 2023 in their original budget submissions. Based on quarter 2 budget monitoring returns, 5 schools now forecast to hold deficit revenue balances at March 2023 (4 of these are new deficits). Whilst pay award and inflation have had impact, the circumstances in these 4 individual schools is more significant to causing deficit growth during the year. More widely, our 76 schools held a net total of surplus balances of £15.9m at March 2022. Schools currently forecast to hold a net £9.27m at March 2023. A number of schools are indicating a reduction in surplus balances, to a small value (12 with forecasted balances under £20,000) at March 2023. This picture does indicate a substantial forecasted reduction in levels of balances. However, there are 2 points of caution: a) balances held by schools substantially spiked over the COVID-19 pandemic period and b) schools typically (and as a whole) underestimate the values of their balances within their quarterly monitoring returns. In 2021/22 for example, our 76 maintained schools forecasted a net £12.4m of balances at quarter 2 and actually closed with £15.9m.
- 17 November Autumn Statement – The Chancellor's Autumn 2022 Statement did not give much detail about schools and early years funding, but it did state that an additional £2.3bn (£2bn when adjusted for the National Insurance Levy funding) is allocated to the core schools budget in 2023/24 and in 2024/25. By "additional", we mean in addition to the core schools budget figures that were announced in autumn 2021. We take from this:

 - a. That the National Insurance Levy support funding that was included in the Schools Supplementary Grant in 2022/23 will not be clawed back, even though the Levy is no longer in place.
 - b. That the DfE is currently working on a NFF-based approach to the allocation of the additional £2bn. We suspect that this will need to take the form of an additional grant for mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies in 2023/24 (as the NFF settlement and formula funding have already been confirmed).
 - c. It is unclear the extent to which any of the £2bn will be allocated to early years. The DfE however, has now stated that £400m will be allocated in respect of high needs.
 - d. The extent to which this funding will feel like "new money" in schools from April 2023 is still to be determined. We understand that this funding potentially in part will simply replace the current schools' energy protection scheme, which will end 31 March 2022.
 - e. It is still very much the case that the weight of the schools' funding

settlement for the 3-year period 2022 to 2025 is in the 2022/23 financial year i.e. schools (and the High Needs Block) have already received the larger % increases in funding. The % increases in per pupil funding (and HNB funding) in 2023/24, and especially in 2024/25, will be much more modest. We already know this to be the case in 2023/24 from the settlement figures we have received. This is a concern in the context of rising costs, and critical to the financial positions of schools, academies and other providers will be the determination of pay awards and changes in inflation.

- The DfE has this week announced an additional capital allocation for schools and academies in support of improving energy efficiency (£500m nationally). A link to the announcement has been posted onto Bradford Schools Online. It is expected that this capital will be allocated by the DfE in December.

Resolved – Subject to the correction (to record the attendance of Melanie Saville), that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2022 be signed as a correct record.

642. MATTERS RAISED BY SCHOOLS

No matters were raised and no resolutions were passed on this item.

643. STANDING ITEM - DSG GROWTH FUND ALLOCATIONS

As presented by the Principal Finance Officer, in Document PA, Forum Members were asked to agree newly proposed allocations, from the 2022/23 Schools Block Growth Fund, to maintained secondary schools and to secondary academies.

These allocations were agreed. Members did not have any comments and did not ask any questions.

Resolved –

- (1) The Schools Forum agreed to allocate a total of £614,037 from the Growth Fund in 2022/23 to maintained secondary schools and secondary academies, as set out in Document PA. ***
- (2) Members noted that an indicative total sum of £1,296,284 of surplus balance of Growth Fund is ring-fenced and is forecasted to be carried forward into 2023/24 within the Schools Block. The Schools Forum noted that it will be asked to consider the allocation and / or retention of this balance at the meeting on 11 January. ***

* The Forum noted that 3 of the secondary-phase allocations are currently estimated (as indicated), as the October Census numbers have not yet been

released to the Authority by the ESFA. The updated spending reports to be presented to the Schools Forum on 11 January will confirm these allocations and the total Growth Fund spend and balance to be carried forward.

ACTION: PRINCIPAL FINANCE OFFICER (SCHOOLS)

644. THE EARLY YEARS BLOCK SETTLEMENT & EYSFF CONSULTATION 2023/24

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented the report, Document PB, which provided an update on Early Years Block formula funding matters. The report included updated benchmarking and the headlines of an indicative scenario for our Early Years Single Funding Formula for 2023/24.

He explained that we had anticipated that the DfE would by now have announced the Early Years Block settlement, and formula funding arrangements, for the 2023/24 financial year, enabling us to present to this Forum meeting our consultation document on proposals for the 2023/24 Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF). However, these announcements have not been made. Indicatively, these are now anticipated for either later in December or in January.

The Business Advisor explained that we hope to be able to present a consultation document to the Forum's meeting to be held on 11 January, though we are not certain of this. In any case, our period of consultation on the 2023/24 EYSFF will need to extend beyond the 11 January (the meeting at which the Schools Forum makes its recommendations on the 2023/24 DSG and formula funding arrangements). As we have done in the last couple of years therefore, we anticipate presenting to the Forum on 11 January a planned Early Years Block budget for 2023/24, which will be based on assumptions and estimates that are made prior to the completion of our consultation.

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

Resolved – Members noted the information presented in the report.

LEAD: BUSINESS ADVISOR (SCHOOLS)

645. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES – SCHOOLS BLOCK FORMULA FUNDING 2023/24

The Principal Finance Officer (Schools) presented the report, Document PC, which asked Members to consider the feedback received to the consultation on our 2023/24 Schools Block formula funding arrangements and Schools Block centrally managed funds.

The Principal Officer explained that, in presenting to various groups, the Authority did not receive any negative comments expressed in real time specifically about the proposals themselves. Some feedback expressed concerns about the general

adequacy of funding in the context of rising costs.

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

Resolved – Members noted the information and consultation responses that were presented in Document PC and did not ask for further information to be provided to support final recommendations to be made on 11 January.

LEAD: PRINCIPAL FINANCE OFFICER (SCHOOLS)

646. INDICATIVE BUDGETS 2023/24 PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES

The Principal Finance Officer (Schools) presented the report, Document PD, which provided Members with updated indicative modelling of mainstream Primary & Secondary formula funding delegated budget shares for 2023/24, now using the pupil numbers taken from the October 2022 Census. He explained that this modelling is tabled only for information at this stage, prior to asking members to make their final recommendations. An update of this modelling, based on the October 2022 Census dataset, will be presented to the Forum on 11 January.

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

Resolved – Members noted the Primary and Secondary modelling information that was presented in Document PD and did not ask for further information to be provided to support final recommendations to be made on 11 January.

LEAD: PRINCIPAL FINANCE OFFICER (SCHOOLS)

647. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES – HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FORMULA FUNDING 2023/24

The Principal Finance Officer (Schools) presented the report, Document PE, which asked Forum Members to consider the feedback received to the consultation on the 2023/24 High Needs Funding Model. Modelling of the SEND Funding Floor, as requested by members at the last meeting, was also presented.

The Principal Officer explained that, in presenting to various groups, the Authority did not receive any negative comments expressed in real time specifically about the proposals themselves. Some feedback, as in previous consultations, expressed concerns about the general adequacy of SEND funding and the impact on mainstreams schools of the growth in the numbers of pupils with SEND. The District Achievement Partnership, whilst supportive of the proposals, expressed their concern that it will continue to be a challenge to manage budgets following a 1% increase in funding, given the on-going rises in costs.

The member representing the Teaching Trades Unions asked whether any

responses have been received from schools that would be affected by the proposed amendment to the SEND Funding Floor. The Business Advisor responded that the Authority has not received feedback (either positive or negative) from individually affected schools.

The Chair prompted members to consider whether they now have sufficient information on which to make their recommendations on high needs funding. He asked members to share any feedback that they may have collected as a result of their conversations with school colleagues. The member representing maintained special schools emphasised that not asking questions or making comments at this stage does not at all signal any lack of interest in, or lack of support of, the Authority's proposals. She explained that the District Achievement Partnership is talking very carefully about the financial position. She also emphasised that the special school sector wishes to do all it can to support other sectors that are also facing significant financial pressures, including early years. This message was echoed by the Alternative Provision Academies member. The Chair thanked members for these comments.

Resolved – Members noted the information and consultation responses that were presented in Document PE and did not ask for further information to be provided to support final recommendations to be made on 11 January.

LEAD: PRINCIPAL FINANCE OFFICER (SCHOOLS)

648. 2023/24 DSG UPDATE

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented the report, Document PF, which provided a summary-level indicative forecast of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) income / expenditure position for the 2023/24 financial year.

Within the presentation, he emphasised that, on current early estimates, we may need to use £8.7m of balances within the 2023/24 DSG planned budget, with the majority of this being used in the High Needs Block (£7.6m) and the Early Years Block (£0.95m). The Advisor explained that, whilst based substantially on estimates, we forecast a significant worsening of our High Needs Block's position, to the extent that the risk of us developing a cumulative deficit within the next 3 years (by the close of the 2025/26 financial year) is now high. The receipt of further funding from the DfE (from the additional £400m) may help. However, there are other factors that may offset this gain. This will require closer consideration and discussion, as well as mitigating action to avoid. We will present to the Forum on 11 January the projection of the High Needs Block within our updated DSG Management Plan.

The Chair signalled that he wished to make some comments, following the presentation of the next agenda item (DSG balances). Members did not have any other comments and did not ask any questions.

Resolved – Members noted the information that was presented in Document PF and did not ask for further information to be provided to support final recommendations to be made on 11 January.

LEAD: BUSINESS ADVISOR (SCHOOLS)

649. 2022/23 DSG SPENDING AND CARRY FORWARD BALANCES FORECAST

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented the report, Document PG, which updated members on the forecasted spending positions of each of the DSG Blocks against the 2022/23 planned budget. This document gave members a view of the estimated values of balances to be carried forward into 2023/24 and a view of the uses of these balances.

In referring to the recent conversations that the Forum has had about the surplus balance that is held within the High Needs Block, the Chair offered his view that, as a result of the Forum's and the Authority's prudent approach to High Needs Block management in recent years, we are in a stronger position to "weather the storm" that now appears to be on the horizon in respect of the High Needs Block. We are in a stronger position to manage the impact of lagged funding, growth in SEND demand, as well as significant uncertainty. An Academies Member supported the Chair's view, adding that the Forum's / Authority's prudent approach to the DSG and to the use of balances has meant that we are better placed to manage peaks and troughs. The Chair explained that the Forum has previously expressed some concern that our surplus balance might be clawed back. However, the DSG is a ring-fenced grant, to be spent on specific school and education activities. The Forum does need to consider how the DSG sits within the wider picture, including alongside the Council's financial position, and the proposals for centrally managed funds within the Early Years Block (under agenda item 13) are put forward in this context.

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

Resolved – Members noted the information that was presented in Document PG and did not ask for further information to be provided to support final recommendations to be made on 11 January.

LEAD: BUSINESS ADVISOR (SCHOOLS)

650. ANNUAL SEND PLACES SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT

The Strategic Manager, Intelligence and Sufficiency presented the report, Document PH, which is the annual statement to the Schools Forum on the sufficiency of specialist places for SEND. This statement was presented as per the schedule of high needs information, which was agreed with the Schools Forum on 14 October 2020, and in advance on an update of the fuller DSG Management Plan, which will be presented on 11 January.

The Strategic Manager explained that the main message of the statement is the same as the statement presented this time last year: the continued significant growth in the number of EHCPs and the need to create a minimum of 200-240 more specialist places over the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years.

The Strategic Manager advised the Forum that the Authority has submitted an application to the DfE for a special school free school. It is anticipated that the

outcome of this application will be known early in the new year. Given the lead in time for a new free school, if successful, the Strategic Manager explained that the Authority is currently working on further interim plans to ensure that sufficient provision is available, both to meet demand and also to reduce our reliance on more expensive independent out of authority placements, which is a cause of significant financial pressure within the High Needs Block. The member representing maintained special schools asked how much we are spending on out of authority and independent placements. The Business Advisor responded that spending is forecasted at £17.75m in this current financial year, which is an increase of £4m (31%) on 2021/22. An Academies Member added that spend not that long ago was reported at £6m, confirming that growth in spending in this area has been significant.

The Strategic Manager explained that the Authority continues to have conversations with many schools and academies about creating new specialist places. She wished to record her thanks to schools and academies for continuing to come forward, especially given how challenging circumstances are at present. The Chair added his thanks, stating that this is a very good example of successful collaborative working. In thanking the Strategic Manager for her report, the Chair also thanked the Strategic Manager for the work of her team and for the clearer strategic plan that has been developed.

Resolved – Members noted the information that was presented in Document PH and did not ask for further information to be provided to support final recommendations to be made on 11 January.

LEAD: BUSINESS ADVISOR (SCHOOLS)

651. CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES, EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDS

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented the report, Document PI, which asked Forum Members to further consider the Authority's proposals for retention of Schools, Central Schools Services and Early Years Block central and de-delegated items in the 2023/24 financial year, following the initial discussion had in the last Forum meeting and in advance of the 11 January.

The Business Advisor firstly took members through the 3 new recommendations for 2023/24 for the Early Years Block, which includes increasing the Block's contribution to the cost of early years support services from £0.100m to £0.530m.

The Assistant Director, Education and Learning and the Business Advisor then presented Appendix 4, which explained the background and options for de-delegation for the purposes of continuing funds for the Authority's school improvement programme for maintained schools, following the cessation of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant. It was explained that the Authority's preferred and proposed approach is option A, as set out in Appendix 4a.

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

Resolved – Members noted the information that was presented in Document PG and did not ask for further information to be provided to support final recommendations to be made on 11 January.

LEAD: BUSINESS ADVISOR (SCHOOLS)

652. SCHOOLS FORUM STANDING ITEMS

No matters were raised and no resolutions were passed on this item.

653. AOB / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

No matters were raised and no resolutions were passed on this item.

654. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled is Wednesday 11 January. This meeting will be held at City Hall.

A provisional meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 18 January (if this is needed to complete 2023/24 DSG recommendations).

For planning purposes, the provisional schedule for Schools Forum meetings for the 2023/24 academic year has now been set, as follows:

- Wednesday 13 September 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 11 October 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 6 December 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 10 January 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 17 January 2024, 8am PROVISIONAL MEETING
- Wednesday 6 March 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 22 May 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 10 July 2024, 8am

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

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