



# **LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

**MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM**  
held on Wednesday 6 December 2017 at 6.00 pm

## **PRESENT**

### **Governors**

Mike Heiser (Chair)  
Karen Zajdel  
Narinder Nathan  
Geraldine Chadwick  
Titilola McDowell  
Martin Beard  
Jo Jhally

### **Head Teachers**

Melissa Loosemore  
Rose Ashton (Vice-Chair)  
Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman  
Kay Charles  
Gerard McKenna  
Andy Prindiville  
Troy Sharpe

### **Early Years PVI**

Sylvie Libson

### **14-19 Partnership**

Mark Stacey

### **Trade Union**

Lesley Gouldbourne

### **Officers**

Brian Grady  
Shirley Parks  
Andrew Ward  
Dena Aly  
Nikolay Manov

### **Observer**

Raphael Moss

## **ABSENT**

<b>Governors</b>	Herman Martyn
<b>Pupil Referral Unit</b>	Vivien Dean
<b>Early Years PVI</b>	Paul Russell

The Chair welcomed members of the Schools Forum to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves.

### **1. Apologies for Absence and Membership**

<b>Governors</b>	Helga Gladbaum Umesh Raichada
<b>Head Teachers</b>	Lesley Benson Martine Clark Gill Bal Jayne Jardine

There was one vacancy on the Forum - a Secondary Academy Head

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **3. Deputations (if Any)**

None.

### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 4 October 2017, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **5. Matters arising (if any)**

In relation to Agenda Item 7 – Update on the implementation of the extended 30 hours childcare entitlement, Brian Grady said that an update on the roll out of the provider portal to schools would be emailed to all Members.

It was noted that any other matters arising would be discussed under Item 6 of the agenda.

### **6. Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Forecast 2017/18**

Andrew Ward introduced the report and said that it would be useful to have the Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Forecast 2017/18 as a standing item on the

agenda. He commented on Appendix A which contained the forecast at the end of October 2017. The Forum heard that the total income was slightly less than budgeted due to an adjustment in the Early Years Block. Mr Ward explained that the income figure provided by the Department for Education (DfE) was based on the previous year and, therefore, was indicative as final funding depended upon the actual provision as per the Early Years census. An adjustment of -£114,000 had already been made in 2017/18 based on the information from the early years census that 30 fewer children were accessing provision compared to the previous January. Furthermore, Mr Ward noted that the Floreat free school, which was no longer opening, had been included in the mainstream funding formula budget, causing an underspend of £0.2 million.

The rate of growth in primary school numbers had slowed and following the underspend last year, a variance of at least £0.75 million against the growth budgets was anticipated. As the October census data had not been confirmed yet, a revised forecast would be presented at the next meeting of the Forum once the growth allocations had been calculated following the release of the data in December 2017.

In relation to the High Needs Block, Mr Ward highlighted that high demand for High Needs support through the Early Years Inclusion Fund had been reported, meaning that there was a risk of an overspend by the end of the year. In contrast, Central Block expenditure was forecasted to be in line with budgets, except for the school admissions service which reported a small overspend related to staffing costs.

As far as the Early Years Block was concerned, Mr Ward pointed out that the uptake of the 30 hours provision was lower than budgeted for. He said that it was not known whether the Block's income would be reduced proportionately by the DfE or whether this funding would be left with Local Authorities, hence, a zero variance position had been reported.

Mr Ward summarised that the current forecast was reported to underspend by £1 million and acknowledged that this could change depending on the growth allocations for 2017/18.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Forecast 2017/18 report be noted.

## 7. **Dedicated Schools Grant Pupil Growth Task Group Report**

Shirley Parks reminded Members that following a report to the Schools Forum in October 2017, it was agreed to review the Pupil Growth Funding criteria. She said that the paper provided a summary of the policy discussion of the Pupil Demand Task and Finish Group and recommended a Pupil Growth Fund budget of £2 million for 2018/19 and a rising rolls contingency of £1.13 million. The Group had

considered four policy questions as set out below (for details, please see pages 16-19 to the Agenda pack).

*Policy question 1: should criteria be developed for additional support beyond current guaranteed funding for primary schools that have been asked by the Local Authority to permanently expand?*

The recommendation of the Group was that no adjustment policy would be taken forward to support these schools. The Group had noted that all schools were expected to manage budgets in response to changing patterns of demand.

*Policy Question 2: should funding be used to support secondary schools that expand by 30 places or more at the request of the Local Authority?*

The recommendation of the Group was that secondary schools that had expanded would be funded to address the issues of lagged funding and to ensure that they could fund the required resources. Ms Parks said that the Group had discussed the differences between primary and secondary schools as well as the impact of expansion of the number of staff employed by schools. Two models for funding growth had been considered – payment of a lump sum in the year in which the growth occurred which would require schools to manage their cash flow in subsequent years or funding to be calculated through a manual variation in the funding formula.

*Policy Question 3: how should rising rolls funding operate in the future and for what time period should support to schools be provided?*

The recommendation of the Group was to retain the rising rolls contingency for primary schools at 1.75%, with the expectation that the requirement for access to this funding would reduce over time. Ms Parks noted that the preferred course of action in relation to secondary schools would depend on which option under the second policy question was selected. For example, if it was decided to calculate funding through a manual variation in the funding formula, there would not be a need for rising rolls funding as there would not be a lagged funding issue. However, it was noted that in relation to secondary schools, 1.75% equated to a larger number of pupils in secondary schools than primary. Therefore, the Local Authority had been asked to consider allocating a different percentage to each sector or to use an absolute value instead.

*Policy Question 4: Schools Forum to consider if a one-off payment should apply to secondary schools*

The recommendation of the Group was that a lump sum of £25,000 was not to be awarded to secondary schools that had been asked to expand. However, where the

expansion of schools required a capital project, all appropriate costs would be capitalised, with all remaining expenses being covered within the schools' budgets.

### *Discussion*

The Chair opened the floor for comments and Members of the Forum discussed that it was easier to forecast the demand for secondary places as children had already been born and were part of the system, which increased the level of confidence in predictions. Ms Parks noted that demand for primary places had dipped but were expected to recover. Primary provision representatives commented that the reduction in demand for primary places had been significant and highlighted that there were vacancies in a number of primary schools. It was noted that social mobility could have an impact on secondary numbers as children could move away from the Borough prior to entering secondary education. Brian Grady confirmed that the Local Authority deemed there was sufficient primary provision and that the refreshed Brent school places sufficiency strategy agreed by Cabinet in June 2017 reflected this position. In relation to top-slicing the Dedicated Schools Grant to create a fund to support good schools with falling rolls, Ms Parks referenced the Group's recommendation that this was not required for schools in Brent. Andrew Ward clarified that, according to the Department for Education regulations, a potential fund could be used only for good and outstanding schools and the need for spaces had to be clearly demonstrated which could be challenging in the current conditions.

A headteacher commented that funding, including for provision of education to children with special needs, should follow the children and be available to those who needed place in the year the funding came in. This view was widely supported by the Forum and it was noted that it was difficult to manage constantly changing budgets and this had had a negative impact on the recruitment and retention of teachers. A Member pointed out that some schools rented out space to generate income and suggested that this option could be explored further.

A Member of the Schools Forum challenged the amount of communication with headteachers prior to the preparation of the report, stating that headteachers could have been informed of the proposed recommendations before the publication of the paper. In response, Ms Parks confirmed that the Group's membership had been based on volunteers from Schools Forum and included headteachers. In relation to social mobility, Mr Ward explained that although the Group had recognised it as an issue, it had not been reflected in the national funding formula.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (i) The contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Pupil Growth Task Group Report be noted;

- (ii) The current growth model for primary expansion would not be changed. Support for individual schools that expand would continue;
- (iii) No additional funding be provided to schools experiencing lower demand and a falling rolls contingency would not be required to be top-sliced from the DSG;
- (iv) A growth model for secondary schools be agreed, with a final methodology recommendations presented to the Schools Forum;
- (v) Rising rolls funding be retained for primary schools and be considered in conjunction with the growth funding models for secondary schools; and
- (vi) The Growth Fund budget be reduced by £500,000, with underspends accumulated in reserves used to mitigate risks of future volatility.

#### **8. Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget and Mainstream Funding Formula 2018/19 and 2019/20**

Andrew Ward introduced the report which contained key decisions that had to be made in order to set the 2018/19 mainstream funding formula. He noted that calculations for the presented models had been made using numbers from the October 2016 census so changes were expected once data from the October 2017 census was released in December 2017. Mr Ward drew the Members' attention to section two of the report (page 21 to the Agenda pack) and explained the rationale behind the recommendations. As reported at the previous meeting of the Forum, an additional £1.5 million would be allocated to the Schools Funding Block and an additional £1 million to the High Needs Block. Dedicated Schools Grant funding of 3 and 4 year olds would be reduced by £0.17 to £5.37 per hour and this would go ahead for 2018/19. Moreover, inflation was expected to exceed the 0.5% per pupil funding increase that had been announced over the summer and there had been an increase in the number of requests for new Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs).

Mr Ward reported on the work of the Task and Finish Groups. The High Needs Task and Finish Group had met twice since the last Schools Forum meeting and its recommendation was that the proposed additional £1 million be used to fund increases to top up funding rates in mitigation of cost pressures, and enable planned increases to special provision places. Furthermore, placements were increasingly available in Brent as opposed to independent and out of the Borough settings and this was expected to improve cost efficiency. The Early Years Task and Finish Group had met once and an additional meeting had been scheduled to agree further actions. Mr Ward highlighted that both Groups had emphasised the need to hold reserves as contingency measures.

Mr Ward drew Members' attention to the table in Appendix 1 which provided information on the funding formula rates, with the proposed increase of rates shown in the middle columns. Mr Ward emphasised that the ratio between primary and secondary provision would be the same as the national average; 1:1.29

The total amount of reserves was estimated to be approximately £7 million and increased rates had been modelled to account for release of £2, £2.5 and £3 million. However, the sustainability of these options could be questioned as it had not been possible to predict trends in the next couple of years and account for the way funding would be controlled. Moreover, if too much funds were allocated, there might be a need to reduce the rate in the future.

Members of the Forum enquired about the way secondary low attainment was defined and if there had been any changes to Key Stage 2 data. In response, Mr Grady said the definition and application of secondary low attainment would be examined and reported back on.

Mr Ward said that Appendix 2 contained data on modelled funding allocation by school which also provided information on the future trends indicated by the National Funding Formula. However, he noted that the figures were subject to ratification by the Council and the DfE. He encouraged business managers at schools to read the Agenda pack for the meeting in January 2018 to aid their financial planning. Mr Ward said that he would find out and report to the Forum if any unused funding would be lost in next year's allocation.

Members of the Forum expressed their gratitude to the Schools Finance Team for their work on this report.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (i) The contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget and Mainstream Funding Formula 2018/19 and 2019/20 report, be noted;
- (ii) The Council be recommended that the pupil funding rates in the formula be adjusted proportionally in order to allocate the £1.5 million additional funding for 2018/19;
- (iii) The Council be recommended to use £2.5 million DSG reserves for allocation in a sustainable manner in the funding formula across 2018/19 and 2019/20; and
- (iv) The High Needs Block and Early Years Block budgets be planned within the funding allocations set out in the report and £2 million DSG reserves be retained as a contingency against cost pressures and potential funding reductions in these areas.

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7.24 pm

MIKE HEISER  
Chair