

Brent Schools Forum**Minutes of the Schools Forum held on
Wednesday 18 June 2014 at The Village School****Attended by Members of the Forum:****Governors:**

Mike Heiser - Chair (MH)
Martin Beard (MB)
Titilola McDowell (TMcD)
Herman Martyn (HM)
Helga Gladbaum (HG)
Cllr Lesley Jones (Cllr LJ)
Sue Knowler (SK)
Umesh Raichada (UR)

Head Teachers:

Sylvie Libson – Vice Chair (SL)
Lesley Benson (LB)
Matthew Lantos (ML)
Rose Ashton (RA)
Kay Johnson (KJ)

PRU:

Terry Hoad (TH)

PVI Sector:**Trade Unions:**

Lesley Gouldbourne (LG)

14-19 Partnership:

Marc Jordan (MJ)

Others:**Lead Member (C&F):****Officers:**

Gail Tolley (GT)
Sara Williams (SW)
Ravinder Jassar (RJ)
Norwena Thomas (NT)
Devbai Patel (DP)

**Circulation to all
present plus:**

Terry Molloy, Maxine Henderson, Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman,
Andy Prindiville, Cllr Ketan Sheth, Gill Bal, Paul Russell, Richard
Martyn and Cllr Ruth Moher



ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
	MH opened the Schools Forum at 6.05pm.	
1.0	<u>Apologies</u>	
1.1	Terry Molloy Ribbi Yitzchak Freeman Andy Prindiville Cllr Ketan Sheth Cllr Ruth Moher	
1.2	Changes in Membership	
1.3	MH thanked the leaving members who were Alan Carter, Janice Alexander and Maggie Bart. He welcomed Cllr Ketan Sheth as a Special Academy Governor and Marc Jordan as 14-19 Partnership. Sue Knowler changes her representation from Primary School Advisor to Primary Governor.	
1.4	He welcomed the Strategic Director of Children & Young People, Gail Tolley. GT said she was delighted to be present at her first Schools Forum. She said that she was observing at the first meeting to see how it works in Brent. MH mentioned presumably GT will be comparing with other Authorities' Forums from her past experience. GT said she was leaving the responsibility of the Schools Forum with Sara Williams, Operational Director - Early Help and Education.	
1.5	MH congratulated HM who has been awarded an MBE and everyone applauded to that.	
2.0.	Minutes of the meeting held on 26 th February 2014 and Matters Arising	
2.1	<u>Accuracy</u>	
2.1.1	UR was present at the last Forum.	
2.1.2	The above correction was noted and the minutes were agreed as accurate record.	
2.2	Matters Arising	
2.2.1	<u>Actions Item 1, Benchmarking of End to End process and cost per pupil in processing admission application</u> - SW reported that there are changes in this area of work so the matter was deferred to next meeting.	SW
2.2.2	<u>Actions Item 2, Update on Schools Forum membership vacancies</u> – DP reported that we only have two vacancies which	

were the Nursery School Governor and Primary School Headteacher. DP said a nomination has finally been received for Maintained Secondary School Governor, Richard Herman. He was only appointed on the day and was not able to attend has noted future forum dates in his diary.

2.2.3 Action Item 3, Update on the 3% increase to EYSFF on 2013-14 base rate – This is covered under Agenda Item 3.

2.2.4 Action Item 4, Distribution of Balance of the Education Action Zone balances – This is covered under Agenda Item 5.

2.2.5 Action Item 5, Consultation of Scheme for Delegation - approval of required amendments to the Scheme – This is to be brought to the September's Forum.

2.2.6 Action item 6, Low Carbon Schools Programme Update Report – This is to be brought to the September's Forum.

2.2.7 Action item 7, Provide details of what service is covered by DSG allocation at GBOEC – This is to be presented to the September's Forum.

3.0 Schools Budget 2013-14 Outturn and DSG Update

3.1 NT Presented this report. She referred to Table 2.1 and explained the movement from 2012-13 which was additional £3m. This excludes schools that have converted prior to 31st March 2014 for fair comparison. ML said that AP has asked him to query that St Gregory's School's balance was different to what was actually shown in the report. NT said this school and along with others in italics were estimated as these schools' Year End accounts were not finalised in time and officers were under pressure to meet the deadline to close year end.

3.2 NT said that there were seven schools in deficit. Six schools continue to remain in deficit from 2012-13. Lyon Park Junior School is now out of deficit but Michael Sobell Sinai School has come into deficit. Their issue has been highlighted previously partly due to the new funding arrangements.

3.3 NT continued reporting on the paper and referred to Section 3 of the report. The surplus of £2.7m is ahead of the programme in meeting the Deficit Recovery Plan. This should mean that DSG comes into surplus in 2014-15. Due to the DSG deficit being ahead of the plan, it was confirmed that the 3% increase to the Early Years 2013-14 will be backdated to all 3 and 4 year old providers. DP

3.4 Table 4.1 details 2014-15 DSG after academy recoupmnt. This is subject to change throughout the year due to further conversions.



- The known conversions are Woodfield from 1st April, Gladstone Park from 1st June, Copland from 1st September and North West London Jewish Day School aiming for 1st August. There are further potential conversions which members will be kept updated during the course of the year.
- 3.5 MH asked when Copland converts what will the position be to their deficit. SW said that unfortunately the deficit reverts to the LA. He added presumably this will be top-sliced from DSG? This then impacts on the Deficit Recovery Plan and it was confirmed as yes.
- 3.6 MB asked what safeguards are in place to prevent schools going into deficits. SW said officers have put in a number of policies in place which are covered in the next agenda item. She said Copland is a historical issue and LA has worked very closely with Copland to minimise their deficit and many redundancies have been made to prevent the deficit growing further. It was confirmed that if a school converts to academy and then requires making redundancies, the cost of redundancies would be billed to their respective Local Authority.
- 3.7 MH asked HM if they are pursuing Sinai's position further. HM said they will be losing 6% every year over the next 3 years. They have written to Michael Gove and the continuing to follow it up. SW said that officers had checked and double checked but no errors were identified. SL said the school also made a representation at the Schools Funding Formula Sub Group and no alternative options allowed the school to financially benefit. MH said there isn't anything that Brent can do but it is a government issue. HM said they have had an initial response to say that no school should lose any more than 1.5% which they are not satisfied with.
- 3.8 HM said they would like to raise an issue that affects voluntary aided schools in that they are not eligible to reclaim VAT on the Governors liability of the capital works, whereas academies are able to re-claim. MH said officers should draft a letter to the EFA to raise this concern. NT/DP
- 3.9 Appendix A shows maintained schools balances. SL said that she has a huge carry forward and this is due to a major planned capital project. MH said that only maintained schools balances are presented as they are bounded by the Financial Regulations. This Schools Forum is represented by all types of schools and therefore all balances should be presented as they are in the public domain anyway. ML said it would be for information only and it was confirmed as yes. MH asked everyone if they agreed to this and general consensus was that all agreed. ML said only if we set a caveat



that there will not be long discussions about how fair or unfair it is for academies with high carry forward balances. This was accepted.

- 3.10 The following recommendations were noted and approved:
- a. Note the schools delegated revenue balances for 2013/14;
 - b. Note that a 3% increase in the hourly rate for early years' settings will now be backdated to April 2013;
 - c. Note the outturn for central expenditure elements of the schools budget for 2013/14;
 - d. Note the provisional DSG settlement figures for 2014/15.

4.0 Update on School Policies

4.1 NT presented this report. The report summarises the three policies that have been put in place from 2014-15. These are Licensed Deficit – Revised Policy, Redundancy Funding and Cash Advance – New Policies. She asked to note that there will be other policies being brought to Schools Forum in due course. She said these are already sent out to schools but being brought to Schools Forum retrospectively for comments and any changes that may be applicable.

4.2 **The Licensed Deficit policy** requests schools to come back into balanced budget within 3 years where as previously it was 5 years. The schools will not be permitted to incur further expenditure and will require approval from the LA in order to fill any vacant and new posts. The report requests suggestions for the increase challenge to schools in deficits. This could be that they make a presentation at the Schools Forum. ML disagreed with this and said it was completely inappropriate. He disagreed that this should be imposed on schools. SL agreed with ML.

4.3 GT said she is familiar with an authority that follows this process. She said there are usually a small number of schools with concerns and it gives them opportunity to explain their deficits. She said it is custom practice in a number of Local Authorities for transparency and is something that should be considered.

4.4 SL said she took on a school with £400k deficit and wouldn't have liked it if she had to come to Schools Forum to explain the deficit. She would have had problems persuading the governors. She thought they need to look at the school before asking them to present their deficit to Schools Forum.

4.5 SK said Schools Finance Service should make a report to the

- Schools Forum to inform of the actions that they are taking as it has known that the Deficit Recovery Plan has not worked in the past. RA said that two models should be in place. If the Head is new to the school, they will not know the financial position of the school and cannot be expected to explain to Schools Forum but if the school has an existing head and the school falls into deficit, the Headteacher and the governors should be answerable to this.
- 4.6 TH referred to paragraph 2.7 of the report which suggests that schools in deficit being required to attend Schools Forums to explain their plans and actions in rectifying their deficit. He thought this was over the top. Every time a school has a deficit it has to present a report to Schools Forum. This should only be considered if the deficit continues and is not being managed well.
- 4.7 LB suggested that the Schools Finance Team needs to be watching to be on it as there is a danger of not wanting to be continuing to be challenging colleagues. She recalled after OFSTED the schools were required to attend Town Hall and stand up to be either criticised or congratulated. She agreed that the budget should be balanced but schools doing good or bad, the Forum is not the right place for it
- 4.8 HM said that the Schools Finance Team should be flagging schools where schools are not reducing deficits or are not taking the necessary steps to reduce the deficit. In these cases when Schools Finance Team is not satisfied, bring those to Schools Forum's attention. ML said that schools can be invited if they voluntary wish to attend.
- 4.9 MH concluded the item that Schools Finance Team need to challenge the schools with deficits and report to Schools Forum with updates noting the comments raised by members (as above)..
- 4.10 **Redundancy Policy** is a new policy which is being implemented due to funding changes. It clarifies the position for maintained schools and mirrors the Local Authority's approval process. She referred to the list in item 3.2 where LA will refuse to pay school redundancies and item 3.3 where funding could be considered. No premature retirements will be funded by the LA. Initial approval of the redundancy fund will be from the Operational Director followed by the Chief Finance Officer and Director of Human Resources.
- 4.11 LG made a reference to item 3.3 and said that it should reflect the need to recognise Trade Union's engagement. SW said this is implicit in the redundancy policy where schools are asked to abide by the council change policy. LG said that it would be nice if Trade Union was mentioned specifically. MH asked officers to note the

comments made by LG and consider it where appropriate.

- 4.12 LB acknowledged the policy and was concerned that there is no advice available freely from LA's HR. The school may have to their knowledge followed the policy but not necessarily compliant with the LA's policy. There needed to be a communication strategy in place. SW said that LA models the Managing Changes policy and gives grater clarity about the gatekeeping. LB said her school prefers to follow the Council policy which is not accessible to schools without a charge and is an issue for schools. There are policies that require schools to comply and schools want to comply with but cannot access it. SW said that she will check on the accessibility and provide an update on this. SW/Sanmi Akinlabi
- 4.13 TH referred to paragraph 3.7 which makes a reference to the type of redundancies that will be funded. Is this a legitimate process as the expectations seem to indicate that the schools will meet the cost. SW said that if schools paid redundancy it would end up in a spiral debt. LG asked what LA's redeployment policy means to schools. LB said that the council can redeploy staff whereas schools cannot. SW said for Council staff there is a policy on redeployment and it is implicit rather than explicit but she will check how this applies to schools. SW/Sanmi Akinlabi
- 4.14 ML said that with the external HR service providers, they have an indemnity agreement and schools are assuming that they are following Brent's policies.
- 4.15 UR asked if Brent Partnership can find a broker that can assist schools with this. KJ responded saying that they have looked at this but currently they are focusing on development of school improvements. They are not against it. It has been investigated.
- 4.16 SK said that it's likely that schools would fall foul of going ahead and not consulting and asked if Brent sends out the Gold Book? LB said they have not seen a settlement policy to which NT said she will follow up with Legal. MH invited comments to which there were no further comments. NT
- 4.17 **Cash Advance** This is another new policy which is being put in place as a safeguard in protecting DSG in the event that a school with deficit converts to academy. This is when a school requests cash advance totaling more than £100k which becomes a formal loan. Officers do deter cash advance requests and only considers it when absolutely necessary.

5.0 Distribution of Balance of the Education Action Zone (EAZ)

- 5.1 SW presented this report. This report requests a decision on



allocating the remaining funds from the Education Action Zone. The EAZ commenced in 2001 and closed in 2011. There were seven schools included in this scheme. The amount remaining is £112,480. The view of the members was sought in allocating the balance.

- 5.2 SL suggested it went back into the general pot for reallocation. ML said only on the basis that it is added to Schools Causing Concern pot. It should not be used to top-up other debts. RA felt that it should be distributed to the remaining maintained schools. She felt that the Crests already had their fair share by paying redundancy cost of the person running the EAZ as the Head of that school had the authority to spend. She felt that her school needs it for the additional cost of their building project which she has to defer and retender.
- 5.3 SN thought that the money should be used to support schools causing concern to help schools in position where Chalkhill was previously. HG was of the same opinion that it should be used towards these schools. SK agreed with ML and said it should be used for the purpose it was set up for, schools causing concern.
- 5.4 LB said if distributed to the schools that were part of the scheme, it should not be a straight split. Should be allocated on per pupil basis.
- 5.5 MH invited members to vote for adding the EAZ remaining funds to Schools Causing Concerns pot:
In favour – 11
Against – 3
Abstained – 0

It was therefore agreed to add this funding to Schools Causing Concerns.

6.0 Universal Infants Free School Meals (UIFSM) – Revenue Update

- 6.1 This report provides an update following the release of DfE's Condition of Grant and calculator in May 2014. The first two terms' payments (7/12th) will be indicative estimated on 87% total take up of Infants minus pupils eligible for FSM. The final payment will be adjusted using the average number of pupils taking a meal in October 14 and January 15 Censuses. The 87% take up is an estimate of expected take up. The meals will be funded at £2.30 for 190 school days.
- 6.2 It should be noted that this grant is not ring-fenced for school meals. The allocation is higher than what the schools would pay



- the contractors. The difference is aimed at funding additional supervision staff and equipment.
- 6.3 SL said that she has written to her new Reception parents asking them to apply for free school meals. Most schools will have no idea how many Reception children will receive Pupil Premium. She thought that LA should be writing to schools informing them to do the same. SW thought that leaflets should be launched which explains the funding mechanism.
- 6.4 NT mentioned that schools should consider encouraging 100% uptake on census day as this would be the basis for funding.
- 6.5 The Free School Meals and Pupil Premium leaflets could not be opened by some members and it was requested that this was e-mailed to all as attachments. DP
- 6.6 MH said that £2.30 per meal is not sufficient for kosher meal and asked for it to be raised with the DfE. SW said this has been raised already with DfE but they have not acknowledged this additional cost nor have they said they will consider it. KJ said that they (Special Schools) have to use two meals for pureed meals which means they are absorbing 100% cost of every meal pureed.
- 6.7 SW updated the Forum on the capital funding for UIFSM. The audit process was carried out by the Capital Team and the team is now procuring the equipment orders to have it in by September 2014. SW will obtain update and convey it to schools. SW
- 7.0 Any Other Business**
- 7.1 There were no AOB items to report.
- 7.2 The Forum ended at 7.40pm.

Action Log

No	Action	Completion Date	Owner
1	3% increase on base rate to be paid to all 3 and 4 Year old 2013-14 providers	September 2014	DP
2	Free School Meals and Pupil Premium leaflets to be emailed as attachments	September 2014	DP
3	Benchmarking of End to End process and cost per pupil in processing admissions application	September 2014	SW
4	Update on capital spend on UIFSM	September 2014	SW
5	Follow up with Legal on Gold Book	September 2014	NT
6	Access to Redundancy policy for schools	September 2014	SW/Sanmi Akinlabi
7	Redeployment policy for schools	September 2014	SW/Sanmi Akinlabi
8	Low Carbon Schools Programme Update Report	September 2014	Emily Ashton
9	Scheme for Financing Schools & Schools Finance Regulations	September 2014	NT
10	Provide details of what service is covered by DSG allocation at GBOEC	September 2014 (report is ready but it's been deferred to the next meeting)	Angela Chiswell