



MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Held as an online virtual meeting on Thursday 19 January 2023 at 6.00 pm

Membership

Representing

PRESENT (all in remote attendance):

Governors	Mike Heiser (Chair) Geraldine Chadwick (Vice Chair) Martin Beard Jo Jhally Cassie Lloyd Perrin Michael Odumosu Ernest Toquie
Headteachers	Jude Enright Michelle Ginty Jayne Jardine Melissa Loosemoore Gerard McKenna Raphael Moss Andy Prindiville
Pupil Referral Unit	Ranjna Shiyani
Non School Members	
Early Years PVI	Paul Russell
Trade Union	John Roche
Officers	Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children & Young People) Shirley Parks (Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy) Olufunke Adediran (Head of Finance) Folake Olufeko (Senior Finance Analyst) Sasi Srinivasan (Early Years Manager) Natalie Connor & James Kinsella (Governance Team)
Councillors	Councillor Grahl, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools.

1. **Apologies for Absence and Membership**

Apologies for absence were received from Nick Cooper, Angela Turner and Jayne Jardine.

The Forum was advised that outstanding member vacancies would be addressed in the next round of Schools Forum elections.

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 3 November 2022 as a correct record.

5. **Actions arising**

Action Point 82: The Committee required further clarification to be sought on the issue of Brent teaching staff being paid an inner London salary despite Brent being funded at an outer London scale. Officers advised that this had been a historical decision to attract teaching staff into the borough, however acknowledged the financial challenges this raised for schools in the current economic climate. Officers agreed to raise the disparity in funding with the DfE and update the Schools Forum when a response had been received.

6. **Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget 2023/24**

Olufunke Adediran, Head of Finance at Brent Council, introduced the report that set out the proposed Schools Budget for 2023/24 for consultation and agreement from the Schools Forum ahead of the Council budget being approved by full Council in February 2023. The following key points were brought to the Forum's attention:

- The Forum was advised that the report focused primarily on the Schools Block, as a separate report had been provided for the Early Years Block, with the High Needs Block due to be a focal point at the February 2023 Schools Forum.
- The Forum heard that following the announcement in the 2022 Autumn Statement that the core schools' budget would increase by £2.3bn over the next two financial years, it materialised that the actual allocation would be £2bn as

the announcement had included £0.3bn for the Health and Social Care Levy which had since been abolished.

- In the 2023/24 financial year mainstream schools would be allocated additional funding through the mainstream schools' additional grant (MSAG), this would be in addition to schools' allocations made through the schools National Funding Formula (NFF). The MSAG additional funding was only applicable to state funded mainstream schools.
- Brent was estimated to receive £8.5m of funding in total for primary and secondary maintained schools and academies, free schools and city technology colleges. The school level allocations of the MSAG for 2023/24 financial year would be published in May 2023.
- The additional funding received in 2022/23 through the schools' supplementary grant (SSG) to reflect the costs of the Health and Social Care levy and other costs pressures had been rolled up into the 2023/34 National Funding Formula (NFF) for the 5 to 16 year old element of the grant.
- Pupil premium funding had increased by 5% for 2023/24 to £1,385 for Primary aged pupils, £985 for Secondary aged pupils and £2,410 for LAC pupils and care leavers.
- The Forum was directed to Table 1 in Section 4.3 of the report that laid out the break down of the DSG Funding Allocations per block that illustrated an increase in all blocks with the exception of the Central Block which would see a small decrease as a result of planned annual reductions against historic pension costs of centrally employed teachers.
- Although the increased funding to the High Needs Block (HNB) was welcomed by the Forum, it was also recognised that the increased funding would be insufficient to cover the cost pressures incurred from the rising EHCP costs and deficit, as such a request was made to Schools Forum to request 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block as per the report recommendations.
- The Forum was advised that the de-delegations for maintained schools to agree remained mainly in line with the previously agreed de-delegated items as shown in Table 3, Section 6.2 of the report. Minor adaptations included increasing the pot of funding to support schools that were financially struggling to fund redundancies to £200k.
- Following the DfE consultation on changes to the way that the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant would be funded from 2022/23. The consultation proposed that there would be a phased removal of the grant over the course of financial year 2022/23 following which all council school improvement activity, including core improvement activities, would be funded via de-delegation. Schools Forum had initially been informed in January 2022 that the local authority would cover the cost of the 50% reduction in grant funding in 2022/23, however as the grant was no longer available from 2023/24 onwards, it was proposed to de-delegate £0.109m for school improvement services to schools to continue to support the functions of the Setting and School Improvement Service.

- Proposed contributions towards Trade unions, maternity and paternity cover remained the same as the current financial year.
- The Forum was advised that the Growth Fund that funded increases in pupil numbers, as well as the Choice Advice and Fair Access Interview (CAFAI) projects for children who had newly arrived in the UK and required additional educational support was expected to overspend by £0.3m due to rising pupil numbers, mainly within the Secondary phase. It was therefore proposed to increase the current growth budget to £2.8m to fund the projected growth in pupil numbers in 2023/24. This also included an allocation to fund a secondary bulge class as approved by Forum in November 2022.
- In relation to the progressive steps being taken to move to the National Funding Formula (NFF) the Forum's attention was drawn to Appendix A which provided information on the funding factor rates used to set the 2023/24 Schools Budgets, followed by Appendix B which provided a breakdown of each of the School Level Allocations 23/34.
- The Forum were updated that following the DfE's announcement that from 2024/25 a standardised formula would be used to calculate the funding for schools with split sites to ensure consistency across all local authorities, one Brent school had been identified as potentially being significantly impacted by the funding changes, however the final design of the split site formula for 2024/25 remained in consultation therefore more accurate financial figures were not expected to be available until the June 2023 Schools Forum.
- The Forum's attention was drawn to Table 4, Section 9.6 of the report that showed the breakdown of the split site funding for affected schools for 2023/24.

The Chair thanked Olufunke Adediran for sharing the report before offering the Forum the opportunity to ask any questions they had. The following key points were discussed:

- The Forum sought clarification as to whether the 10% funding increase to the High Needs Block (HNB) in 23/24 would cascade down to increased funding for Special Schools and if Special Schools would receive the Minimum Funding Guarantee of 3.4% in line with all Top-Up Funding Bands in 2023/24. Officers advised that final funding allocations for Special Schools and Pupil Referral Unit's would be shared in full at the February 2023 meeting of the Schools Forum, however it was confirmed that the Government had stipulated the breakdown of how the minimum funding guarantee of 3.4% should be used.
- The Forum felt that it would be helpful to see the criteria that schools were required to meet in order to request support from the Schools Facing Financial Difficulties Fund (SFFD), officers agreed to take this action forward.
- A discussion was had in relation to the amount of money that schools were contributing to the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant, particularly in relation to schools that would receive very light support from the local authority despite contributing to the pot of money, additionally it was queried what the minimum level of support schools should receive. Officers confirmed

that it was a decision from central government to remove the grant, subsequently leaving the local authority to maintain the level of support to schools without adequate funding from the government, which had led to this being funded through de-delegation. The Forum heard that the framework used by the Schools Effectiveness team remained the same in identifying which schools required support and what different support looked like in practice for different schools, with some schools requiring high level targeted support whereas others may only need a light touch including the usual cycle of reviews.

- In relation to the additional de-delegated funds allocated to support financially struggling schools with redundancies the Forum queried how much money was forecast to be saved long term for schools benefitting from the funds against the potential ongoing burden to the DSG. Officers advised that this would be explored further as an action to take forward, whereby the redundancy costs would be tracked alongside a summary of how much schools had saved as a result of the support received from the fund. The feedback would be shared at a future Schools Forum meeting.

The Chair thanked members for their contributions to the discussion on the report and noted the following Action Points to be taken forward:

Action point 83 - The Forum felt that it would be helpful to see the criteria that schools were required to meet in order to request support from the Schools Facing Financial Difficulties Fund (SFFD), officers agreed to take this action forward to support transparency.

Action Point 84 – A track of the redundancy costs requested and the savings those schools struggling financially have achieved as a result of the support received from the redundancy pot, to be reported at the June Schools Forum to support monitoring the benefits of having a redundancy pot.

Having established that Forum members had no further questions or comments in relation to the report, the Forum **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) In line with 2022/23 to approve the transfer of (0.5%) £1.3m from the Schools Block to support the High Needs Block. Department for Education (DfE) regulations permits that up to 0.5% of the Schools Block funding can be transferred with Forum approval.
- (2) To note the additional funding allocations to Brent, as mentioned in the Government's Spending Review 2021 and Autumn Statement 2022.
- (3) To endorse the 2023/24 budget for the DSG Blocks, including the mainstream funding formula, to Full Council for approval.
- (4) To note the DfE's update on split site funding effective from 2024/25.

The Chair the invited the Maintained School members represented on the Forum to consider the proposed de-delegation arrangements and as a result they **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed de-delegation arrangements, as set out within section 6 of the report, including the proposal to fund redundancy costs for school based staff from the de-delegated contingencies budget and the proposal to de-delegate funds from schools to make provisions for the local authority to continue to support school improvement activities.

7. **Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) 2023/24**

Folake Olufeko, Senior Finance Analyst at Brent Council introduced the report which outlined the provisional Early Years Block DSG funding allocation for Brent as supported by the Early Years Funding subgroup.

In presenting the report key points highlighted included:

- The government had announced a national £180m increase for 2023/24 with a further £20m announced to support Early Years providers with the additional National Living Wage costs associated with delivering the free childcare entitlements.
- As a result of the national increase in funding, the Forum were advised that Brent would see a £1.3m increase compared to 2022/23, equating to a total fund of £24.5m. Additionally there had been an increase to 2, 3 and 4 year old funding rates as illustrated in Table 1, Section 3.7 of the report.
- The Forum noted that the funding had been based on the figures from the January 2022 census and would be updated later in the year to reflect updated census figures.
- The Forum were advised that following Government consultation the DfE had taken the decision to mainstream the teachers' pay and pensions grant (TPPG) into the 2023/24 EYNFF. Subsequent concerns were raised from some local authorities that schools based nurseries would no longer receive the TPPG as a separate grant. In response to the concerns raised through the consultation, the government had increased the total planned value of funding supplements to no more than 12% of the total value of planned formula funding to providers, (the quality supplement) compared to 10% in 2022/23. This would allow local authorities the flexibility to use the additional 2% to fund pressures that some provides faced from addressing the need to pay contributions to the teachers' pension scheme.
- The Early Years Funding Sub group was consulted on the proposed methodology and agreed that the supplement should apply to Brent school based nurseries and PVI's where they had qualified staff, maintained nurseries would be excluded from the equality supplement to avoid double funding as the maintained nursery supplement funding had been revised to an hourly funding rate that was inclusive of the teacher's pay and pensions grant.

- For 2023/24 the EYNFF rate for 2 year old funding would see an increase from £6.29 per hour to £6.84 per hour, it was proposed that 100% of the funding would be passed on to providers. This was possible due to the increased funding for 3 & 4 year olds which had resulted in increased allocations of 5% being retained for central expenditure.
- The Forum noted that the Early Years Funding Sub Group had expressed gratitude for the increased funding, however were clear that funding remained far below the levels needed to effectively meet the needs of the service, particularly in light of the ongoing issues with recruitment, retention and increased numbers of children presenting with Special Educational Needs.
- It was noted that although Maintained Nursery Schools (MNS) in Brent would continue to receive supplementary funding that would see a 6% increase this financial year, due to the TPPG now being included there would actually be a reduction in the totality of funding of approximately £44,000.
- Currently one Brent MNS had been identified as potentially being significantly impacted by the reduced funding, they had been notified by the Local Authority so that they could put plans in place to mitigate the impacts of the cuts, with the Local Authority offering support where possible in terms of planning and preparation for the impending budgetary changes.

The Chair thanked Folake Olufeko for introducing the report before inviting the Forum to raise any questions or comments they may have in relation to the report, with the following issues raised:

- Members noted that the 3 and 4 year old funding increases for providers were lower than the rate of inflation, therefore essentially there was reduction in funding. Officers advised that the Early Years Sub Group had also shared their high level of concern that their service is being significantly underfunded by central government.
- Members queried what support was available to the Maintained Nursery School that was expected to be most adversely affected by reduced funding. Officers advised that a significant proportion of the funding was linked to take up hours, therefore the Council were supporting the nursery to promote their availability to local families with a view to increasing the take up numbers.
- The Forum reiterated that they felt government funding should at the very least be in line with wage inflation, particularly as there was a shortage in qualified practitioners this meant that qualified practitioners were in a position to request a significantly higher salary than pre pandemic levels, further adding to the economic challenges faced by the Early Year's Sector.
- It was noted that although the government initiative to offer 30 hours of funding to 3 and 4 year olds was a positive initiative to support families and encourage take up of nursery places, due to the low value funding provided by the government for the funded places, providers whose cohort did not require top up hours were almost entirely government funded at a poor and unsustainable rate.

- Officers advised that they were aware of the difficulties Early Years providers faced and as such sufficiency exercises at ward level were being actively undertaken to gain a greater understanding of where increased targeted support could be offered across the borough.
- The Forum expressed that it would be helpful if details of how the Early Years Panel awarded additional funds could be expanded on at a future meeting to support transparency and a greater understanding of how the funds were discharged, including further information on the providers that were in receipt of the additional funds. Officers agreed to take this forward as an action to include some additional data in an Outturn report to the Schools Forum in June 2023.

The Chair thanked members for their contributions to the discussion on the report and noted the following Action Point to be taken forward:

Action Point 85 – The Forum to receive information at a future Schools Forum meeting detailing data on the distribution of additional funding awarded from the Early Years Panel.

Having established that Forum members had no further questions or comments in relation to the report, the Forum **RESOLVED** to:

1. Endorse Brent's EY Funding Formula for 2023/24, as supported by the EY Funding Subgroup. The following updates have been applied to the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF):
 - a) A universal base rate for Brent providers for 3 and 4-year-old funding of £4.84 per hour. This represents a 2.1% increase of £0.10p from £4.74 in 2022/23.
 - b) An allocation for deprivation supplement for 3 and 4-year-old funding of 10%.
 - c) A base rate for Brent providers for 2-year-old funding of £6.84. This represents an 11% increase of £0.68 from £6.16 in 2022/23.
 - d) A cap on centrally retained funding by the local authority of 5% of the 3 and 4-year-old funding.
 - e) The funding previously allocated under a disapplication for the 2017/18 academic year for additional 15-hour places for some 3 and 4-year-old based on local eligibility continues to be allocated to the Under 5s Nursery Panel, and both PVI and maintained providers can apply for this to ensure the funding continues to be targeted at vulnerable children.
 - f) In line with the DfE's proposal to roll the teachers' pay and pension grant into the EYNFF and with the increase in the planned value of

supplements to no more than 12% (from 10% previously), it is proposed that the additional 2% is used to introduce a quality supplement to the 3 and 4-year-old funding allocated to providers.

8. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 21 February 2023 at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 7:14 pm

M Heiser
Chair