

Minutes of the ninth meeting of the Schools Forum held at Brent Town Hall at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 9th February 2005

Attendance

Members of the Forum

Governors

Pat Anderson
Joyce Bacchus
Stephen Greene
Rochelle Hausman
Mike Heiser (Chair)

Head Teachers

Gerald Davidson
Martin Earley
Kathy Heaps
Sue Knowler
Sylvie Libson
Mike Maxwell

Others

Lesley Benson (EYDCP)
Tommy Masters (LSC)
Tony Vaughan (Trade Union)
Francoise Harris (Capital City Academy)

Councillors

Cllr. Michael Lyon – Lead Member Education Arts and Libraries

Officers

John Christie	Director of Education, Arts and Libraries
Martin Stratford	Assistant Director of Education
Roger Annan	Education Financial Services (minutes)

Apologies for absence received from Carol Bevis-Smith, Eamonn Doherty, Countess Mariaska Romanov, Terry Molloy, Vivienne Orloff and Corinne Van Colle.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th December 2004 and matters arising from them

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with two clarifications – in the introductory paragraph of item 2 on page one of the minutes, the item referred to was the best value review of Special Education Needs; and on page 5 under item 5, the comment about Vernon House related to the high proportion of out Borough children on the roll of the school.

The following matters arose from the minutes:

BSF Martin reported that a meeting was scheduled for the following Tuesday with the DfES to discuss with the DfES the Borough's position within the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Loan Scheme for Schools Martin reported that details of the finance available for this scheme awaited the decisions of the Executive on the Capital Programme.

Non-Statemented SEN There had not been enough time to issue definitive guidance on categorising pupils into Action and Action Plus before returns were required for this year's budget but this will be done next year.

Training Martin was thanked by the Chair for the excellent session he had run recently attended by several members of the Forum.

SEN Review A revised consultative document will be circulated widely after half term. Responses will be requested by half term in the summer term allowing a whole term for consideration of responses.

Gershon Review There had been two meetings of the group of heads and officers (including heads who are members of the Forum) considering responses to the Gershon Report and as a result a paper has been produced on possible efficiency savings. This will go to officers and then to the meeting of head teachers and the Director in March. It was expected that this would be brought to the Forum in July.

3. Workforce Reform

David Maton, Jeff Smith and Chris Harris of the Borough Workforce Remodelling Team attended this part of the meeting to make a presentation on Workforce Reform. The Chair in introducing the item reminded members that the Forum was responsible for advising the Council on funding issues and that workforce reform was a major financial issue.

The team gave a presentation on the workforce reform process and some idea of the likely financial pressures and then took comments and answered questions.

The Chair asked how could governors and heads benchmark how much provision they would need to provide PPA time. Jeff Smith said this would depend on how much flexibility currently existed and how the school had decided to provide PPA time. The Workforce Remodelling Team could provide help and advice to schools individually on these issues.

Tony Vaughan reported the concerns of the support staff unions (GMB and UNISON). They felt they had not been properly consulted and that job evaluations have been too low, in particular the level 3 work they would undertake had not been recognised. They were also concerned if they undertook HLTA (higher level teaching assistant) training there was no guarantee such work would be available. Concern was expressed that the group working on job descriptions did not include union representation. Jeff Smith said there was a consultative group with all Unions represented, and that draft job descriptions were with Human Resources who were evaluating them. Chris Harris said there were vacancies on HLTA training courses.

Lesley Benson expressed concern about the financial implications, support staff were not really being paid for level of work they were doing currently.

Mike Maxwell stressed strongly that Leadership Team members should not be used to deliver PPA as this would mean they could not perform their leadership role properly. He thought that the LEA would need two to three million pounds to pay for proper cover of PPA time.

John Christie reminded the Forum that extra finance over inflation was being made available for 2005-06 with more going to primary than secondary as the latter already have non-contact time. Governing Bodies needed to decide the best solutions for their schools.

The Chair said that it was up to Governing Bodies to decide. The remodelling team could provide support but not make decisions or promote a particular course of action.

Stephen Green asked if there was computerised support for calculations for the cost of providing PPA time. David Maton said the disc provided with the packs circulated at the start of the meeting provided this. Stephen asked if there were sufficient people available for the recruitment needs of implementing workforce reform. Jeff Smith said one of the benefits of workforce reform would be to make teaching more attractive and gave an example of how it had helped recruitment for his own school. He added that given the need for more teachers arising from retirements over the next few years it was important that the reforms succeeded.

Lesley Benson and Sue Knowler expressed concerns about funding issues. Sue said that whilst good will might ease the situation initially long term reliance on it would be counter productive.

The Chair suggested that the Forum should keep Workforce Reform under review and might conduct a survey in twelve months time. He thanked the team for their presentation and help. Martin reminded the meeting that help was available from the team and Education Finance and the headteacher support officers.

4. Funding formula and Budget 2005/06

Martin introduced documents 2 and 3. Two models of possible funding for 2005-06 were provided. Model 1 incorporated the funding formula changes recommended by the Forum at its December meeting. Model 2 showed the effect of using £500,000 of the additional money available specifically for the primary sector. A report would go to the Council's Executive on Monday of next week recommending that the Executive adopt the Forum's formula changes as agreed in December. The Executive would choose which model to adopt and would have the minutes and recommendations of the current Forum meeting.

Martin explained that the models were based on the September 04 pupil figures and these would be updated when the January 2005 PLASC figures became available. He told the Forum that Menorah had withdrawn its application for Voluntary Aided status. As a result the ISB will reduce by £314k, but there will be approximately £100k available for other schools. The LEA will still passport in full.

Document 3 provided three areas of information.

1. The number of schools across London in deficit – this brought out some points but was not as useful as hoped
2. A comparison of models 1 and 2 and a comparison to 2004-05. This excludes sixth form funding and new schools.
3. A table showing the variations between schools created by the two models.

Martin explained that the 12% increase for nursery arose from the new treatment of action and action plus in the non-statemented SEN factor. The use of protection in 2004/05 had significantly disadvantaged this sector. The amount of cash involved was relatively low.

Mike Maxwell said the disparity between Brent and London showed that we are moving backwards. Although the percentage increase on paper looked good we needed to remember that Brent was starting from a lower level and that there were considerable costs arising from PPA and remodelling support staff structures. He asked if more money could be found by the Executive, and why the Council Tax increase was being kept below the 5% capping level. Michael Lyon said he noted the points being made but the setting of the Council budget followed a process and it was necessary to balance all the other service demands on the Council. Recent Council tax increases had been above government expectations. He also pointed out that the overall ISB increase between 2004/05 and 2005/06 was, at 7.53%, well above inflation.

Sylvie Libson and Mike Maxwell said that model 2 was robbing Peter to pay Paul and that it was invidious to take money from one sector to meet the needs of another.

Martin Earley made two points – how much consultation had taken place on model 2 and the discrepancy between the effects of the formula on individual schools. He said that the secondary schools with the most disadvantaged pupils appeared to be getting the smallest increases. It was perverse that the effect was to disadvantage the disadvantaged, he said.

Martin Stratford said that the effect of the updating of the formula with the latest PLASC figures over the years had tended to benefit the secondary sector, but there was no guarantee that this would happen again this year.

Stephen Green stressed the importance of moving towards the London average. John Christie explained that the increases for JFS and Wembley High arose from increased pupil numbers.

Rochelle Haussman felt the meeting should not vote between the two models. Sue Knowler felt the Council should provide more finance because they would have to in the future when the DfES introduced the Dedicated Schools Budget (DSB) in 2006/07. John Christie explained that the effect on FSS of the DSB would impact on the Council's other services.

Kathy Heaps suggested that if model 2 was favoured, the 100k resulting from Menorah withdrawing its applications should be allocated to the secondary sector.

The Chair put the matter to the meeting and the following resolution was agreed

In relation to the 2005-06 schools budget, the Schools Forum resolves:

1. To re-iterate the decision of the Forum in February 2004 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.”
2. That the Schools Forum requests the Council's Executive to make every effort to fund the additional resources required to put extra money into the Individual

Schools Budget in 2005-06 above the passporting level so that schools can fully meet the cost pressures facing them in 2005/06.

3. That if the additional funding referred to in (2) above is not forthcoming, to agree to revise the Weighted Pupil values in the 2005/06 funding formula so as to move £500,000 into the primary sector and to increase the secondary Weighted Pupil values so as to allocate the additional £100,000, generated by the decision of Menorah school not to seek VA status, into the secondary sector.

(The third element of this resolution was agreed by a vote: 6 for, 4 against and 3 abstentions)

Martin asked the Forum to agree to the LEA holding back approximately £200k from Standards Grant 1 for training (particularly for SEN) in 2005-06, the figure being the same cash sum as had been agreed by the Forum for 2004-05. This was agreed.

Martin also informed the meeting that one effect of the introduction of the Dedicated Schools Budget arrangements from 2006-07 would be that any under spend on the non devolved element of the budget would be carried forward within the DSB year on year.

5. Children's Centre Funding

This item was postponed to the next meeting of the Forum. It was agreed that it would be taken as the first item at that meeting.

6. Cost of statementing/Benchmark Data

This item was postponed to the next meeting of the Forum.

7. LSC Funding

This item was postponed to the next meeting of the Forum.

8. Any other business

No time was available for this item.

9. Time, date and venue of the next meetings

Due to pressure of business it was agreed to hold an additional meeting of the Forum and the dates of the next two meetings were agreed. The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 20th April 2005** with the Children's Centre Funding item taken first. The second meeting will be on **Tuesday 12th July 2005**. The venues for both meetings have yet to be confirmed (the April meeting will definitely not be at the Town Hall) They will commence as usual at 6.00 p.m., with refreshments provided at 5.45 p.m.

The meeting closed at 8.05 p.m.

RA 10.2.05