Appendix F

Minutes of the fifteenth meeting of the Schools Forum held at Brent Town Hall at 6.00 p.m. on Monday 6th February 2006

Attendance

Members of the Forum

Governors	**Head Teachers**	**Others**
Pat Anderson (PA)	Lesley Benson (LB)	Tony Vaughan (Trade Union) (AV)
Martin Beard (MB)	Gerald Davidson (GD)	**Observer**
Carol Bevis-Smith (CB)	Martin Earley (ME)	Margaret Clements (LSC)
Stephen Greene (SG)	Sue Knowler (SK)	
Mike Heiser (MH) (Chair)	Sylvie Libson (SL)	
Miss O. Ogundimu (OO)	Mike Maxwell (MM)	
	Maria Shea (MSh)	
	Kathy Heaps (KH)	

Councillors
Cllr. Michael Lyon (ML)

Officers

John Christie (JC)	Director Children and Families
Martin Stratford (MS)	Assistant Director Finance and Performance
Peter Stachniewski	Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Resources
Faira Ellks	Senior School Improvement Adviser
Roger Annan	Children and Family Finance (minutes)

1. **Apologies** for absence received from Countess Mariaska Romanov, Wendy Yianni and Terry Molloy.

2. **Minutes of the previous meetings held on 5th December 2005**

The minutes of the meeting of 5th December were agreed with one correction – in the third paragraph of item 3 the word ‘elated’ should read ‘related’. However, concern was expressed that the minute on decoupling did not fully reflect the range of comment made at the meeting. MS said the detail was contained in the consultation circular (1731) issued in December and was as follows:

“There was considerable and detailed discussion on the issues and although there was general support for the principles of decoupling there was also a general view that there should be some moderation of the impact of the changes. One possibility considered was that the change should be phased in by applying decoupling only to primary and year 7 pupils in the first year (and redistributing the additional funding only to those year groups). This would reduce the impact on secondary schools. In the second year of the new system, year 8 would be included and so on. This would, however, be quite complex to administer. A further suggestion was that resources should be transferred to the factor In order to cover the losses of the losing schools (this would be around £400,000 in the first year based on the £7,500 model). It was also proposed that the £400,000 should be added in by the Council as growth rather than as a transfer from another element of the formula. (In relation to this latter point, it should be noted that the finance settlement for

schools in 2006/07 is significantly greater than that for the rest of the Council's services and it is unlikely that such additional growth could be found. Even if you wish to support this proposal, therefore, your comments on your preferred alternative option should also be submitted).

The final suggestion, which had general support in the Forum, was that initially the cut-off threshold should be set at £5,000 rather than £7,500 and that it should be phased in over three years. At the end of the three-year period, the success of the new system could be reviewed with a view to exploring the possibility of moving to the £7,500 threshold. This would mean that the decoupling factor in 2006/07 would be based on the column "Adj. allocation under £5,000" (sixth from the end of the exemplar), but that the change between that and the total 2005/06 allocation would be reduced to a third of the figures shown. Thus, the figures in the column headed "Variation under £5,000" would, in the first year of the scheme, be one third of those shown in that column. These figures are, of course, based on 2005/06 data and will vary when the 2006/07 data is known, but they do provide a meaningful guide as to the likely impact of the proposals."

Matters arising were:

Cover costs for support staff
GD expressed concern about the effect of the new pay scales on cover costs for support staff and, in particular, the differential between HLTA levels 3 and 4 and the resulting costs to school. MS explained that all the support staff pay scales were being revised by a group with the detailed work being done by Ken Gaston; Martin felt that the reason for the differential resulted from the job description for level 4 including the requirement to deliver elements of the curriculum.

Pay rates for full-time nursery nurses working in Children's Centres
LB asked for clarification of the 'Gold Book' (the annual information booklet produced by the LA to help schools with budget preparation) on this area. She was concerned that nursery nurses working in schools on full annual pay enjoyed school holiday entitlement whilst those working full year in Children's Centres received the same remuneration. MS said LB would be contacted over this issue.

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

MS introduced the paper, saying that the amount to be received by the LA was much greater than had been first thought and this was further enhanced by the projected rising rolls in the Borough, for 2006/07 and 2007/08. However, he was concerned that the predicted rise for 2007-2008 might not be achieved and felt care should be taken in deciding provisional allocations for that year. He stressed that whilst the total to be allocated was dependent on actual pupil numbers the announced figures of grant per pupil for each year were secure. Final budget share information for 2006/07 should be issued by the end of February. The decisions made by the Schools Forum in December in respect of the funding formula were included in the table. Four areas in particular still required decision.

(a) Special school place weightings
Special school place weightings had been recalculated in the light of their changing pupil profile. This would require an additional £303k – appendix 2 set out the proposed allocations.

(b) Decoupling
Nine responses had been received from the consultation. In the light of these and the conclusions reached at the last meeting it was proposed that the scheme should proceed cautiously with the threshold being set at £5,000 and with secondary schools being protected for three years.

(c) Contingency
MS had been in touch with DfES about the rising rolls contingency. DfES felt that this should only be applied if a whole additional form of entry was admitted but said the regulations did not define a number. Brent currently set this at 10 additional pupils in a year group.

(d) DSG Elements
DfES have set out how the additional grant had been calculated. It was an option for this to be reflected in appropriate formula factors. This could be achieved by withdrawing the necessary finance from the AWPU allocation and creating new factors.

Other factors

1) Primary funding in Brent is 2.25% below the London average in the current year whilst secondary if 5.7% above. To bring primary funding up to the London average would cost £1.6m.

2) The DfES will require LAs to submit by 5th May details of their social deprivation based allocations. Schools Forums have been asked to address the issue of targetting social deprivation factors among schools and it is one of the issues which DfES is likely to bear in mind when deciding on 2008/11 allocations.

3) Mobility – a late response to the original consultation had suggested this should be increased. £77k was currently unallocated and could be used for this.

4) The SEN review proposed new attached units for pupils with physical disability to be created in 2007/08: Further work is needed on this proposal that doesn't have to be decided immediately as it applies to 2007/08.

5) New Financial Regulations for Schools: Changes are needed to comply with EU regulations.

6)School balances and reserves regulations were explained. MS said that as all Brent schools with surpluses had indicated these were earmarked for future development, the LA was not proposing claw back currently but this could be implemented in future if plans did not materialise.

Discussion followed. MM said that he did not understand the relationship between table 5.1 and 6.9. MS said there was no relationship – 5.1 was the DfES breakdown of the Dedicated Schools Grant increases, 6.9 reflected proposals for

use of the currently unallocated sums. SK said that she understood this and accepted reasons for not adding further factors.

Special school weightings

GD said special school heads had agreed the proposals subject to some clarification. SK said she accepted the need for the special schools to have place funding rather than pupil funding but was concerned that some units might be regularly under subscribed SK felt that funding should be readdressed in a three year cycle which would review occupancy over that period. MS expected the LA would address such a situation by changing the type of school/unit appropriately. SL felt these issues were more apparent in units rather than schools.

The special school weightings were AGREED (cost £303,273). Special Unit numbers to be reviewed during 2007/08 in light of the SEN review.

Decoupling

The Chair summed up he situation as he saw it:

(a) schools had been consulted
(b) there had been a mixed response
(c) the Schools Forum could either defer, pending further consultation, or consider and go ahead cautiously.

SK felt that the resulting increase in early intervention was a substantial improvement and would help in the protection of children. She felt safeguarding was needed to protect children in their last years of education and supported the suggested protection. MB drew attention to the differing percentage between small and large schools. MS agreed with this and will do some modelling but suggested, as this could not be done now, that any resulting changes could be applied in 2008-09.

MM asked that as primary heads had said a clear “no” to going ahead, did the proposals need to happen in 2006-07? JC said the time was right to take this forward. It would free up money from the assessment process. He understood the primary heads’ response and hence the proposed low threshold. MB asked for the secondary heads view. ME said that they had agreed the proposals subject to protection; KH supported this view. ML felt it would lead to earlier intervention and would help small primaries and reduce the burdens resulting from present practice. He had two concerns – size of the threshold and impact on individual schools. MB was concerned there might be legal challenges. MS several authorities had implemented decoupling – including Harrow and Hammersmith and Fulham. PA felt that complex needs would continue to be covered. LB felt there was a need for clarity on Children’s Centres status and whether the 0-3s would be covered. SK asked if children below school age could get statements.

The Chair put the matter to the vote

(a) A factor for decoupling be built into the funding formula and,
(b) The threshold be set at £5,000 and secondary schools protected for three years (cost £163,379 p.a.).

PASSED by 12 votes to 3.

Contingencies
AV suggested this should remain as at present – i.e. when roll in a year group increases by 10 or more.

This was AGREED.

DSG elements
Considerable discussion took place on this item. There was concern over ensuring deprivation was addressed in the funding formula - possibly by CATs scores (these could also address Gifted and Talented issues). MS suggested allocating £236k to secondary schools in 2007/08 based on CAT scores. KH asked how this related to the deprivation percentage being distributed in the formula. SK felt that the first priority should remain addressing the discrepancy between primary and secondary funding by bring primaries up to the London average.

The Chair said a decision was needed, he felt no one was arguing for formula change on the basis of the DfES allocation. KH disagreed with increasing funding through AWPU, as that would embed present lack of targeting deprivation. She urged that this should be looked at for 2008-2011 three-year funding.

The Chair proposed that the Forum should address the issue of deprivation for 2008-09 in the light of the DfES/Treasury review, that the Forum agree not to take further action in 2006-2008.

This was AGREED.

Mobility
The proposal that an extra £77k be put into the mobility factor was NOT AGREED.

SEN Review
AGREED to review attached unit provision in 2007/08

Amendments to Financial Regulations
The changes necessitated by EU rules were AGREED.

Lump sum for the new Wembley Manor Primary School
SK could not see the justification for the proposed new primary group size and asked why additional funding was needed prior to the school attaining its full size. It was suggested that there was no reason to differentiate between the current secondary group 5 lump sum and one for a primary school in group 5.

The proposal for the new grouping was NOT AGREED.

Claw back
The proposal that claw back proposals be re-examined in 2008-09 was AGREED.
Allocation of extra resources
After the specific formula changes now agreed, £2m was available for allocation, less the £164k allocated to decoupling, plus the £77k not allocated to mobility. MB proposed that £236k be allocated to secondary and £1,600k plus £77k to primary. ME said that whilst he agreed with the existing commitment to bring primary funding up to the London average , he felt that this should be over three rather than two years. He felt the original timetable of 3 to 4 years was more

appropriate. He also felt the additional money should be allocated on the basis of additional education needs rather the AWPU. MS pointed out there was no guarantee of a substantial increase in 2008-09 and if this did not materialise a three year strategy would not be able to be completed. MM reminded members that primary schools were 6% below SFSS and secondaries 1 to 2% above currently.

KH supported needs led allocations to bring primaries up to London average. SK agreed with bringing up to SFSS. She felt that the extra funding is available currently and that the Forum should grab the opportunity to address the imbalance, as there may not be a future opportunity. She proposed £3,200k over two years should be added to primary through AWPU plus the £77k from mobility. MB reminded members that the £164k for decoupling was effectively shifting this money from secondary to primary.

ML understood the secondary view of supporting the allocation of more resource to primary but felt that doing this in two years was too fast. JC said that given the relative needs of primary the proposal over two years seemed reasonable. He noted that secondaries would be getting at least the minimum funding guarantee (MFG). MB was concerned that 6 of the secondaries would need MFG protection. MS said that final allocations were likely to show no secondary need MFG protection. MB asked that social deprivation factors be used that addressed these issues irrespective of school size. MS suggested he bring a paper to the June meeting to address these issues for 2008/09 onwards. This was AGREED.

The Chair felt that ME's proposal of £1,400k to primary and the balance to secondary was prudent. He agreed that the third year would then need to ensure the process was completed. SK felt parity should be achieved as soon as possible and that a tight budget in 2008/09 might stop progress. SL was very disappointed; she did not want to see one sector against another. The sooner parity was achieved the sooner we could move forward. MM pointed out two thirds of LAs funded above SFSS, Brent schools had been underfunded for a significant time and he felt that the first opportunity should be taken to remedy the situation.

ME proposed the £1.477m be allocated to primary and the balance to secondary. This was put to the vote and LOST by 4 votes in favour to 9 against. SK proposed putting the funding released as a result of the mobility decision into primary with £1.677m to primary and £236k (2007/08 £400k) to secondary. This was AGREED by 9 votes to 3.

Table 6.9 as amended was AGREED without opposition.

It was AGREED to review the formula for 2008-09, especially re allocation factors based on the percentage of pupils on roll.

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

MS introduced the paper. He said that appendices A and B were subject to some amendment as the level of grant would change on the basis of actual pupil numbers. He felt 2006/07 was fairly close but 2007/08 was subject to more variation. He said all central expenditure could be contained within the central

expenditure limit (CEL). The nursery education grant (NEG) had already been agreed.

Two additional items (religious leave and trade union cover) would, if approved, breach the CEL and savings would have to be found for the £40k cost. He drew attention to the possible new VA school in para 8.1 and a typo in para 9.8. There was likely to be headroom in the CEL for 2007/08 – this would be the subject of a later report. SL asked about the matched funding that would be needed for the Common Assessment Framework and JC said this would be subject to further consultation with schools.

The following decisions were taken:

The proposals for funding the new PRU were agreed
£30k was agreed as the budget for the Schools Forum
Growth of £300k for unplaced children agreed
Home tuition – extra £150k agreed
NEG confirmed

Religious leave
MB felt this should be a matter for schools to decide. MS explained that this was for school support staff. JC explained it came up in consultation. After further discussion it was felt this was a matter for individual schools and the proposal was REJECTED.

Trade Union cover
After discussion this was agreed. The £20k savings required to cover the cost will be taken from the out Borough SEN placement provision.

Prudential borrowing
A report on this and the other growth demands on the 2007/08 CEL will be made to the June meeting.

Children's Centre staffing
LB expressed concern at proposals to use agreed teacher staffing for Children's Centres as Advisory teachers and referred to guidance on Teachers Centre which she said suggests that the teachers should be an integral part of the Children's Centre staff. SK was concerned that LB has to keep coming back to these matters and asked that Children's Centre funding be a future agenda item. MS agreed to request a paper for the June meeting on this issue. JC felt the staff were deployed according to the policy but was happy to reopen and review it. LB suggested two main areas for consideration were:

1. Need for advisory teachers
2. Need for teachers attached to Children's Centres

ME expressed concern about the implications of para 9.8 and wondered if this would be funded from education monies. JC said health and social care would be making an input and he expected extra personnel would be needed. He suggested that this needed further consideration. (Note: this relates to the wider issue raised and not specifically to the Children's Centre staffing issue)

The Forum AGREED to the DSB as amended and the arrangements for the CEL as in appendices A and B.

5. Standards Fund 2006/07 and 2007/08

MS explained that there was a guaranteed percentage increase per pupil. SK wanted more information. MS will bring a paper to June meeting. ME said secondary heads wanted to look at central spending for 2007/08 (i.e. the non devolved funding).

It was agreed that any additional resources after the application of the MFG be distributed in pro rata to other SDG allocations.

The paper was AGREED.

6. Schools Forum Good Practice Guidance

This item will be discussed at the June meeting. MS asked members to keep the papers for that meeting.

7. Any other business

MS informed members of a course for governors at CNWL Wembley Park on 28th February at 7 p.m. to be led by him. Applications should be made to Governor Services.

8. Time, date and venue of the next meeting

It was agreed that that the next meeting will be held on **Monday 12th June 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