



Brent

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Held as an online virtual meeting on Thursday 17 June 2021 at 6.00 pm

Membership

Representing

PRESENT (all in remote attendance):

Governors	Martin Beard Geraldine Chadwick (Vice-Chair – in the chair) Michael Odumuso Jo Jhally Angela Turner
Headteachers	Melissa Loosemore Danny Coyle Gerard McKenna Jayne Jardine Andy Prindiville Danny Coyle Nick Cooper
Trade Union	John Roche
PRU	Ranjna Shiyani
Early Years PVI	Paul Russell Wioletta Bura
Officers	Olufunke Adediran Brian Grady James Kinsella Craig Player Sharon Buckby Folake Olufeko Kamaljit Kaur
Councillors	Stephens (Lead Member for Schools, Employment & Skills)

1. **Apologies for Absence and Membership**

Apologies were received from Mike Heiser (Chair) Councillor Mili Patel, Narinder Nathan, Michelle Ginty, Raphael Moss and Lesley Benson. Lesley Benson was substituted by Nisha Lingam.

Geraldine Chadwick advised that as the Chair had submitted his apologies for the meeting she would undertake this role (as Vice-Chair) for the meeting. The Forum

was then advised that Michael Maurice, Tim Jones and Lesley Benson would be stepping down from their roles as members later in the month with members thanking them for their contribution during their time on the Forum. The Chair then welcomed the following new members to the Forum, Angela Turner, who had been elected as a Nursery Governor representative and Nick Cooper, who had been elected as a Special Educational Needs representative.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3. **Deputations (if Any)**

None.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 February 2021 as a correct record.

5. **Actions arising**

Action 77: Costings for High Needs Block mitigation strategies – An update would be given under item 7 – Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block Management Update

Action 78: Value for money considerations and resource allocation under the Banding Review – An update would be given under item 8 – High Needs Block Budget 2021/22 Update

Action 79: Brent Graduated Approach – An update would be given under item 8 – High Needs Block Budget 2021/22 Update

Action 80: Time limited EHCPs - An update would be given under item 7 – Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block Management Update

6. **Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Outturn 2021/22**

Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council, introduced the report on the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn report against the budget for the 2020/21 year and the in-year 2020/21 £5.6 million deficit.

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

- The DSG budget had an in-year deficit of £5.6m in 2020/21, which was an improvement from the previous forecast position reported to the Forum. The position was primarily due to a £6.2m deficit on the High Needs block mainly because of demand led pressures on top-up funding to mainstream settings, residential and independent settings, and post-16 providers.
- Members noted that receipt of funding was slow compared to previous financial years.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

7. **Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block Management Plan Update**

Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council and Sharon Buckby, Head of Inclusion and Virtual School Headteacher at Brent Council, introduced the report on the DSG 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:

- It was noted that the Council would work with current school clusters to explore with schools how needs could be best met locally, focusing on increasing SEND capacity in mainstream through Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs). Seven primary schools and two secondary schools had come forward and feasibility studies were currently underway.
- In response to a question regarding the Roe Green Strathcona site, it was noted that the site would be fully closed by the end of July 2022. Post-16 development had been considered as an alternative use for the site.
- The projected in-year forecast for 2024-5 and 2025-6 would have a surplus. This was seen as a working estimate and subject to change. The in-year position would be reviewed on a monthly basis.
- In response to a question regarding the establishment of a new special school in Brent with a proposed 150 places, it was accepted that the provision was needed but would not fully meet projected demand. Alternative options such as expanding existing special schools were also under consideration. Feasibility studies for the new special school would be undertaken and presented to Cabinet for approval later in the year.

It was **RESOLVED**

- (1). To note the contents of the report.
- (2). That an update on school place planning for children with SEND be provided at a future meeting of the Forum. (**Action 81: Brian Grady**)

8. **High Needs Block Budget 2021/22 Update**

Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council and Sharon Buckby, Head of Inclusion and Virtual School Headteacher at Brent Council introduced the report on the detailed High Needs Block budget for adoption in 2021/22, the Graduated Framework Approach and the implications of the outcomes of the Banding review.

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 there were increases to the budgets for special schools both in and out of the borough, and for mainstream pupils in out of borough settings. This reflected the rise in demand and the spending patterns of previous years.

Having noted the comments provided, it was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

9. **Scheme for Financing Schools & Finance Regulations**

Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council, introduced the report on the changes to be implemented to the Scheme for Financing Schools and Schools Financial Regulations.

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 all changes applied in the revision were in line with the April 2021 Department for Education Scheme for Financing Local Authority Maintained Schools Statutory Guidance issued to local authorities, changes to the Local Authority's own regulations, the EU Public Procurement Regulations and all the relevant regulations.
- Regarding consultation with school members, it was noted that voting was open to all maintained school members for the proposed changes to the 2021-22 Scheme for Financing Schools and formal comment open from all maintained school members for the proposed changes to the 2021-22 Schools Financial Regulations.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- (1). To approve the amendments to the Scheme for Financing Schools 2021/22.
- (2). To note the amendments made to the Schools Financial Regulations 2021/22.

10. **Any Other Urgent Business**

A query was raised regarding a recent speech in which the Secretary of State for Education outlined the government's proposed vision for every school to be part of a family of schools in a multi-academy trust. It was noted that the query was out of scope of the Forum terms of reference but that officers were available to respond to any queries regarding wider government announcements.

The Operational Director, Safeguarding Partnerships and Strategy informed Schools Forum that a refresh of the current School Place Planning Strategy was due to be considered by Cabinet on 8 November 2021 and a link to the refreshed strategy would be circulated to Forum members for information.

The meeting closed at 6.55pm

M HEISER
Chair