

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 2016 AT CITY HALL, BRADFORD

Commenced 0800
 Adjourned 0945
 Reconvened 1000
 Concluded 1035

PRESENT

School Members

Bev George, Brent Fitzpatrick, Chris Quinn, Dianne Rowbotham, Dominic Wall, Dwayne Saxton, Helen Williams, Kevin Holland, Lesley Heathcote, Michele Robinson, Nick Weller, Nicky Kilvington, Sue Haithwaite, Tahir Jamil, Trevor Loft and Wahid Zaman.

Nominated Sub School Member

Irene Docherty

Non School Members

Ian Murch
 Donna Willoughby

Local Authority Officers

Andrew Redding	Business Advisor (Schools)
Dawn Haigh	Principal Finance Officer (Schools)
Michael Jameson	Strategic Director, Children's Services
Raj Singh	Business Advisor
Stuart McKinnon-Evans	Director of Finance

Observers

Alison Kaye	Director Business and Finance, Ilkley Grammar School
Councillor Hinchcliffe	Portfolio Holder, Education, Skills and Culture
Lynn Murphy	Business Manager, Feversham College

Apologies

Emma Ockerby, Ian Morrel, Maureen Cairns, Nigel Cooper, Phil Travis, Ray Tate and Sami Harzallah

DOMINIC WALL IN THE CHAIR

142. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed Helen Williams (Ilkley Grammar School) and Lesley Heathcote (Merlin Top Academy Primary School) as new members of the Schools Forum (Academy Primary and Secondary Representatives). Also welcomed was Alison Kaye (Director Business and Finance, Ilkley Grammar School).



143. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest in matters under consideration.

144. MINUTES OF 6 JANUARY 2016 AND MATTERS ARISING

The Business Advisor (Schools) reported on Matters Arising items following the meeting of 6 January 2016, as below:

- The Council's Executive has approved the recommendations from the Schools Forum for the allocation of the 2016/17 Dedicated Schools Grant that were made at the meeting held on 6 January 2016. We still await final confirmation from the DfE of our 2016/17 DSG funding.
- Budgets have been published for schools and the Primary and Secondary Formula Pro-forma has been submitted and approved by the Education Funding Agency.
- From an action point recorded from the January meeting, further discussion regarding the proposals for the control of place-led funding in the High Needs Block has taken place and agreement has been reached with the District Achievement Partnership for the funding of additional places to be allocated in real time during the year and for an end of year reconciliation to be actioned, which will mean that a school's place funding will be reduced (negative adjustment) if the school has been allocated too much additional places funding for its annual composite occupancy.
- From an action point recorded in the December meeting, a conversation has been had with Beckfoot Upper Heaton Academy regarding their approach to raising standards whilst securing maximum intake of pupils. The Local Authority is very satisfied that the Academy has a clear focus and a clear action plan, which includes a detailed risk register covering all aspects of the Academy's performance (standards and financial).
- The Government had published draft legislation on the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. This draft has confirmed that from, April 2017, single employers with an annual wage bill in excess of than £3 million will be liable for a 0.5% levy and that public sector employers are included. We expect to bring a more detailed agenda item to the Schools Forum in the autumn term.
- A very small number and value of settlements relating to equal value (single status) pay claims have been charged to schools for the 2015 calendar year. Relevant schools have been contacted.
- Since the January meeting there has been 1 conversion of a maintained school to academy status. The Authority is aware of a number of planned conversion up to and including 1 September 2016. The Business Advisor explained that a response to the request made at the January meeting for further information on possible liabilities resulting from the conversion of schools (including deficit budgets) will be presented to the Forum in May. Doing so will enable the report to include information in the light of the balances held by maintained schools at the end of the 2015/16 financial year.

- Regarding the 2 key outstanding matters to be reported back to the Schools Forum, the Business Advisor confirmed that a report on the progress of the redevelopment of the outdoor education centres, and a detailed update on SEND and behaviour provision and review matters, will be presented to the May meeting.

The Chair of the Forum also informed Members that he and the Vice Chair have written to the Education Improvement Strategy Board and the Partnership Priorities and Joint Working Board on SEND matters. They will be attending a meeting of the EISB on 18 April.

Resolved –

- (1) **That progress made on Matters Arising be noted.**
- (2) **That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2016 be signed as a correct record.**

ACTION: Interim City Solicitor

145. MATTERS RAISED BY SCHOOLS

There were no matters raised by schools to report.

No resolution was passed on this item.

146. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION

The Chair introduced this item, explaining that this was a single agenda item meeting to consider the proposals of the DfE's 1st stage consultation on the introduction of a National Funding Formula (NFF). The Chair also explained that, from the presentation and subsequent discussion, we are looking to see if we can identify areas of agreement for inclusion in our response to the consultation.

The Business Advisor (Schools) delivered a presentation, which was based on Documents FV and FW. It was agreed that the PowerPoint slides be sent to Members and be published for schools on Bradford Schools Online. The presentation focused on the key aspects of the consultation document and what is understood by these, seeking to identify risks and matters that we would wish to raise in our response. First and foremost, it was explained that the 1st stage consultation gives no indication (or figures) on which to assess the impact on funding levels for the Bradford District or individual schools and academies. However, it does give a very clear steer on the reducing role of the Local Authority and Bradford's Schools Forum in deciding on local funding matters. It was also explained that a consultation on Early Years Funding has not yet been published, but that a 'parallel' process will be published in due course. As a result, it is clear that there is still much for the Schools Forum to consider regarding the impact of the NFF and our response to this.

These minutes do not repeat the content of the presentation. Please see the PowerPoint slides, which are available online.

In considering the presentation, Members asked the following questions and made the following comments. The recorded below includes the key points for inclusion in our response to the consultation to be submitted to the DfE that were agreed:

- The Strategic Director, Children's Services stated that the needs of vulnerable learners must remain central and he expressed his concern that this focus is missing in the consultation document and may be lost in technical complications and transitions. A holistic investment model is required, working with other agencies e.g. the Police. He also stated that the critical conversations on raising standards in the District's schools must not be lost as the funding system changes and the pace of academy conversion accelerates. He also explained that the issue of commercial liabilities resulting from academy conversions is an area that requires more investigation.
- The Director of Finance explained that our response at this stage has to be about the principles on which more detailed proposals (2nd stage consultation) are to be based. For example, are there elements that we observe in school funding that the NFF proposals do not cover? How do we feel about the protection that the proposed transitional arrangements will bring?
- Members expressed an immediate concern that the NFF is proposed not to include a mobility factor. Our case for the inclusion of mobility must feature strongly in our response back to the DfE.
- There is likely to be a difference in views between schools and the Local Authority regarding the size of the new Central Schools Block. Greater value for money needs to be achieved where the Local Authority continues to deliver services for schools. The Strategic Director, Children's Services agreed. The Chair added that, clearly, the Authority's ambition for the District will step beyond what is funded within the small Central Schools Block. How the Authority works with schools and its partnerships then will be critical.
- That further consideration needs to be given to how financial collaboration will operate in the future e.g. following the cessation of de-delegation. A question was asked whether Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) can collaborate in purchasing. The Director of Finance confirmed that MATs can join together as group purchasers. An Academy Member also added that MATs do currently find ways to achieve economies of scale and deliver buying efficiencies.
- Members expressed a general concern about the position of the High Needs Block, also expressing a good understanding of the relationship between mainstream formula change and how this has implications for High Needs provision. Our response to the DfE must explain our concern about the possibility of different transition timescales in the different Blocks and the difficulties that this is likely to cause in our re-shaping of provisions. The Vice Chair added how important it is for our SEND and Behaviour review groups to complete their work to aid this re-shaping. The Chair stated that the Authority must respond quickly to access additional capital / spend to save monies that will be allocated by the DfE as details of these are announced. Members also expressed the need, once figures on impact are available, to model the High Needs Block on a longer-term basis, looking ahead to what our High Needs Block funding is likely to be post-transition and re-shaping our provisions now in the light of this longer-term view about affordability.

- The NFF will only be fair where the weighting for deprivation is correct. This message needs to be very clear in our consultation response. A Member added however, that people will have different views about what constitutes a fair weighting.
- That the DfE must be made aware in our response of the ‘flaws’ in their explanation of the differences in levels of per pupil funding allocated to schools in different authorities; in that this ignores that differences in the nature of SEND provision (inclusion) affect levels of per pupil funding allocated through mainstream formulae. We are concerned that the DfE understands this context before it finalizes its detailed proposals.
- The Executive Member for Children’s Services stated that we need to engage all ‘levers’ that are available to us, including MPs, to ensure our concerns and views influence the development of the DfE’s final proposals. The Chair also added that the Forum has previously agreed for Members to disseminate information and key messages via their networks and partnerships.

Resolved –

- (1) **That Documents FV and FW be noted.**
- (2) **That the School Forum’s responses to the consultation proposals, that were agreed by consensus and that are recorded in the minutes, be submitted to the DfE before 17 April 2016 deadline.**

LEAD: Business Advisor (Schools)

147. OTHER SCHOOLS FORUM STANDING ITEMS

There were no further updates presented on the Forum’s standing items:

No resolution was passed on this item.

148. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB)

No additional items of business for consideration were tabled.

No resolution was passed on this item.

149. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Schools Forum is Wednesday 18 May 2016.

The Business Advisor (Schools) gave advance notice for schedule of meeting for the 2016/17 academic year, as follows:

- Wednesday 21 September 2016

- Wednesday 19 October 2016
- Wednesday 7 December 2016
- Wednesday 11 January 2017
- *Wednesday 18 January 2017 - PROVISIONAL MEETING*
- Wednesday 15 March 2017
- Wednesday 17 May 2017
- Wednesday 5 July 2017

All meetings would commence at 0800 in Committee Room 1, City Hall, Bradford.

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

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