

**Schools Forum Minutes
15 June 2016**

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BRENT SCHOOLS FORUM

**Minutes of the Schools Forum held on
Wednesday 15 June 2016 at Queens Park Community School**

Attended by Members of the Forum:**Governors:**

Martin Beard (MB)
Helga Gladbaum (HG)
Mike Heiser (MH) - Chair
Jo Jhally (JJ)
Sue Knowler (SK)
Titilola McDowell (TM)
Narinder Nathan (NN)

Head Teachers:

Rose Ashton (RA)
Lesley Benson (LB)
Martine Clark (MC)
Kay Charles (KC)
Danny Coyle (DC)
Desi Lodge Patch (DLP)
Andy Prindiville (AP)
Troy Sharpe (TS)

PRU:

Terry Hoad (TH)

PVI Sector:

Paul Russell (PR)

Trade Unions:**14-19 Partnership:****Lead Member (C&YP):**

Cllr Wilhelmina Mitchell Murray (WM)

Officers:

Gail Tolley (GT)
Cate Duffy (CD)
Norwena Thomas (NT)
John Holden (JH)
Devbai Patel (DP)
Sue Gates (SG)
Sasi Srinivasan (SS)

Others:

Raphael Moss (RM) - Observer

ITEM DISCUSSION**i. Introductions**

The Forum commenced at 6.05pm.

MH asked the new Lead Member to introduce herself followed by all others present.

ii. Apologies

Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman
Lesley Gouldbourne
Herman Martyn
Melissa Loosemore
Umesh Raichada
Troy Sharp – for arriving late

iii. Membership

Five vacancies remain which are two Secondary Academy Heads, Nursery School Governor, Early Years PVI and 14-19 Partnership. MH asked if these are being filled and it was confirmed that invitation for nominations are sent out frequently.

1 Declarations of Interests

1.1 None

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2016 and Matters Arising

2.1 Paragraph 9.1 – the second sentence was corrected to state that MH said that when a school changes its status the members' category change. It would not be compliant if members were moved into categories that they did not fit into.

2.2 The above was noted. There were no other corrections to the minutes therefore they were approved as an accurate record.

3.0 Action Log and Matters Arising

3.1 With regards to 2017-18 funding phase 2 of the consultation is awaited. MH thanked officers for very detailed responses.

4.0 Election of Vice Chair

4.1 DP reported that nominations were received for two members but RA had the majority number. DP had obtained RA's approval and she had

agreed to take on this position (RA had not arrived at this point). RA was therefore appointed as vice-chair. MH congratulated her.

5.0 Update on Early Years Funding – 30 Hours

[This report was for information.](#)

- 5.1 SG presented this report. She said the report is being brought to Schools Forum for information sharing. The report provides an update on extending new Nursery Education Grant to 3 and 4 year olds to 30 hours for working families and is required to be implemented from September 2017. The current 3 and 4 year olds free 15 hour places continue to be statutory.
- 5.2 The meetings and consultations have taken place so far with parents, child minders and Children's Centres through focus groups in the preparation for implementation. Parents were also consulted through PVI sector providers. A reasonable response has been received.
- 5.3 Section 5 of the report provided a projection on demand estimated to be around 1870 new places based on Brent's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. Local Authorities will be measured against sufficiency rather than take up. Places are already becoming available and it is likely that therefore a number of places required are going to be fewer than initially planned. Statutory guidance is still to be issued. Early Years providers are mostly positive. Providers are concerned about rates. DfE are planning a consultation on rates which is likely to be in autumn. Parents have understandably been positive. No provider has signalled that they didn't want to take up the free 30 hours. The next step was to set up a pilot to see how it would work.
- 5.4 LB said that Brent need to decide on what was needed to be done next. Also a decision needed to be made about current Full Time places. Two year old hourly rate costs are higher than what is funded. She said it was concerning that the government allows slippage on quality. Providers face a potential cashflow issue.
- 5.5 SG said that a message has gone out to providers. Local Authority has a flexibility around notice period. It used to be at half term of child losing place. There can be a flexibility with full time places. There aren't currently many full time places. Officers are in discussion with the DfE around full time places and will get a steer from them. Quality will have same flexibility with full time places. Most settings are getting good or above and a focus is on settings that are on borderline. In regards to rates, we will have to wait for DfE announcement.
- 5.6 PR said that ratio used to be 13:1 and does keep the cost down. Some of the nurseries charge in more affluent area £1,500 per month but PVI's are trapped and it is concerning for them. They don't own their property and face significant rent increases.

- 5.7 SG agreed with PR and agreed to put a case forward to DfE but still think the rates will not be high enough. Currently there can strictly be no top up of rates but this may change with future guidance.
- 5.8 PR said Brent is good at monitoring top up attempts and prohibiting it whereas other boroughs tend to ignore it.
- 5.9 Recommendation, to note the contents of the report as initial information sharing. This was noted. The Schools Forum would be updated as and when more information from DfE is received and when consultations are completed.
- 6.0 Dedicated Schools Grant – Outturn 2015-16 and Budget 2016-17**
[This report was for information and decision.](#)
- 6.1 NT presented this report. The report provided details of DSG outturn for 2015-16 including Individual Schools Budget (ISB) balances and central items along with the latest position on 2016-17 DSG.
- 6.2 The 2015-16 ISB balances continue to increase. There was one school in deficit by the end of 2015-16 opposed to six 2-3 years ago. There was underspend on DSG of £669k making a cumulative balance of £1.02m which was proposed to be kept as a contingency. The grant is ring-fenced and is therefore carried forward to 2016-17.
- 6.3 The allocation for 2016-17 is £195m after recoupment. This is subject to change due to adjustments to Early Years actual census data and if further schools convert to academy.
- 6.4 An increase of £2m has been applied in 2016-17 to Early Years due to ongoing pressures on this block. There has been a restructure in the council so the total £2m is not with Early Years. Of this £577k is with Schools Effectiveness Service because some of the Early Years' service is transferred to this area.
- 6.5 MH said the budget needs to correctly reflect the Section 251 statement to ensure that central expenditure is not showing high. Some LA's do have a high central expenditure budget.
- 6.6 KC asked if a detailed breakdown could be provided to be able to identify services i.e. how much of it is going to alternative provision and special schools. Without this level of information, members are not in a position to scrutinise. They would like to support but do not know where to start. MH asked if this can be provided for 2015-16 and GT said that there is no resources to complete it this year but can be provided in the future years.
- 6.7 SK asked if the budget for Trade Unions was correct as it had overspent. NT thought it was swapped with maternity grant as she

was confident that the Trade Union budget was underspent. She would check and confirm.

Post meeting notes: The Trade Union budget was £86,473 and the Maternity budget was £220,067. The actual spend was £41,878 and £240,144 respectively.

6.8 The following recommendations were noted:

- a. Outturn for delegated (ISB) schools revenue balances for 2015-16
- b. The outturn for central expenditure elements of the DSG for 2015-16
- c. The revised DSG allocations for 2016-17

Members were invited to vote to agree the DSG budget for 2016-17. This was agreed unanimously.

7.0 Updated Scheme for Financing Schools and Schools Financial Regulations 2016-17

This report was for consultation and information.

7.1 NT presented this report. The Scheme for Financing Schools was updated and the summary of changes were included as an appendix. NT went through the changes. The main change is the increase in threshold for high value contract from £250k to £500k. Schools Financial Regulations sits alongside Scheme for Financing Schools and again a summary of changes was attached as a separate appendix. LB said a lot of work went into Scheme for Financing Schools last year where a group was set up to look at it in detail. Therefore there were not many changes this year. GT thanked those involved.

The Chair asked Members to consider the following Recommendations:

- a. Scheme for Financing Schools. Maintained schools Members were invited to vote to approve the Scheme for Financing Schools 2016-17. This was agreed unanimously.
- b. Schools Financial Regulations – Members were consulted on this and had no further comments.

8. Review of Criteria for Split-Site Factor, Falling Rolls and Growth Fund

This report was for consultation and information.

8.1 NT presented this report. The report reviews the split site factor, falling rolls and growth funding. The split site factor funding has not been reviewed since it was introduced several years ago. It became apparent through discussions with other London Boroughs and

through benchmarking that Brent pays the second highest and fourth highest in percentage of total school block of funding. The criteria being proposed meets the DfE guidelines.

- 8.2 Three options were presented and the one recommended was a phased implementation over 4 years. This was on the basis that it would be necessary to support schools that are going through an expansion on two or more sites until the school is fully occupied. Once the school is full, the pupil-led funding and site specific factor funding should cover the costs. It would be necessary to support the schools in the first couple of years. If this option was approved, out of five schools that currently receive funding three would cease to receive it as they would no longer be eligible.
- 8.3 The Falling Rolls criteria was being introduced for the first time in Brent. In the first instance only good and outstanding schools qualify for funding under this criteria. The full criteria was explained under paragraph 4.5. (b) of the report. This is to protect schools that are currently undersubscribed but due to growth, the places will be required in the near future. In 2016-17 two schools would have been eligible for funding under this criteria. It was recommended that £500k was top sliced from DSG to fund eligible number of places equivalent to AWPU. It may be necessary to scale AWPU value down to remain within the budget of £500k.
- 8.4 The Growth funding is split between additional classrooms and rising rolls. This is top sliced from DSG to create places in meeting the basic needs demand. The DfE's criteria is specific that this funding is used towards basic needs and not due to popularity.
- 8.5 It was to be noted that the bulge and additional class funding is guaranteed for 5 terms for each class from the time they start. If these then become permanent then the funding is guaranteed for 5 terms from the term they become permanent.
- 8.6 HG reported on behalf of a primary school in receipt of split site funding the concerns that the school has if the split site criteria was approved by the Schools Forum. She read out a submission from the school. They felt that they were not consulted directly to understand the impact and will cause an enormous pressure on their school. NT responded that schools were contacted a week before the Schools Forum. The primary schools should have less movement between sites other than the leadership. Some of the contracts could be negotiated for joint sites and would reduce cost i.e. cleaning and catering. It is likely that a similar change may be imposed in the new national fair funding formula so this is preparing schools in advance.
- 8.7 AP read out a statement he had received from a secondary school which requested that a decision on this paper was deferred until they

are in a position to analyse the impact. He read out a list of duties and staff that are required at both sites i.e. receptionists, libraries and additional student facilities.

- 8.8 MC said Strathcona will not be financially viable to manage without this additional funding. The school also felt that they were not given sufficient time to review the impact.
- 8.9 MH spoke not as a chair but as a governor for a secondary school and shared his view with AP. The school with two sites do have additional costs i.e. cleaning and catering. It is something that has been in place for a long time and it was implemented with a clear formula. He asked if someone could find a formula from the time it was approved by the Schools Forum.
- 8.10 CD said she understood the concerns of schools and not wanting this change to happen. The schools do have legitimate cases and good arguments. She agreed that more discussions would be required over a longer period. Schools however need to understand that over a £1m is allocated to 5 schools which is more than what they would receive in other boroughs. This funding which would in other boroughs go into the pot for distribution to all schools.
- 8.11 GT added that Newham receives £40k and how they do manage. LB said it is something that should be re-visited on more regular basis.
- 8.12 RA said in light of the challenge, it is difficult to put a price to it. Her school has taken on two bulge classes and the work is enormous.
- 8.13 SK agreed that the paper should be differed. She also agreed that it was a lot of money funded under this factor but wanted to know how a lump sum was arrived at. There must have been a formula around it.
- 8.14 LB said she was curious to find out where £30k fixed lump sum for primary schools came from. GT replied that it was in consideration with other boroughs. She added that officers will specifically write to affected schools inviting comments and offering to be able to make representation.
- 8.15 A clarification was requested over a 'near future' for funding falling rolls funding. CD replied that a Cabinet report is submitted every year on projections and this will be used to determine in applying the criteria. This could be 5 years for primary and 5-7 years in secondary.
- 8.16 RM was given permission to speak as an observer. He asked if the falling rolls criteria also applied to schools that are expanding but not filled up. It was confirmed that this was a separate situation and would not apply to expanding schools. MC asked even if they do not fill up and CD replied that they are given 5 terms of guarantee funding. NN

said that Harlesden has expanded and cannot fill up. CD said it is common for the first year not to fill up but if it becomes a longer-term issue then it will require revisit to see how it can be managed. TS asked if the schools that have falling rolls will have support in helping them to fill up. CD said this could be tricky depending on the school's history and building it back up. They have to be recognised by OFSTED and in addition the schools would have to do their bits such as marketing.

- 8.17 SK asked about the falling rolls criteria regarding the proposed eligibility figure of a 20% or more reduction in one year group and whether the total population of the school should be a factor.
- 8.18 GT stated that Brent was a net exporter of children from primary to secondary but the number of schools that are good or outstanding are improving.
- 8.19 Recommendations agreed as follows:
- a. Approved the revised split-site factor criteria.
This was differed to September 2016 Forum
 - b. Select an option for implementation of the revised split-site factor to existing schools.
This was differed to September 2016 Forum.
 - c. Approve the introduction of falling rolls and fund and the proposed criteria and allocations.
Against – 1
Agreed – 14
Abstention – 0
 - d. Approve the revised falling rolls fund criteria.
Against – 0
Agreed – 14
Abstention – 1
 - e. Approved the revised additional classes funding criteria.
This was agreed unanimously.

9. Schools Forum Administration Review

[This report was for consultation.](#)

- 9.1 NT presented this report. This paper proposes changes and improvements to the administration to the Schools Forum and its sub-groups.
- 9.2 There are three Task and Finish (T&F) working groups proposed which replaces the old sub groups, High Needs, Early Years and National Fair Funding Formula (NFFF). Currently there are vacancies in all sub

groups due to change in membership. A couple of these groups have not met for some time. The three groups will focus on individual tasks and will be in place throughout the task for a year or two and enable a meaningful discussion. It was felt that the T&F group for the Schools Finance Conference would be more meaningful if managed by T&F group rather than the officers.

- 9.3 The newsletter will need input from Schools Forum Members. There is now a Schools Forum email set up which is accessible to DP and NT where anyone can email and these can be forwarded to Schools Forum members. The minutes and papers are published on website and a circular is sent out to schools as soon as the latest papers become available.
- 9.4 A technical group is being introduced for half an hour prior to the start of the Schools Forum.
- 9.5 KC expressed a concern and said that a lot of work went into the previous sub group setting up place funding for special schools with discussions around cross modernisation using Kington and Harrow models. They looked at bandings where so much work went into it and wouldn't want that to go to waste.
- 9.6 TH said PRUs are same as special schools and felt that they may not get fully represented. He was curious to know why Trade Union is only included in one T&F groups. It was agreed to add Trade Union to the NFFF group too.
- 9.7 KC said she had no objection to group and agreed that PRU is a special case too but as long as there was a proper consultation and wider involvement.
- 9.8 CD said she is used to seeing more people engaged. The High Needs group could involve more people.
- 9.9 It was confirmed that the T&F groups would be chaired by the officers. The NFFF group would be chaired by Head of Finance or Senior Finance Analyst. It was agreed to add Trade Union to this group but bearing in mind there is only one Trade Union representative on the Forum and she may not want to attend.
- 9.10 Governors need to be aware of Schools Forum roll and this is brought up at termly and other follow up governors meetings. Some governors have very little knowledge about Schools Forum.
- 9.11 MH asked if anyone wanted to volunteer for the newsletter but no one expressed immediate interest. MH suggested that Brent Communication Team might be able to take this forward. CD said the newsletter will enable schools and governors to know of Schools

Forum. A lot of people do not know there is a dedicated webpage for schools forum. It's good to know that schools contacted their representatives over split-site issue.

- 9.12 It was agreed that the T&F group members would be invited for expression of interest and nominations. There was no maximum number but the minimum was as proposed in the report therefore there will not be a need for elections. The admin tasks can be carried out by DP and JH.

10 AOB

- 10.1 GT informed members that it was NT's last meeting as she was leaving the council to go and work in a school outside the borough. She has made a positive career choice. NT's work was recognised in support of Schools Forum. GT added that the resources are reduced at the back office in the Civic Centre. LB said as a headteacher, NT has been so supportive, generous and given time and the correct advice.

The Forum ended at 08.10pm.

ACTION LOG

| Item No | Action | Due | Owner |
|----------------|--|------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Decision on Split Site Factor Funding | Sept 16 | All Forum Members |
| 2 | Clarifications and implications of falling roll fund | Dec 16 | Officers |

