



MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Held as an online virtual meeting on Thursday 21 January 2021 at 6.00 pm

Membership

Representing

PRESENT (all in remote attendance):

Governors	Mike Heiser (Chair) Martin Beard Geraldine Chadwick (Vice-Chair) Michael Odumuso Tim Jones Narinder Nathan Michael Maurice
Headteachers	Melissa Loosemore Danny Coyle Michelle Ginty Gerard McKenna Raphael Moss Jude Enright Andy Prindville Nisha Lingam
Trade Union	John Roche
Officers	Dena Aly Olufunke Adediran Brian Grady James Kinsella Craig Player Sharon Buckby Kamaljit Kuar Sasi Srinivasan
Councillors	Stephens (Lead Member for Schools, Employment & Skills) Mili Patel (Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care)

1. Election of Vice-Chair

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Geraldine Chadwick as the Vice-Chair of the Schools Forum.

2. **Apologies for Absence and Membership**

Apologies were received from Lesley Benson (Nursery Head), Ranjna Shiyani (Pupil Referral Unit) and Jo Jhally (Academy Primary Governor). Lesley Benson was substituted by Nisha Lingam.

Jude Enright (Academy Secondary Head) was introduced as a newly appointed member of the Forum.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

4. **Deputations (if Any)**

None.

5. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 05 November 2020 as a correct record.

6. **Actions arising**

Action 68: SEN provision planning – An update would be given under Item 7: Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget 2021/22 to be considered later on the agenda.

Action 69: Additional costs incurred due the pandemic - An update would be given under Item 7: Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget 2021/22 to be considered later on the agenda.

Action 70: EHCPs growth modelling - An update would be given under 9: Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan to be considered later on the agenda.

Action 71: DSG budget work plan - An update would be given under Item 7: Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget 2021/22 to be considered later on the agenda.

7. **Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget 2021/22**

Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council introduced a report on the proposed Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget ahead of the Council budget being set and approved by Full Council.

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

- It was noted that in the proposed funding formula, 50 of the 87 schools required a minimum funding guarantee of 0.5% which ensured that per pupil funding increased by this proportion.

- The budget proposed that there be a transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to mitigate the growing number of children with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs). While in agreement, the Forum did note that an extra 10% of funding had already been allocated for the High Needs Block for 2021/22.
- In response to a question from the Forum, it was suggested that a more detailed breakdown of the DSG contribution to central services to fund education functions and an update on the CAFAI projects funding be provided at the next meeting of the Forum.
- It was confirmed that the de-delegated expenditure on staff supply cover costs was in relation to parental leave. There had been a consistent increase in the number of schools applying for this funding over the past three years and so it was proposed that the budget increased to £0.28 million to meet current spending levels.

Resolved

- 1. To approve the proposed de-delegation arrangements set out within the report.**
- 2. To approve the transfer of £1.2m (0.5%) from the Schools Block to support the High Needs Block.**
- 3. To recommend the budget for the DSG blocks, including the mainstream funding formula, to the Council.**
- 4. That a breakdown of the DSG contribution to central services to fund education functions and an update on the CAFAI projects funding be provided at the next meeting of the Forum. (Action 72: Dena Aly and Olufunke Adediran)**

8. Early Years National Funding Formula 2021/22

Dena Aly, Senior Finance Analyst at Brent Council introduced a report on the local Early Years Funding Formula 2021/22, which needed to be set following the confirmation of the Early Years Block DSG funding for the borough.

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 regarding the allocation of funds from the Specialist Nursery Panel to children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) or children in need (CIN), it was suggested that information on its spend over the 2020/21 financial year be provided at a later meeting of the Forum.
- It was also suggested that the eligibility criteria for children with SEND and CIN to access funding from the Specialist Nursery Panel be included in the next headteacher's bulletin and that information on how it was reviewed and monitored be provided at a later meeting of the Forum.
- The Forum sought clarification over the provisional decrease in allocation of maintained nursery school supplementary funding from £0.75 million in

2020/21 to £0.717 million in 2021/22. Concern was raised over this change, and the Forum was reassured that the Council was lobbying the Department for Education (DfE) to ensure this concern was taken into consideration.

- It was suggested that the funding formula ensured as much funding allocation was transferred through to private, voluntary and independent childcare providers (PVI) as possible, with the central spend being as minimal as it could be for effective administration. It was confirmed that central spend had indeed been set at a minimum, and that the allocation of funding to PVI was regularly reviewed by the Early Years Funding Sub-Group.

Resolved

- 1. To endorse Brent's Early Years Funding Formula for 2021/22.**
- 2. That information on the Specialist Nursery Panel's spend over the 2020/21 financial year be provided at a later meeting of the Forum. (Action 73: Dena Aly and Olufunke Adediran)**
- 3. That the eligibility criteria for children with SEND and CIN to access funding from the Specialist Nursery Panel be included in the next headteacher's bulletin. (Action 74: Brian Grady)**
- 4. That information on how the eligibility criteria for children with SEND and CIN to access funding from the Specialist Nursery Panel is reviewed and monitored be provided at a later meeting of the Forum. (Action 75: Dena Aly and Olufunke Adediran)**

9. Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan

Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council and Sharon Buckby, Head of Inclusion and Brent Virtual School at Brent Council introduced a report on the preparation of the DSG Deficit High Needs Block Management Plan.

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 suggested that a proposed timetable of the actions to be taken to mitigate the High Needs Block deficit and the potential affect these actions be provided at the next meeting of the Forum.
- It was noted that a number of actions were being taken to expand the range of local placement options for children with SEND and reduce the need for high cost independent sector placements. The Forum agreed that local provision should remain a key consideration in any actions taken to mitigate the deficit.
- One action highlighted was the establishment of a new banding criteria to allocate funding and additional support into SEND support. It was suggested that any proposals be informed by a comparison with other local authorities.
- In regard to the consultation process for the establishment of a banding criteria for the allocation of funds and additional support into SEN support, it

was noted that the consultation process would be undertaken through a variety of communication routes. The Forum was encouraged to engage widely with their colleagues regarding the proposals and share their views through the appropriate channels.

- In response to a question regarding Roundwood Alternative Provision School, it was noted that it was opening to its first cohort this month. This first cohort would be on a six-week respite basis and the provision would offer combined curriculum and therapeutic interventions.
- Regarding the financial impact of forecast trends of EHCP numbers, it was noted that officers were continuing to look closely at the possible financial impacts. The Forum was assured that any modelling would take into consideration the variation in the cost of EHCPs and the point at which EHCPs were ceased.

Resolved

- 1. To note the DSG High Needs Block deficit management plan proposals.**
- 2. That a proposed timetable of the actions to mitigate the High Needs Block deficit and the potential affect these actions would have be provided at the next meeting of the Forum. (Action 76: Olufunke Adediran and Sharon Buckby)**

10. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

The meeting closed at 7.13pm

M HESIER
Chair