

**Minutes of the fifth meeting of the Schools Forum held at Brent Town Hall  
at 6.00 p.m. on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2004**

**Attendance**

**Members of the Forum**

**Governors**

Countess Mariaska Romanov  
Carol Beavis-Smith  
Rochelle Hausman  
Pat Anderson  
Joyce Bacchus  
Mike Heiser (Chair)

**Head Teachers**

Martin Earley  
Judy Edwards  
Vivienne Orloff  
Sylvie Libson  
Kathy Heaps  
Sue Knowler  
Terry Molloy  
Mike Maxwell

**Others**

Lesley Benson (EYDCP)  
Tony Vaughan (T Union)

**Observers**

Cllr. Michael Lyon – Lead Member Education Arts and Libraries

**Officers**

John Christie	Director of Education
Martin Stratford	Assistant Director of Education
Rik Boxer	Assistant Director of Education
Roger Annan	Education Financial Services (minutes)

**Apologies** for absence received from Tommy Masters (Learning and Skills Council)

It was noted that the arrangements for electing to the vacant primary governor place were well underway. There were eight nominations for the vacancy and the result of the election would be available by the end of March.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2003 and matters arising from them**

It was noted that the meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2004 had been abandoned due to the bad weather.

There were two matters arising:

School journey advice was being finalised and should be issued shortly.

The PTR modelling had been undertaken and a paper had been circulated.

### **3. DfES Circular “What Schools Forums Need to Do”**

Martin took the Forum through a paper from the DfES explaining the role of the Forum. It was noted that all the issues raised in the paper had been addressed by the Forum.

### **4. Funding Formula review 2004-05**

Martin went through the changes to the formula that had been agreed by the Councils Executive on 9<sup>th</sup> February. Because of the cancellation of the previous meeting, it had not been possible to consult the Forum formally on all the issues, but Martin had written to all Forum Members explaining what was being proposed to the Executive and inviting comments. He had received no such comments.

The position with regard to the dispensation application was discussed. Martin circulated a copy of the latest letter from the DfES. The LEA had decided to accept the decision and was not proposing to appeal further. Because the DfES letter had been received after the Executive Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February, the final decision on the ISB would be left for the Council meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March. The likely outcome was that an additional £663,000 would be added to the devolved budget. This would produce an overall increase (excluding LSC funding) of around 6.4%.

The other decision that would need to be taken by the Council meeting would be how to allocate the extra funding. It could simply be used to increase the weighted pupil values overall, or it could be directed more specifically. In this regard, Martin introduced his paper on primary/secondary funding differentials and these were noted.

In relation to the allocation of non-statemented SEN funding, discussion of action and action plus variations took place and several members recorded their support for the proposed audit system especially for those with over 30% of pupils in these categories. The proposals were supported.

The increase from £100,000 to £500,000 in the allocation to the social deprivation factor and the implementation of the £1,000 floor were supported.

The Chair proposed and, after discussion the Forum agreed:

- (a) that the additional funding now available as a result of the DfES decision on the dispensation application should be applied to the primary sector;
- (b) to support a study as suggested by the Director of Education into needs-led funding, including the costs of workforce reform, being set up; and,
- (c) to confirm that the goal of the Forum for school funding should be to maintain for secondary and achieve for primary pupil funding at least at the London average for the 2005-06 financial year and to move in incremental steps towards achieving the Inner London average over the next few years.

Martin undertook to model the primary and secondary funding per pupil comparison with the Inner London average over the past four years.

## **5. 2004/05 Budget Issues**

These had largely been covered under the previous item and included:

- debate on primary secondary funding needs
- workforce reform issues
- comparison with other London and Inner London LEAs

Rik introduced a tabled paper on the School Development Grant – a 2004/05 standards fund grant and asked for the Forum's views on the proposed central holdback of part of the funding in order to maintain central support for SEN issues and suggested a further £55,000 be retained for the primary social inclusion project making a total holdback of £235,000 of the £2,930,573 allocated for this fund. Any central hold back from this allocation required the support of the Schools Forum. After debate the Forum agreed to support these suggestions as set out in Rik's paper.

Martin outlined the forthcoming changes to Local Authorities' capital borrowing requirements and explained that Brent was developing a scheme that would enable its schools to take advantage of the extra flexibility that would be available to Local Authorities. There were still some legal and financial issues to be clarified before the scheme could be finalised, but it was hoped to have the scheme in place in the near future and schools would be notified as soon as it was ready. Council Members were very supportive of the scheme. Some members of the Forum expressed nervousness about long-term capital debt being amassed by individual schools but noted the prudential requirements of the scheme. Martin said that work with legal and financial colleagues was continuing and the scheme would include a ceiling to the amount that could be borrowed. The Forum endorsed this approach.

## **6. Building Schools for the Future (BSF)**

The forum noted that the Authority had submitted a bid to be included in the second wave of BSF approvals. A decision was still awaited on this.

## **7. Standard School Year**

This issue was deferred from the previous meeting. The Forum considered the briefing paper and noted the support of the ALG for a London wide scheme. Discussion about the possible impact of the changes on schools with a religious foundation took place. The Forum agreed to support the six term year provided that it was applied across London.

## **8. Training for Forum Members**

This item had been put on the agenda at the request of Forum members at the previous meeting. Governor representatives stressed the imbalance in background knowledge between governors and heads. Martin was happy to take forward suggestions and would be facilitating information for future members of the Forum. The Chair suggested the posting of the papers for School Forum meetings on the EAL web site and Martin said that this was being progressed. The Chair and Martin were happy to answer requests for background information from Forum members by phone or email.

## **9. Any other business**

Tony raised the issue of the funding of trade union representation. He suggested an additional amount of £50,000 per year was needed to allow costs of covering union representatives to attend meetings in school time. It was agreed in principle as a bid for growth in the 2005/06 budget.

## **10. Time, date and venue of the next meeting**

It was agreed to hold the next meeting on **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2004 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Town Hall but not in the Council Chamber.

The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

RA 24.02.04