

**DRAFT**  
**Brent Schools Forum**

**Minutes of the 41<sup>st</sup> Schools Forum held on  
Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011 at Manor School**

**Attended by:**

**Members of the Forum**

**Governors**

Mike Heiser (MH) Chair  
Alan Carter (AC)  
Martin Beard (MB)  
Stephen Greene (SG)  
Herman Martyn (HM)

**Head Teachers**

Sylvie Libson – Vice Chair (SL)  
Lesley Benson (LB)  
Mary Adossides (MAd)  
Sue Knowler (SK)  
Elaine Clarke (EC)  
Gill Bal (GB)  
Sabina Nettey (SN)  
Geraldine Freear (GF)  
Maggie Raffee (MR)

**Lead Member**

Cllr Mary Arnold (MA)

**Officers**

Mustafa Salih (MS)  
Lin Diaby (LD)  
Graham Lovell (GL)  
Roy Smith (RS)  
Mike Hymans (MHy)  
Rik Boxer (RB)

**Others**

Lesley Gouldbourne (LG)  
Nicole Kennedy (NK)  
Ruby Azam (RA)

MH opened the meeting at 6.15pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting.  
MH asked everyone to introduce themselves and to identify the sector they were representing.

**1. Apologies**

None

## **2. Minutes of the 39<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2010**

### **i) Accuracy**

Apologies for Lesley Gouldbourne were not recorded.

Otherwise the forum members went through each page and the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **ii) Matters arising**

MS confirmed LA has communicated with School Governors to request representation on Schools Forum and there are approximately 6 Governors interested. An election process will be carried out to select members.

MS also confirmed the drawings for the special school have now been forwarded to the Project Manager as requested by AC.

## **Minutes of the 40<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

### **i) Accuracy**

MB referred to page 4 a) Energy Advisor. Thought the reference to (a stealth tax of some £300k for 2011/12. was for £600k.

**Action: To be clarified.**

Otherwise the forum members went through each page and the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **ii) Matters arising**

MS confirmed the schools indicative budgets have been published on the Schools Extranet on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January as requested.

## **3. SEN Statementing Formula Changes**

RS presented the paper and confirmed there has been 6 responses to the consultation. The low numbers could be due to the tight timescales and/or schools being happy with the recommendations.

SL explained this has been discussed at the primary heads meeting and they are concerned about the bandings. Band B has no funding for children with cognitive needs at all. This implies very little funding.

RS stated there is confusion over the way the banding schedule codifies existing descriptors to current funding. No change is proposed in terms of resources allocated.

SL asked if this means there is no change to the current funding.

RS explained the descriptors have been taken from what is currently in practice.

SK does not think that is correct as Band C is the first band to pick up cognitive learning. There are needs lower in the scale than Down Syndrome.

MHy explained there are not many statements for just cognitive learning difficulties below £12,378.

SK is ok with not funding until Band B. The Band A children have access to small groups.

RS explained Band A should be removed as 0.5FTE is a range of needs up to 0.5FTE support and not 1 category band A.

SK commented that schools will and do provide support in small groups.

RS confirmed more work could be done to look at the descriptors in more detail with SENCOs and MHy.

LB asked for clarification at the other end of the banding scale. What happens to those children above Band C, are they not in mainstream schools? Are there no children who exceed Band C.

MHy confirmed children above Band C would be in Special Schools. Also explained it's very difficult to map to existing Bands for Special Schools. If there is a need to do so, further discussions could be held on the descriptors for Bands above C.

RB confirmed further work is needed on descriptors but asked the Forum to agree in principle to the banded approach.

SL stated the timing of the consultation has meant that schools won't have looked at the information in great detail but further work is needed as the budgets schools have are under pressure.

LB stated of the 6 responses to the consultation, none of them are saying the idea is great and there are some fundamental questions being asked.

RS confirmed the LA is not pushing the proposals without support. However, if this is deferred, the current situation will continue as it is.

MR commented she is on the Schools Funding Review Group where this has been discussed and it would be crazy to defer after all the work carried out so far and cannot see why the Forum cannot agree the proposals.

GF stated the consultation started on 1<sup>st</sup> December and asked if there is something that can be agreed to or not.

MB commented the threshold is defined at 0.5FTE rather than a cash value.

SK stated it is ok to set a level below which funding is not available, but should not state an amount but should be a level below which schools deal with, above they get funding at the levels in the Bands.

MH asked Forum to vote on recommendations with agreement that further work is required on descriptors.

**Vote: 14 For, 0 Against & 2 Abstained**

**Action: Further work required on descriptors.**

#### **4. Formula Funding of Additional Resource Provision**

RS introduced his paper to the schools forum following on from the previous meeting.

LB stated she is curious about how we are in this position. There must have been discussions about how it was going to be funded. If agreed, it must be made clear that it is an interim funding solution only.

MR commented that it must be right for the future.

RS explained that now we have this model it should help with any new facility.

LB suggested that if this works well, it could encourage other units but would be costly.

RS explained if you look at the cost of Out of Borough and Transport costs, this is better comparatively.

MB requested a mechanism to moderate the banding annually – referring to Kingsbury Green.

RS confirmed this would need to be looked at if a trend develops.

MB recommended bandings are kept under an annual review for all units.

MH asked Forum if they accept recommendations.

**Forum carried a unanimous decision to accept recommendations.**

**5. Consultation on Proposed Schools Budget 2011/12**

MS presented this paper with clarification of the following:

DfE provides final budgets in June following cleansing of the pupil numbers being finalised.

The ISB (Individual Schools Budget) has been increased by 0.3% and Central Expenditure reduced by 1.3%.

Early Years Single Funding Formula increase is due to the increase from 12.5 hours to 15 hours of free provision but additional DSG funding will be received to cover this.

MR asked why the £3m deficit was being recouped over 2 years rather than 3 years at £1m per year.

MS explained that although trying to delay the repayment is desirable, we don't have details of the funding settlement for the next 2 years and what the funding formula changes will be. It would lower the risk to clear this deficit earlier.

LB stated the figures don't show exactly where the over spend has come from and the Children's Centres, Harmony, Willow and Treetops have been moved into DSG from General Fund so are not part of the overspend. Details of the over spends would have been preferred.

GF asked where cost centres CB10-CB50 (Early Years) were held previously.

MS explained the Children's Centres on CB26, CB32 & CB42 were part of the Council's General Fund but is Children's Centre expenditure under the regulations.

LB agreed there is logic to them being moved across. Are they not funded out of Sure Start Grant.

MS confirmed CB50 (Early Years NEG) has always been part of the schools budget.

LB asked about CB10 (Early Years Management & Advisory Teachers) having met with Faira Ellks, the funding for that team was coming from the Sure Start Grant. Is it now coming from DSG.

MS confirmed again these have always been in the schools budget. The only ones new to this are the 3 Children's Centres.

LB asked if the childcare co-ordinator is funded by Integrated Services.

MS replied No it is not.

SN asked why the £3m is being cleared so quickly when government may give funding directly to schools which would make it more difficult for the LA to recoup from schools.

MS explained if that were to happen, a case would be put to government to recoup the money.

SN commented there is no incentive to not run a deficit budget.

SK stated there are two sets of items to be considered, the centrally retained items and the partly retained/partly devolved central expenditure. Also commented she is surprised BETS budget is equivalent to that of a lot of schools budgets. Has this been looked at in terms of pupil numbers etc?

RB explained it has been looked at and they have over 100 young people over a year and it includes full time education for permanently excluded pupils.

SK asked at what point does the support kick in, for example hospital tuition for a 2 day stay or more?

RB confirmed the LA can look into producing a detailed report on this area to a future meeting.

MR stated information is needed on items like BETS to be able to give a view on the budgets. Executive should be informed of views of schools forum in their decision making process.

AC asked where the BEDOS funding is located.

RB confirmed this is part of schools delegated funding.

SL asked if AC90 (Schools Causing Concern) has always been included.

MS confirmed it has.

LB explained that in the Early Years Sub Group meetings it was agreed the 3 Children's Centres on CB26, CB32 and CB42 would be looked at. They take in extremely vulnerable children, the structure has been dismantled with no teacher leadership or teacher input. There is no formula allocating funding to the children. Other facilities could meet the needs of the children.

GF stated this was previously raised in the December meeting (see page 7 of minutes) but there is still no resolution.

MS confirmed the comments need to be responded to and it is important this is looked at by the sub group.

MS will discuss with Graham Genoni to bring a paper to the next sub group meeting.

MS explained we are a lot clearer on these areas but confirmed there is still more to be done on items like BETS but it does take time.

MR asked for clarification if when Executive consider the budget, would the funding be re-quired to schools if the funding for BETS is considered to be higher than is required.

NK asked how it was decided who should pitch for funding at the previous meeting.

MS confirmed that when consulting Schools Forum, some things really need a view.

Items that have always been in the schools budget do not need discussion with Schools Forum unless the budget is increasing.

MR proposed the deficit recovery be extended over 3 years.

MH clarified this would cut the schools contribution to £330k.

LG asked if the Forum agreed to recover it over 3 years, would that be put to the Executive.

MS confirmed the minutes of the Schools Forum and recommendations would be put forward with the budget.

SN asked if a member of Schools Forum could attend the Executive meeting to put forward their views in a passionate way.

MA confirmed as Lead Member for Children & Families, she is the representative for Schools Forum and will ensure MS's report represents the views of the Forum.

MH suggested the recommendations can be passed as they are or with further recommendations.

SK accepts the Children's Centres and BETS decisions may not come into being until the following financial year but could in year savings be put forward from those areas if identified during the review of the services.

MH suggested Forum could itemise the codes they wish to have looked at and any savings, if identified, be put back into schools budgets.

MB asked if the Forum could recommend a 97% budget rather than maintaining a cash flat budget, which would produce a £150k saving.

MH asked Forum to consider each item in Appendix B in turn.

#### Extended Schools – Subsidy Grant

MR commented the Secondary Schools think there shouldn't be so much centrally held back and £200k should be mainstreamed.

SL commented the Primary Heads feel all of the Subsidy Grant should be mainstreamed. MH asked forum to vote on not keeping the subsidy grant centralised.

**Vote: 12 For, 0 Against & 3 Abstained**

Extended Schools – Sustainability Grant

SK explained the sustainability activities would take place in schools anyway and suggest keeping just 1 person to advise on after school activities under the School Improvement Service.

MR commented Secondary Heads feel it should all be delegated to schools and they don't think there is a need for someone to co-ordinate it for them.

MA asked how the activities across the borough ensure total inclusion if there wasn't a co-ordinator.

SK stated that sustainability is the schools own activities but also clusters of schools have been formed to deliver this.

MR agreed a person in School Improvement Service could co-ordinate this.

RB commented that whether the money was devolved or not, there is a collaborative partnership enterprise and a post to co-ordinate this is a good idea. Recommendations could be made as to where the post sits.

MS these reductions in centralised funding could potentially lead to redundancies and the costs would have to be met by schools.

MH proposed the grant should be distributed based on pupil numbers.

**Decision: All in favour of distribution by pupil numbers and funding one post centrally to co-ordinate.**

Secondary Strategy

**Decision: All in favour of keeping central funding.**

EMAG

GB proposing 25% reduction in centrally held element.

LB stated the primary schools would like to keep it as it is.

MR commented on the Academies being funded directly and can buy back the service.

MA stated the outcomes for the children are important for all schools.

MR suggested the LA look into how much of the improvements made is down to the school heads etc.

MAd explained EMTAS really helps to focus on the correct areas and has provided a very good service. The service can provide an overview across the borough. It should be kept as it is.

SK stated with the schools becoming academies still in a state of flux, this should be kept for this year.

AC asked what schools get from this service as the funding looks like the equivalent of 15FTEs.

RB confirmed this was in the papers for the previous meeting.

GF commented that she thinks this area is overfunded for the centralised element.

MH asked Forum to vote on keeping the funding as it is.

**Vote to keep as stated: 6 For, 3 Against & 6 Abstained.**

One to One Tuition

**Decision: All in favour of keeping central funding.**

#### Primary Strategy – Targeted Support Grant

LB stated primary heads looked at this with One to One Tuition and suggested keeping it as it is with a possible slight efficiency saving.

**Decision: All in favour of keeping central funding.**

#### School Development Grant

**Decision: All in favour of keeping central funding.**

#### School Lunch Grant

SK suggested none of this should be centrally retained.

MB asked how would statutory returns on nutrition be completed if not centrally.

SL proposed all of the funding should be devolved.

**Vote for all funding to be devolved: 12 For, 1 Against & 2 Abstained.**

#### Early Intervention Team

SK stated they Primary Heads had a long discussion about the amount of money that should be retained against the efficiency for staff and the majority were in favour of cutting the retained amount to £300k.

LB explained there was an argument made about having somebody based in schools would be a better option.

AC confirmed there was already £150k reduction being proposed and maybe cutting more would be too critical.

RB explained that on top of the £150k there is a further £195k children's fund gone and there is a risk of going over the tipping point if further cuts were made.

LB commented there were pretty clear views about not wanting to pay for something that was not delivering and the service needs to be leaner and more efficient.

MS confirmed this was looked at with the service and all staff will be tasked with improving quality of service. Cuts beyond those proposed could affect the level of service able to be delivered.

MS proposed a further review in 6 months.

NK asked if Pat Grady's team is separate from this.

RB confirmed it is separate from this.

NK commented that comments were made in a previous Forum meeting regarding CAF not working with the PVI sector and Jo Bridger was supposed to make contact with NK but did not do so until December.

SN asked that after taking into account everything said, would any head be able to act in that way.

SN suggested cuts need to be made to poor quality staff.

MA agreed all staff are to be held accountable but we need to look at the bigger picture. Brent Early Intervention is really starting to work well and it would be a pity to dismantle something that is going in the right direction.

SL commented it was interesting to hear MA's perception when the schools experience is that it is a very poor service, poorly run and schools are not benefitting.

SL proposed to cut funding and service to come back with a full report on success.

SN commented that the figures presented previously were dreadful.

AC proposed cutting budget to £400k.

**Vote to cut budget to £400k: 11 For, 0 Against & 3 Abstained**

#### Playing for Success Grant

## Appendix I (ii)

SK commented that the Primary Heads think this is worth keeping but raised concerns about the service being run by agency staff and suggest putting this into School Improvement Service. Some head teachers didn't know anything about the service. MR stated that she doesn't know of any Secondary Heads who know anything about this service.

GB stated that Preston Manor City Learning Centre use Wembley Stadium facility.

MH proposed this budget is maintained as it is.

**Decision: All in favour of keeping budget as it is.**

School Energy Advisor

MB suggested looking at this in more detail when the costs are going to the schools.

**Vote to stop funding this post: 10 For, 0 Against & 4 Abstained.**

SK asked about the Music Grant as that hasn't been mentioned.

MH confirmed it is not in the schools budget and is pretty sure government will provide music grant but not sure if it will be in DSG or direct to schools.

SK asked for it to be noted that schools would like Music Service to be maintained. Even though it is not in the budget, it came up in discussions around the budget.

SK would also like a note for Executive to not cut the funding to Welsh Harp. Schools fully support and use the service as it's the only environmental education facility in Brent, it's heavily used by schools and relatively inexpensive.

LG confirmed it is also used by Special Schools and the facilities could not be met elsewhere.

MA confirmed she would take this back to the Executive.

LB suggested schools should fight the closure.

LG confirmed the Trade Unions have proposed to fight closure.

MH asked if the closure went ahead, then what would happen.

SK commented she presumed it would be open until the summer as bookings have been taken for that.

RB confirmed there would be a 90 consultation period and a fallback position would need to fit in with that if any alternatives were to be suggested.

MH asked forum to refer back to Appendix A.

MR proposed accepting appendix, incorporating decisions above and with all the items being questioned to be brought back with full details of how the funding is being spent.

GB asked to add school admissions to the list to be reviewed.

MH clarified the proposals decided upon in Appendix B should be included in Appendix A and a review of the other items to be carried out.

NK asked to have CB10 included.

MR suggested a list of codes to be reviewed should be emailed to all.

MS suggested we start with BETS and Admissions as they have the largest budgets.

**Decisions: All in favour of agreeing recommendations with Appendix B decisions incorporated into Appendix A and suggested areas to be reviews.**

## 6. AOB

Future dates to be confirmed.

Meeting closed 9.00pm