

Minutes of the eighth meeting of the Schools Forum held at Brent Town Hall at 6.00 p.m. on Monday 6th December 2004

Attendance

Members of the Forum

Governors

Countess Mariaska Romanov
Carol Beavis-Smith
Mike Heiser (Chair)
Pat Anderson
Stephen Greene
Eamonn Doherty
Joyce Bacchus
Rochelle Hausman

Head Teachers

Kathy Heaps
Judy Edwards
Mike Maxwell
Sylvie Libson
Martin Earley
Terry Molloy
Vivienne Orloff

Others

Lesley Benson (EYDCP)
Tony Vaughan (Trade Union)
Tommy Masters (LSC)

Councillors

Cllr. Michael Lyon – Lead Member Education Arts and Libraries

Officers

John Christie	Director of Education, Arts and Libraries
Duncan McLeod	Director of Finance
Peter Stachniewski	Deputy Director of Finance
Martin Stratford	Assistant Director of Education
Roger Annan	Education Financial Services (minutes)

Apologies for absence received from Corinne van Colle.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 4th October 2004 and matters arising from them

The minutes were accepted with one amendment – in paragraph 3 School Funding Issues 2005-06 Mike Maxwell asked that the word ‘appeared to have’ in the penultimate paragraph be replaced by ‘had’. This was AGREED. Judy Edwards referred to the minutes of the meeting of 6th July and expressed concern that an item that took about one hour of the meeting was only referred to in two lines of the meeting. It was AGREED that future minutes should be full enough to reflect the various views expressed at the meeting.

The following were matters arising that were not on the agenda:

BSF Martin reported that Brent was not included in waves 2 or 3 of BSF as LEAs were selected on the basis of a combination of a high percentage of free school meals pupils and low examination results. DfES has undertaken to meet with LEAs individually to discuss future inclusion in the programme. Martin will keep the Forum informed.

Standard School Year The LGA has indicated that it is going forward with proposals for 2006-07

Loan Scheme for Schools The LEA scheme has been approved by the DfES. Martin has issued a circular on the extranet and will issue forms for applications for 2005-06 in the New Year.

Funding for equipment for school meals Mike Maxwell asked if the LEA could look at the criteria again.

Training for School Forum members Governors should be encouraged to attend the training on 19th January 2005. The Chair proposed that a needs analysis of training needs should be undertaken. Martin asked that members let him know what needs to be covered and suggested that this might best be done after the January training as that could cover some of the issues.

Children's Centre Issues Lesley Benson is to lead a session on this at the next meeting.

3. Funding Formula 2005-06 consultation responses and the Schools Forum recommendations

Martin introduced the item and went through the responses received from the consultation. He tabled a paper of the recommendations of the Head Teachers Devolved Working Party (HTDWP) from its meeting of 25th November. Martin stated that a position was needed on the minimum funding guarantee for the Nursery Schools – this could either be on a per pupil or a cash basis. Special Schools used the latter and this was what he proposed. This was agreed.

NNDR Mike Maxwell asked if this was proposed for one year only, Martin indicated that it was intended to be a permanent change. Judy Edwards proposed the recommendation of the HTDWP be accepted – agree to the 2.01% model protection for secondary schools provided an equivalent sum to the secondary protection (£676,000) is added into the primary schools' funding. This was agreed.

Non-Statemented SEN Rochelle Haussmann asked if the proposal from HTDWP would require additional data to be collected. Martin indicated it would not because action and action plus data is required for PLASC. The meeting agreed to accept the proposal i.e.: Continue to use Action and Action Plus data with a cap of 25% (which can be raised if schools prove their need); the LEA to issue guidance on the categorising of pupils into Action and Action Plus; both Action and Action Plus to have the same cash value and no protection for loss compared to previous years.

Decoupling It was agreed that the proposal should not be accepted. John Christie proposes to do more work on this and will submit a paper to the Forum in the summer.

Diseconomies of Scale for Smaller Schools Since the meeting of the HTDWP Martin had modelled the cost of the proposal they had put forward. In view of this very significant cost of around £1.4m, he suggested that instead of increasing the lump sum to include the full cost of a deputy head in group 2 and group 3 schools, that the increase should be reduced to 50% of the cost of a deputy head in group 2 schools and 75% of the cost in group 3 schools. He tabled a paper showing the effect of this. This revised proposal was agreed.

Free School Meals Instead of scaling down the cost to schools of a free school meal by 9% to take account of non-take up, Martin proposed funding it at 100% plus inflating the cost to take account of the minimum funding guarantee. This was agreed.

It was agreed that CATs scores would continue to be used rather than KS2 outcomes in calculating the needs led element of the formula for secondary schools as this was favoured by the secondary heads.

No further changes in the devolved funding formula were suggested.

4. Schools Block Budget

Martin tabled a report from the Director of Finance to the Council's Executive on the 2005/2006 Schools Budget. He apologised for tabling such a detailed report, but it had only just been produced due to the late notification by Central Government of funding allocations to Councils. He stated that the settlement would give a net School Block allocation (the "passporting" figure) of £152,330,000 for 2005/06. This included a 7% increase across the board (excluding 6th form funding) as well as covering the costs of two new VA schools (Menorah and The Avenue). The passporting figure provided £2.8m headroom above the DfES minimum guarantee figures as well as funding the new schools.

Martin proposed to issue draft budget shares (based on September 2004 numbers) to schools before the end of term (**NOTE: This is now likely to slip to early in the New Year**). Duncan McLeod explained the figures in whole Council terms saying that the settlement was good for education but less good for other blocks.

School Forum members were asked to approve the non-devolved element of the schools block and to allocating £196,000 of growth for the provision of a new KS4 Pupil Referral Unit in the light of the SEN Review, the latter being needed to ensure in-house provision rather than increase expenditure outside the Borough.

Extra provision for disabled pupils that had already been agreed was to meet access provision requirements in all schools the meeting was told.

Mike Maxwell asked if the funding now proposed would bring Brent up to EFSS level. Martin explained that with the introduction of the Dedicated Schools Budget from 2006/07 the gap was expected to narrow from that year.

Stephen Green asked about the increase in funding under Excellence in Cities (EiC). He was told that EiC is being extended to the primary sector next year and that this would support a variety of projects.

Kathy Heaps was concerned that there might be a conflict of interest between Menorah and the John Kelly schools over adjacent land for expansion. Rochelle Haussmann asked for an expression of support for the John Kelly schools. This was agreed. Tony Vaughan said that this matter was being considered by the School Organisation Committee.

The Schools Forum agreed to support Appendix 4 (proposed schools block budget 2005/2006 at passporting level), and specifically the growth of £196,000 for the new PRU and the non-devolved element in the Schools Block budget.

Martin Earley noted that by his calculation primary schools would receive a significantly greater increase in funding in 2005/06 compared to secondary schools (particularly if the LSC's 4% increase in funding for sixth funds was taken into account). Martin Stratford said that rising rolls would have a greater impact on secondary school funding and more work would need to be done to assess the impact on each sector. Martin Earley asked that his comments be borne in mind and said that secondary schools had their own pressing needs.

The Chair asked when we would know these effects and Martin Stratford said that he could produce exemplars for the next meeting in February 2005. The Chair asked if we could look at effects in years 2 and 3 and Duncan McLeod said this might be possible. John Christie said there was a strong argument to put any balance into primary.

Terry Molloy pointed out there was no additional finance for workforce reform in secondary and his concerns about this.

Mike Maxwell felt it should not be seen as a matter of primary robbing from secondary but acknowledging primary was very under funded, he said there was a need to tell the government this.

Martin undertook to issue two sets of budget data to schools, one showing the impact of non specific shift of resources to primary (other than already agreed as a result of the formula changes above) and one with such a shift. Schools would be advised to work to the lower of the two budget shares for their school until the final decision was made. Martin was concerned that since the formula was simply allocating from a fixed pot and additional funding to one schools was a reduction elsewhere, schools should not be given data that produced a misleadingly high budget share.

5. SEN Review

Cllr Michael Lyon went through some of the issues covered by the new SEN Review consultation paper:

Dealing with more of the needs of pupils from within Brent
Reducing costly out-Borough placements

Supporting integration as far as was appropriate

He said that further consultation on Hay Lane/Grove Park was needed.

Judy Edwards went through some of her concerns with the paper and, in particular the possible mixing of SLD and physically disabled children over which she expressed grave concerns.

Rochelle Haussmann completely agreed with Judy and added that part-time placements do not work. She supported greater provision for autistic children.

Kathy Heaps asked if there was evidence of successful “multicap” provision. John Christie replied that there were examples of schools that make provision for a wide variety of needs. However, he pointed out that as Brent was not in the early stages of BSF it would be at least 3-5 years before building improvements could be achieved at Hay Lane/Grove Park.

Pat Anderson was concerned over the difficulty of getting children into Vernon House.

Sylvie Libson was concerned at the length of time needed for the statementing process. John Christie said he would look at statementing issues.

6. Cost of statementing/Benchmark Data

Martin took the meeting through the paper explaining the two bases of comparison – cash totals and costs per pupil. The Chair suggested that Forum members come back to this at a subsequent meeting after there has been time to assimilate the figures. Tommy Masters pointed out that the LSC merely passes on to the LEA money for special educational. Martin pointed out that the amounts allocated were still based on year 2000 data.

There will be further consideration of this paper at the next meeting.

7. Workforce Reform/PPA Costs

Martin introduced this paper. Mike Maxwell and Sylvie Libson said the funding so far available was not sufficient to meet the needs of primary schools to introduce PPA. Martin Earley said the same applied to secondary.

It was agreed to put this matter on the agenda of the next meeting of the Forum and to postpone consideration of Gershon to a future meeting. A member of the remodelling team is to be invited to the next meeting to talk to the item.

8. Any other business

1. Letter to Chairs and Clerks of School Forums from DfES
Martin tabled this paper from DfES and asked that members read it.

2. Gershon
Martin outlined very briefly the issues related to Gershon and said that he will be seeking 2 or 3 Heads (ideally from the Forum) to sit on a working party to look at school related issues in this regard.
3. Judy Edwards
As this was Judy Edwards last meeting of the Forum the Chair thanked he for her contributions since its inception. All members of the Forum concurred with the Chair's statement.

Gerald Davidson, head of Vernon House School, will replace Judy.

9. **Time, date and venue of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday **9th February 2005**, at the Town Hall (Committee Room 3) to commence at 6pm, with refreshments provided at 5.45 p.m.

The meeting closed at 8.16 p.m.

RA
8.12.04