



MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM
Thursday 5 November 2020 at 6.00 pm

Membership

Representing

PRESENT (all in remote attendance):

Governors	Mike Heiser (Chair) Martin Beard Geraldine Chadwick Jo Jhally Michael Odumuso
Headteachers	Melissa Loosemore Danny Coyle Michelle Ginty Gerard McKenna Raphael Moss
Pupil Referral Unit	Ranjna Shiyani
Trade Union	John Roche
Officers	Dena Aly Olufunke Adediran Brian Grady James Kinsella Craig Player
Councillor	Stephens (Lead Member for Schools, Employment & Skills)

1. Apologies for Absence and Membership

Apologies were received from Narinder Nathan (Governor) and Andy Prindville (Headteacher).

The Chair introduced Michael Odumosu (Governor), Danny Coyle (Headteacher) and Ranjna Shiyani (Pupil Referral Unit) as newly appointed members of the Forum, and welcomed back Geraldine Chadwick (Governor) and Jayne Jardine (SEN) who had been reappointed for another term. Thanks were extended to Titilola McDowell and Martine Clark who had both recently stood down from their respective posts.

James Kinsella, Governance Manager at Brent Council gave an update on the Forum's current vacancies. It was confirmed that a recent recruitment process had filled five posts, and that the remaining vacant posts would be recruited to in the

new year. A separate recruitment process was underway for the vacant Early Years PVI non-school member posts and these would be filled by the next meeting of the Forum.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3. **Deputations (if Any)**

None.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** that subject to the following amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting on 17 June 2020 were approved as a correct record:

Pages 2-8 – It was noted that the document footer referenced the 26 February 2020 meeting of the Forum rather than the 17 June 2020 meeting.

It was therefore agreed that the document footer would be amended to reference the 17 June 2020 meeting of the Forum.

5. **Actions arising**

Action 59: DSG deficit – There had been a letter sent through by the Society of London Treasurers on the issues and concerns raised in relation to the continued pressure on DSG funding and deficit recovery plans. The letter also raised the possibility of collating deficits across London boroughs.

Action 63: Banding Review - The requested review of the impact that any recalibration may have on special schools was underway, and an update would be provided at the January meeting of the Forum.

Action 64 and 65: DSG management – An update would be given under Item 6: Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Monitoring Report 2020/21 to be considered later on the agenda.

Action 66: Split site funding proposals working group – This had been established and an update would be given under Item 7: Dedicated Schools Grant Funding Update 2021/22.

Action 67: Concerns over reconfiguration of the length of term and lack of consultation with early years providers – The concerns had been raised with the Early Years Team and an appropriate response had been provided outlining the reasons for the decision.

6. **Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Monitoring Report 2020/21**

Aly Dena, Senior Finance Analyst at Brent Council and Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council presented a report on the forecast financial position for 2020/21. The position was reported against the budget set in consultation with the

Schools Forum and submitted to the Department for Education on the Section 251 budget return.

The Forum was then invited to raise questions on the report, which focused on a number of key areas as highlighted below:

- In response to a question from the Forum, it was noted that there was a risk of overspend in the High Needs Block if the number of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continued to grow at the same rate as previous years.
- As a result, there was an expected increase in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit due to an expectation that DSG expenditure would exceed income by £4.2 million in 2020/21. As such, the DSG deficit would increase from £4.9 million to £9.1 million by the end of the financial year.
- In response to a question from the Forum, it was noted that many schools were becoming increasingly concerned at demand on schools provision as a result of the growth in the number of EHCPs. The Forum was assured that resourcing and provision is being considered as part of the Banding Review and that particular attention was being given to special school place planning. Immediate actions to expand provision were underway as well as longer-term strategies.
- It was recognised that many mainstream schools, as well as special schools, had engaged with the Council in supporting the development of additionally resourced provision. However, Forum members expressed concern over the funding for additionally resourced provision and the long-term effect this could have on retaining providers.
- In response to a question from the Forum, it was recognised that the number of EHCPs had been rising over a number of years. There was a need for sufficient funding to cover the rising costs associated with special needs provision. The efforts of the Society of London Treasurers to lobby central government on children's services funding was welcomed.
- It was suggested that forecasts for the growth in the number of EHCPs recognise the likely increase in mental health issues as a result of the pandemic.
- It was noted that the funding made available to state-funded mainstream and special needs schools to claim back additional premises and cleaning costs associated with the pandemic was only available for costs incurred during the Easter holiday.
- In response to a question from the Forum, it was noted that schools had submitted claims of up to £104 million nationally. The first batch of funding that was paid out nationally amounted to £58 million, of which Brent schools received £99,000. The value of the second batch of funding was not yet known.
- Concern was raised over the additional costs that would be incurred due to the current lockdown. Schools were encouraged to evidence the level of additional costs so that it could be fed back to central government.

Resolved

1. To note the contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Monitoring Report.

2. That an update regarding the progress of special educational needs provision planning within the borough be provided to members of the Forum at a future meeting. (Action 68: Brian Grady)
3. That officers survey Brent schools in the borough regarding the additional costs incurred due to the current lockdown, so that it could be fed back to central government. (Action 69: Olufunke Adediran)

7. Dedicated Schools Grant Funding Update 2021/22

Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council and Aly Dena, Senior Finance Analyst at Brent Council presented a report on the provisional DSG block funding allocations announced for 2021/22 and the discussions held by the split site funding work group.

The Forum was then invited to raise questions on the report, which focused on a number of key areas as highlighted below:

- In response to a question from the Forum, it was noted that the High Needs Block had received a transfer of 0.5% of the Schools Block income in 2020/21 and that continuing this transfer in 2021/22 would enable potential pressures arising from the growth in the number of EHCPs be mitigated.
- It was noted that the Council was now required to model the growth in the number of EHCPs in the borough. It was in the process of doing so and would bring this modelling to future meetings of the Forum.

Resolved

1. To note the Dedicated Schools Grant Funding Update.
2. That modelling of the growth in the number of EHCPs be provided to members of the Forum at a future meeting. (Action 70: Olufunke Adediran and Aly Dena)
3. That a work plan detailing the actions being taken by officers in regard to the DSG budget be provided to members of the Forum at a later meeting. (Action 71: Brian Grady)

8. Dates of Future Meetings

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following changes to the schedule of future meetings:

Wednesday 9 December 2020 at 6pm to Thursday 10 December 2020 at 6pm (next meeting of the Schools Forum)

Wednesday 20 January 2021 at 6pm to Thursday 21 January 2021 6pm

Wednesday 24 February 2021 at 6pm to Thursday 25 February 2021 at 6pm

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm

M HEISER
Chair