



Brent Schools Forum

**Minutes of the Schools Forum held on
Wednesday 17 September 2014 at Queens Park Community School**

Attended by Members of the Forum:

Governors:

Martin Beard (MB)
Herman Martyn (HM)
Helga Gladbaum (HG)
Sue Knowler (SK)
Richard Martyn (RM)

Head Teachers:

Rose Ashton (RA)
Kay Charles (KC)
Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman (YF)
Andy Prindiville (AP)
Terry Molloy (TM)
Sabina Netty (SN)
Gill Bal (GB)

PRU:

PVI Sector:

Paul Russell (PR)

Trade Unions:

Lesley Gouldbourne (LG)

14-19 Partnership:

Lead Member (C&F):

Cllr Ruth Moher (Cllr RM)

Officers:

Sara Williams (SW)
Minesh Patel (MP)
Norwena Thomas (NT)
Devbai Patel (DP)
Emily Ashton (EA) – up to Item 3
Anis Robinson (AR) – up to Item 3

Circulation to all present plus:

Mike Heiser, Sylvie Libson, Cllr Ketan Sheth, Terry Hoad,
Lesley Benson, Matthew Lantos, Cllr Lesley Jones, Titilola
McDowell, Marc Jordan and Umesh Raichada

ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
	MB opened the Schools Forum at 6.05pm.	
1.0	<u>Apologies</u>	
1.1	Mike Heiser Sylvie Libson Cllr Ketan Sheth Terry Hoad Lesley Benson Matthew Lantos Cllr Lesley Jones Titilola McDowell Marc Jordan Umesh Raichada Gail Tolley	
2.0.	Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2014 and Matters Arising	
2.1	<u>Accuracy</u>	
2.1.1	SN was present at the last Forum but had arrived late.	
2.1.2	The above correction was noted and the minutes were agreed as an accurate record.	
2.2	Matters Arising	
2.2.1	<u>Action Item 1, 3% increase on base rate to be paid to all 2013-14 3 & 4 Year Old providers.</u> – DP said this has been calculated and has been authorised for payment. PR said the nurseries have not received it. DP said that Brent has moved to a new finance system and was aware that there were delays and that she would check if this has affected it. She said she could in the meantime provide him with the figures.	
2.2.2	<u>Action Item 2, Free School Meals and Pupil Premium leaflets to be emailed as attachments</u> – DP said these have been emailed. HG said she didn't think she received it and asked for it to be resent to her.	DP
2.2.3	<u>Action Item 3, Benchmarking of End to End process and cost per pupil in processing admission application</u> – SW said that there has not been much progress with this due to the additional work burden in Customer Services so it would remain as an outstanding item.	SW



- 2.2.4 Action Item 4, Update on Capital Spend on UIFSM – SW reported the funding had been spent and while there were some delays, all schools had been able to provide hot meals in line with the Government’s expectation except for one small school. It was acknowledged that the funding was not sufficient to cover all requirements.
- 2.2.5 Action Item 5, Follow up with Legal on Gold Book – Norwena said she not yet had a response from Legal but is following it up. NT
- 2.2.6 Action Items 6 and 7, Access to Model Redundancy Policy for Schools – SW said she followed this up with the HR manager. There are policies which all schools have access to and there are other policies which are only accessible to schools that buy into Schools’ HR support. This is part of the current business model. SW will speak to the head of schools HR since it is anomalous that policies are not available to all schools when Brent is the employer for community schools.
- 2.2.7 Action Item 8, Low Carbon Schools Programme Update – This is on agenda item 3
- 2.2.8 Action Item 9, Consultation of Scheme for Delegation - approval of required amendments to the Scheme – This is on agenda item 5.
- 2.2.9 Action item 10, Provide details of what service is covered by DSG allocation at GBOEC – This report was ready but as the number of attendees was low, and in particular those that requested this item, the report was postponed to the next Forum. SW said it was not time critical and could wait until the next Forum. If members wished, it could be sent out earlier and they agreed to this.
- 2.2.10 Action Item 11 (Paragraph 3.8 from minutes), VAT, officers to raise with EFA why VA schools are not exempted from paying VAT on the governors liability of capital funding and Academies are exempted – DP said that this has not been followed up yet. MB reminded officers that the Chair asked at the last meeting that a letter be drafted and said he would sign it. NT/DP
- 2.2.11 Action Item 12 (Paragraph 6.6 from minutes), School Meals budget – officers to raise with EFA that £2.30 per meal should be increased for meals that have to pureed and for kosher meals – This has not been followed up (although representations were made when the scheme was first announced). Officers will follow it up and provide update at the next meeting. NT/DP



3.0 Low Carbon Schools Programme Update

- 3.1 EA presented the report introducing herself and the Energy Manager, AR. She reminded members that this is a year two update of the report which was brought to the Forum last year and provided update on savings achieved by schools on energy bills and CRC. She highlighted the targets set for the project and how some of these targets have been exceeded leading to financial benefits from energy bills and CRC tax reduction. The officers have spoken with the senior officers in CYP and it was confirmed that in the future this programme could only be funded on a school by school basis i.e. as a traded service. However the Low Carbon Schools programme web page, which offers advice and tools to assist in energy management, will continue to be hosted on Schools Extranet and is available to all of the boroughs schools.
- 3.2 HG asked that if the funding is not top-sliced from DSG, how will the service be supported financially and EA said through schools funding it from their own delegated budget i.e. on buy back basis
- 3.3 AR provided information on developing the service to enable schools to buy into it. She mentioned Ben Young who worked for the LA as a consultant and has set up his own service to work closely with a couple of Borough's schools. He has tailored his service to meet the requirements of three schools which were on a draft poster. One of them is Malorees Infant School which has no caretaker and Ben is assisting with the maintenance of the boiler contract and general heating controls. His service is tailored to suit individual schools' needs for a fee of £1,170 per annum. One of the schools has recouped savings of 15% in the first six months.
- 3.4 The schools have an option of taking an interest free loan supported by Salix Finance. This allows schools to pay back in five years which could be easily funded from the energy savings it makes. The first payment is deferred so that the repayment starts in the second year. This is a GLA refit programme which is currently supporting an expanding school and 6 corporate buildings. The programme has a £1m investment aiming to achieve 23% savings. It's a guaranteed framework service where the provider pays back the money. She suggested if schools are looking into savings on energy bills they should speak to Ben Young.
- 3.5 MB concluded this item saying that this is the end of the programme and it will now become a traded service. He thanked the Energy Manager and asked her to circulate to all schools the final version of the poster when finalised.

4.0 Funding Arrangements for 2015-16

4.1 SW introduced this item and said that this paper should be viewed positively. Brent is one of the authorities that will receive additional funding of at least £11m to be passed on to schools. Officers will be creating scenarios for distribution and bringing them to the Schools Funding Sub Group followed by the Schools Forum in October.

4.2 SW added that there will be further changes on the High Needs Block which are detailed in the Appendices attached. The DfE have consulted on Early Years funding, Pupil Premium grant and the changes proposed to 3&4 year funding. It was confirmed that non recoupment academies will be brought into the Local Authorities' funding formula and therefore from 2015-16 the academies will not be differentiated as recoupment and non recoupment in terms of funding. Free schools will also be brought into the funding formula but from the second year after opening. The EFA will fund Free Schools in the first year of opening.

4.3 HG raised the issue of PVLs reluctance to take on 2 year olds, and asked whether the WEG rates paid to settings could be renewed.

4.4 PR said that PVLs have problems admitting 2 year old NEG funded children. There are concerns on quality and security. Also the staff time required in changing the number of nappies making it uneconomical. In addition, the Local Authority requires a significant level of paperwork in particular Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which requires additional time for families with problems. He said there is a definite need for the Schools Forum to review the rates.

4.5 HG referred to February 2013 report brought to the Schools Forum on 'Consultation on the proposals for funding the free entitlement for two year olds for 2013/14' She asked if an update can be provided on this. HG thanked the Chair for allowing her to raise this additional issue.

SW/Sue
Gates

4.6 LG asked if the ESG provides funding to the Music Service. SW said that the service is funded with a combination of both a small degree of ring-fenced grant but majority of its funding is as a traded service

4.7 HM asked if the funding issue with Sinai could be considered again. He recognised that it is treated fairly in line with the new Funding Formula and that there were no mechanisms to divert additional money to Sinai but he requested if any new mechanics of distributing funding could be considered to enable Sinai to benefit

as well.

- 4.8 SW said that there is a large piece of work being done on the formula in order to present the budgets to Schools Forum. She said it is important to get it right and there will be an opportunity to work at the detail and consequences for each school.

5.0 Scheme for Financing Schools & Schools Financial Regulations

- 5.1 NT presented this report. She said that the Scheme for Financing Schools and Schools Financial Regulations are statutory documents. The Scheme for Financing Schools requires approval of the Schools Forum. These are only applicable to maintained schools including PRU's as they also now have delegated budget. She referred to Item 1.5 of the report which detailed the changes to the previous scheme. Some parts of the document have already been consulted on and approved i.e. the Licensed Deficit policy.
- 5.2 The second document is more detailed and is in line with the Council's Financial Regulations. The Schools Forum is being consulted on this document.
- 5.3 SK said she had not read it thoroughly but it would be helpful in particular to those with finance responsibility to highlight what the changes are and, in addition, provide some training or workshops. She referred to Item 2.17 on fraud where it indicates that all schools must have a robust system of controls to safeguard themselves against fraudulent or improper use of public money and assets. She said there needs to be specific guidance to schools on what the robust system looks like. NT said that further information is provided on Schools Extranet and training sessions are arranged. She said there were two audit courses on fraud prevention arranged but there was no expression of interest therefore the courses were cancelled. The courses would be pushed to bursars and through the headteachers' bulletin.
- 5.4 KC said that while the guidance set out what is expected of the schools, expectations of the LA were not clear. The council's adherence to its own procedures and regulations was audited.
- 5.5 RA queried the quality of Audits as some school staff have committed fraud at schools have passed audits. NT said that Audit has been consulted on these regulations. She added that these Regulations mirror the national guidance which LAs and the schools are required to follow.
- 5.6 MB said in some cases it would be impossible to follow these regulations as there is not a sufficient number of staff to segregate



duties. YF agreed as his school experiences this. HG said Governors at schools have a responsibility to ensure that fraud is not committed. It is useful to have a protocol. TM said even if schools do not commit fraud, it is easy to make mistakes, particularly for small schools and therefore it is useful to have guidelines to follow to protect staff.

- 5.7 KC asked who is monitoring the quality of Audit as she has taken the view that the school next door with poor management gets the same rating as a good school with proper management systems. She felt that the audit reports are “cut & paste” from one school to another and not reflecting the actual school position. Also the reports have grammatical errors and are poorly written. She asked who was reading them to compare. Can schools give feedback?

- 5.8 SW said she would pursue this with the Head of Audit.

SW

- 5.11 MB concluded this item and asked the maintained schools’ representatives to vote on whether or not to approve these Regulations.

The votes were:

For - 9

Against – 0

Abstained – 0

The Scheme for Financing Schools Regulations were therefore approved, with no objections to Schools Financial Regulations.

6.0 Any Other Business

- 6.1 HG asked if the school expansions will take place in time to address the demand of school places. SW said that some expansion projects are proceeding slowly due to procurement issues. These delays will not affect Brent in the shorter term as places are available for another year.

- 6.2 SW wanted to inform members in an informal way to highlight that there could be some service cuts that effect schools directly as well as the other service areas in the Council. The Council is required to make cuts in 2015-16 of £53m from the General Fund. She said that the Council looks at everything that it funds, and school crossing patrols were cited as an example where schools would have to pick up the bill if the service were to continue and decides what services can be reduced. SN said her school has not had school crossing patrol for 2 years and her school is on the hill. SK said that everybody will argue if particular cuts are proposed but if the Council is clear about its choices then schools can decide on the lesser of the evils. HG asked if members can email officers with suggestion on areas where there could be savings. SW said yes



those would be welcomed. GB said it was good that SW was sharing the issues with the Schools Forum in advance.

- 6.3 A nomination to represent at the Schools Funding Sub Group was requested to fill the vacancy. HM and HG both agreed but HG was happy for HM to represent. HM was therefore nominated as a primary governor.
- 6.4 The Forum ended at 8.00pm



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	Sept 14	DP
2	Free School Meals and Pupil Premium leaflets to be emailed as attachments	Sept 14	DP
3	Benchmarking of End to End process and cost per pupil in processing admissions application	Sept 14	SW
4	Write to EFA to why the VA schools are not exempted from paying VAT on the governors liability of capital funding and Academies are exempted	Sept 14	SW
5	School Meals budget – officers to raise with EFA that £2.30 per meal should be increased for meals that have to pureed and for kosher meals	Sept 14	SW
6	Follow up with Legal on the settlement agreement policy	Sept 14	NT
7	Provide details of what service is covered by DSG allocation at GBOEC	Sept 14	Angela Chiswell

December 2014 / January 2015 Forums

8	Review of NEG 3&4 hourly rates	Dec 14/ Jan 15	Sue Gates
9	Update on funding the free entitlement for two year olds	Dec 14/ Jan 15	Sue Gates
10	Wembley Learning Zone – DSG Funding request for 2015-16	Dec 14/ Jan 15	John Gallagher
11	De-Delegation - Free School Meals Eligibility Assessments	Dec 14/ Jan 15	Carmen Coffey
12	De-Delegation - Staff Cost Supply Cover, Licenses/Subscriptions and Trade Union Facilities Time	Dec 14/ Jan 15	NT
13	Schools Causing Concerns - DSG Funding request for 2015-16	Dec 14/ Jan 15	John Gallagher

14 2015-16 Growth Funding and Pupils Out of School Places

Dec 14/ Carmen
Jan 15 Coffey

15 Review of SEN Band 6

Dec 14/ Carmen
Jan 15 Coffey