

Minutes of the fourteenth meeting of the Schools Forum held at Brent Town Hall at 6.00 p.m. on Monday 5th December 2005

Attendance

Members of the Forum

Governors

Pat Anderson (PA)
Martin Beard (MB)
Gerald Davidson (GD)
Stephen Greene (SG)
Mike Heiser (MH) (Chair)
Miss O. Ogundimu (OO)
Wendy Yianni (WY)
Countess Mariaska Romanov (CMR)

Head Teachers

Lesley Benson (LB)
Maria Shea (MS)
Martin Earley (ME)
Sue Knowler (SK)
Sylvie Libson (SL)
Mike Maxwell (MM)
Terry Molloy (TM)

Others

Tony Vaughan (Trade Union) (AV)

Councillors

Cllr. Michael Lyon (ML)

Officers

John Christie (JC)
Martin Stratford (MS)
Rik Boxer (RB)
Roger Annan

Director Children and Families
Assistant Director Finance and Performance
Deputy Director Achievement and Inclusion
Children and Family Finance (minutes)

1. **Apologies** for absence received from Carole Bevis-Smith, Kathy Heaps, and Margaret Clements (Learning and Skills Council replacement representative).

2. Minutes of the previous meetings held on 17th October 2005

Matters arising were:

Workforce Reform

In response to a question from AV, MS said another meeting would be held with Trade Unions before the end of the year, the Local Authority (LA) would be recommending that new gradings come into force in April 2006. LB expressed concern over difficulties in advertising specific grades/salaries for support staff and WY commented that other LAs appeared to have brought new gradings into effect resulting in a lack of competitiveness for Brent schools. MM raised concerns about staffing reviews generally (required by the end of the year) and the costs of implementation.

Brent Comparative Spend

This had been postponed from the last meeting. MS said he would be happy to discuss any issue that arose from the data supplied.

The minutes of the meeting of 17th October were agreed.

3. Funding Formula Review 2006/07 and 2007/08

MS introduced this item and drew Forum members' attention to the summary grid of responses, the copies of the actual responses and a late submission included in the papers for the meeting. He said that the Forum needed to agree its recommendations to the Council's Executive that would be meeting on 13th February 2006. Decisions did not have to be made this evening, as there would need to be another Forum meeting before the Executive, but it would be helpful if as many recommendations as possible could be finalised so as to simplify the decision making for the next Forum meeting. MS drew attention to the table showing the possible ISB in 2006/07 in paragraph 1.5 of his paper and explained the assumptions that had been made in its formulation. He expected announcements about the teachers pay award on 6th December and the DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) about 8th December. The amounts shown in para 1.5 were, therefore, subject to change arising from these announcements. However, he felt that it should be possible to agree most formula changes at the meeting.

MS also drew attention to the funding formula exemplar for 2006/07 and the 'health warning' that accompanied it. He hoped that the amount of grant would exceed the 5.5% increase included in the exemplar. Rising rolls should increase DSG by about £800k.

The SEN items were taken first, followed by the other funding formula proposals and then the other related issues. After discussion, the following decisions and recommendations were made:

Issue	School Forum View
Allocation of Threshold grant	Historical data should be used for 2006/07 and 2007/08. Review the position before 2008/09 to consider moving in a phased way to a more data driven approach
Social Deprivation Factor	No change
Split Site factor	Agree the proposal for Alperton and Kingsbury High split site calculation
Proposed Extension of the Split Site Factor for Cardinal Hinsley/Convent Federation Beyond 2006/07	Should be phased out over three years – 2/3 in 2007/08, 1/3 in 2008/09 and no allocation in 2009/10
Place Factor for Nursery Schools	Agree to proposal
Review of Financial Regulations for Schools	Agree with the proposed financial regulations
SEN Issues Arising from the Review	Note that there is no need to revise the funding formula itself and that a report on the weighting changes required to address the issues in the SEN Review will come to the next Forum meeting in February 2006
SEN funding - Decoupling	Agree to a consultation paper being sent out. Threshold should be set at £5,000 and impact should be phased in over three years. Result of consultation to be reported back to the next meeting of the Forum in February 2006
Transitional Funding for Merged schools	Agree that merging schools should be provided with some transitional protection The annual figure should be less than £100,000 and should apply from the date of merger
Small Loan Scheme	Agree with the small loans scheme
Hard to Place Children	Agree that a contingency be created for Hard to Place Pupils and with the criteria and methodology set out in the consultation paper

In relation to whether data within on Age Weighted Pupil elements of the funding formula should be updated during a multi-year budget period, the following was agreed:

Factor	Forum Decision	2005/06 Factor Value (£k)
Non Statemented SEN	Update data each year	2,238
Special Units	Freeze data during multi year period	1,806
Special School Place Weighting	Freeze data during multi year period	5,243
Mobility	Freeze data during multi year period	108
Pre-school Place Led	Freeze data during multi year period	138
Pupil Retention Factor	Freeze data during multi year period	642
Social Deprivation Factor	Freeze data during multi year period	524
Needs Led factor	Freeze data during multi year period	582
Premises	Predict known increases in floor area and adjust allocation data prior to the start of the multi year period	5,063
Split Site	Freeze data during multi year period	693
Redeployed Staff	Freeze data during multi year period	3
School Meals	Freeze data during multi year period	2,994

The Forum debated the issue of whether provision currently classified as unallocated ISB should continue as contingencies under the new arrangements from 1st April 2006.

It was decided that the stated pupil provision for in-year statement changes should continue, as should the rising rolls contingency (even though a trigger of ten pupils might be considered too low by the DfES) and the increase in whole forms of entry. The other provisions should cease. (Errors, pupils from regenerated housing estates and schools with a reducing standard number).

The issue of a personalised learning factor was deferred to the next meeting when more data would be available. The technical adjustment related to special school sixth form funding and their LSC allocation was agreed.

4. Dedicated Schools Budget 2006-07 and 2007-08

MS introduced the paper document 5. He emphasised that the funding assumptions were based on previous DfES announcements but felt that the final settlement would be at least at the levels assumed and could be better. He said that if the details from DfES arrived on the expected date (8th December) then he would hope to get preliminary draft Budget Shares to schools (based on current pupil number data) before the end of term.

There were four items of growth in the Central Expenditure Limit area on which further discussion would be required at the next Forum meeting. They were:

- The cost of the new pupil referral unit
- Realistic costs for the Schools Forum
- Unplaced pupils costs
- Expenditure on the home tuition service

The cost of all of these could be funded from within the Central expenditure Limit. Final details would be available for the next meeting. The nursery education grant would be increased by 4% to bring it in line with other LAs. All of these would be contained within the DSB.

The Chair clarified the possibilities and said that Forum approval to the DSB would be sought at the next meeting.

MM drew the Forum's attention to the cost pressures on schools – particularly the cost of the new TLR structures and of funding duplicate systems over the next three years. He asked whether the Forum would approve of schools setting deficit budgets in the multi-year periods in future. MS said this was one of the benefits of multi-year budgets providing the outcome at the end of each period is a balanced position. MM explained the difficulties for primary schools and felt that budgets in Brent were very tight. JC said that the LA would have difficulties dealing with these issues unless the Dedicated Schools Grant turned reflected FSS.

LB asked about a problem that was arising in Children's Centres with the funding of staff from the devolved budget who worked with the youngest children. Was this allowable? MS said the staff concerned must be working in the Children's Centres. LB said the Centres should be given the money but she was not comfortable with this solution. The Chair asked that this should be looked in to.

The Chair said that his understanding of DfES and RIG (Rewards and Incentive Group) guidance was that TLRs should save money. MS said that the Director of Finance expected the settlement for schools would be more generous than that for the Council. SL felt this was irrelevant and felt that the under funding of primary schools in Brent compared to other London LAs had not been addressed. MS said that this could not be done until the levels of the funding settlement were known. He added that he was concerned about the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) and the overall position of the formula if the settlement is low; he felt that there was a possibility that the formula might not work mathematically in this case.

It was AGREED that further consideration would be given at the next meeting when final details of the DSG should be available.

5. Standards Fund

It was decided to defer this to the next meeting when funding details would be available.

6. Any other business

6.1 SK asked for clarification of the Standards Fund role in regard to capital finance. MS said it was within the terms of reference of the Schools Forum and that Forums were likely to be expected to look at capital issues in the future. SK expressed concern about a project, involving the replacement of huts, that had been stopped, and the lack of consultation involved. ML indicated he would be happy to discuss the issues if there was a problem. The Chair asked that the matter should be looked at and the procedures checked.

6.2 MS drew attention to a late response to the formula consultation from Sudbury Primary School. It was AGREED to look t the issue at the next meeting.

7. Time, date and venue of the next meeting

It was agreed that that the next meeting will be held on **Monday 6th February 2006** at the Town Hall commencing at 6.00 p.m., with refreshments provided at 5.45 p.m.

The meeting finished at 8.55 p.m.

RA 15.12.05