



Brent Schools Forum

Minutes of the 55th Schools Forum held on Wednesday 18th September 2013 at the Village School

Attended by:

Members of the Forum

Governors Mike Heiser - Chair (MH)
 Martin Beard (MB)
 Janice Alexander (JA)
 Titilola McDowell (TMcD)
 Umesh Raichada (UR)
 Alan Carter (AC)

Head Teachers Sylvie Libson – Vice Chair (SL)
 Kay Johnson (KJ)
 Lesley Benson (LB)
 Matthew Lantos (ML)
 Andy Prindiville (AP)
 Rose Ashton (RA)

PRU Narinder Nathan (NN)

PVI Sector Lesley Gouldbourne (LG)

Trade Unions Lesley Gouldbourne (LG)

Others Sue Knowler (SK)

Officers Sara Williams (SW)
 Elizabeth Jones (EJ)
 Norwena Thomas (NT)
 Devbai Patel (DP)
 Emily Ashton (EA)
 Anis Robinson (AR)
 Paula Buckley (PB)
 Ceridwen John (CD)

ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
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MH opened the meeting at 6.05pm. He informed the Forum members that Mustafa Salih has left the Council and thanked him for his service over the past 5 years. SW updated everyone on staffing changes. SW informed the Forum members that EJ is currently the Assistant Director of Finance for Adults, Social and Children and Families, NT is the Interim Schools Finance Manager and DP continues in the same post. MH thanked Mustafa Salih for his service to schools over the past 5 years. MH asked everyone to introduce themselves.

1.0 Apologies

- 1.1 Terry Molloy (TM)
Herman Martyn (HM)
Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman (YF)
Cllr Helga Gladbaum (Cllr HG)
Sabina Netty (SN)
John Voytal (JV)

1.2 MH said YF and HM sent their apologies to this Forum due to start of the Jewish festival of Sukkos on the same evening. MH asked that in future religious days are considered and to avoid arranging Forums on these days. DP said that it was not brought to her attention at the time of arranging Forums in February and was not aware that the festivals commence at sunset the day before although she was aware that it started on 19th September. This will be noted in the future.

2.0. Minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2013 and Matters Arising

2.1.0 Accuracy

- 2.1.1 Paragraph 4.2 should say ‘opportunity’ not ‘inopportunity’.
- 2.1.2 The above amendment was noted and the minutes were approved as accurate record

2.2.0 Matters Arising

2.2.1 **Schools Forum Membership** – It was requested at the last forum that a new model be created based on 9 primary, 1 academy primary and 8 secondary schools. DP said that the

model is not updated. This is because out of the three academies that were due to convert only 1 has converted and does not change the membership between phases, maintained and academies. It will be recalculated once these one or two schools convert. DP also thought it would be ideal to update at the start of the year in June as there is a likelihood of more schools converting. MH asked if the calculation will be separated between converting and sponsored academies to which DP said this can be done. ML said this would not make any difference. GB said the only time it makes any difference is that sponsored academies can donate. MH asked if there are any vacancies and DP said that Laurence Keel has resigned who represented the Primary Heads and this position will be filled via the Brent Partnership Group. There is also a vacancy for the Secondary Governor which will be filled through the normal process which is to invite nominations. The vacancy for the nursery governor remains unfilled.

DP

2.2.2 **Item 2.2.9 – Early Intervention Team** – SW said that there is still work in progress with the Early Year’s Sub Group and this report will be brought to the next regular Forum in December.

SW

2.2.3 **Budget Review of Alternative Education Service** – DP said that this will be brought to December’s Forum.

Sara Kulay

2.2.4 **Strategy for Full-Time Nursery Places** – this will be brought to December’s Forum with models subject to a review by the Early Years Sub Group.

Sue Gates

3.0 **Low Carbon Schools Programme Closing Report**

3.1 EA introduced the report indicating that their primary goal has been to encourage schools to manage their energy usage effectively and efficiently. The programme commenced in 2012 and officers have been working with the schools in trying to meet targets. She provided background details on thirteen schools that were selected because they had the highest CO₂ emissions. The savings identified by the borough’s schools collectively was around £180K on their energy bills. MH asked if this savings is in CRC. EA replied that it isn’t and no comparisons could be made as there were changes to reporting of CRC between 2011/12 and 2012/13. MH asked if this meant that there will be no interest after 2014. EA agreed and said unless the government changes the rules otherwise.



- 3.2 UR asked why there was lack of participation by the schools. EA answered that in some cases senior management made a commitment but when passed down to lower level staff the commitment was not the same. In some cases the caretaker's were not providing the meter reading which was one of the main barriers.
- 3.3 SK made a reference to paragraph 7.1 of the report where it indicates that the highest energy CO₂ schools were selected. SK asked if they were all told to take part and EA said no they were asked and they all volunteered to participate. Some schools did choose not to participate and therefore the next on the list was asked. She asked how the schools will be engaged to participate in a possible programme to run from April 2013 to March 2014. EA replied that they held a stall at the Finance Conference in January 2013 to invite schools to buy back as part of traded services but unfortunately no schools signed up there. The other ways are Schools Extranet and various bulletins.
- 3.4 AR added that Peter Balham and herself visit schools to discuss the way forward on a general basis and on individual projects.
- 3.5 MH asked if this project is more of an Invest to Save basis and EA confirmed as exactly that.
- 3.6 **The following recommendations were noted:**
1. Close the project in its current form and ask schools to approach the Council if they would like any further tailor made support, either behavioural change technical or both, on a traded service basis.
 2. If a programme similar to the Low Carbon Schools Programme is to be rolled out to Brent schools again, the above areas will need to be addressed and full school support given to the project.
 3. In a one years' time revisit all schools energy and CO₂ reduction progress, in particular the progress of the 'New Intake' schools.
 4. If the Schools Forum raises concerns with schools energy and CO₂ reduction progress after one year, the forum will consider corrective action such as ways of funding schools support.

- 5. Continue to host the Brent Council Low Carbon Schools webpage for all schools to have access to the entry level service.
- 6. Offer a Caretaker training service/workshop on an individual school payment basis.

3.7 MH asked if everyone was in agreement with the recommendations to which there were no further comments. The recommendations were therefore noted. He asked that a report is brought back to the Schools Forum in a year with progress and update. EA

4.0 School Funding Reforms – 2014/15 Update

4.1 SW presented the report. The report highlights the changes from 2013/14 being implemented in 2014/15. The key focus of the report is to increase secondary schools ratio from 1:1.09 towards the national average and to reduce the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), both being Brent’s outliers in the Country. Although the ratio is low for secondary schools, with MFG it still stayed above the national average to 1:1.34. By increasing the ratio to 1:1.27, with MFG the ratio is 1:1.31. She highlighted that the MFG remains at 1.5% and this year the introduction on the gains capped also at 1.5%. The report consults Schools Forum members to address this as early as possible in the event of MFG being removed in the near future. MH said it will not be removed but could be reduced. He also highlighted that the other area of funding that is not protected is the 6th Form funding. Being an outlier isn’t good in that the funding is not directed towards the adequate factors. He said that although the pre-MFG ratio is increasing, the post MFG ratio is decreasing, so primary schools are not in any worse position. The increase in ratio is being derived by uplifting the secondary allocation by 12% greater than primary unit values of all factors (the actual uplifts being 13% and 25% respectively for the primary and secondary sectors). The typo in the table in Section 3.3, the second column with (Pre-MFG), should state (Post-MFG).

4.2 The report seeks approval of the Schools Forum on whether or not to continue de-delegations of the specific services that require approval each year. These are Schools in Financial Difficulty, Free School Meals eligibility, Maternity Grant, Licenses & Subscriptions and Trade Union Facilities. The Wembley Learning Zone and Gordon Brown Centre are historical optional services with a contribution from DSG. Members felt that there is not sufficient information to decide on de-delegations and therefore requested Budget Holders/SW

that detailed reports are refreshed on each service in order that decisions can be made as required. They felt that each service needs to be revisited particularly as there are a number of new members. It was questioned if this is the correct amount as the budget doesn't seem to be sufficient to address the level of needs for Schools in Financial Difficulty. This is to be confirmed by officers for the next meeting. It was also questioned as to why it only supported the primary schools. DP confirmed that this is an error as it was evident from the table under paragraph 4.1 that three secondary and one special school have been supported in the last three years. JV/DP

4.3 MH asked if any members had any comments on the ratio moving towards the national average. ML said we are well away from the national average and to move towards the national average without MFG was a sensible thing to do. SK asked why the ratio is going up straight to 1:1.27 rather for example 1:1.20. MB replied that Brent would still be an outlier. SL said the Sub Group Members spent two hours in trying to understand how the funding worked and only in the last 10 minutes they understood that the ratio being low doesn't impact on individual schools funding. She said it is important that schools understand this and therefore consulting them with comparisons between 2013/14 and 2014/15 is very important.

4.4 SW said that we will be consulting schools with full exemplifications to help them understand better. MB said that all issues should be contextual e.g. explaining why the MFG is being reduced and the impact of it. We should explain the reduction in other factors for example the lump sum reduced by £25k which is significant to small schools. Obviously this is not related with the proposed increase in ratio for secondary schools.

4.5 Growth funding – DP said that £500k was allowed for this last year. ML asked if this was sufficient amount as his school alone has a big chunk of this money. DP said there is also some funding being paid from the contingency and officers are aware that 2013/14 growth funding is not sufficient to address additional classroom funding. It was requested that a detailed report for Growth funding for 2013/14 is brought to next Forum in order to agree an amount for 2014/15. Questions were raised in the slowness of filling vacancies in time for the October 2012 census which were responded to by PB. She stressed the importance of the LA receiving up to date information to identify vacancies. The officers are keen to understand which schools have vacancies especially if children have not returned after summer. SL said Stonebridge Carmen Coffey



School has vacancies in Reception and Year 1 and Furness has vacancies in Year 1 and 2. These need to be filled in time for pupils to be included on Census day. PB replied that they are encouraging parents to take places and explaining that not accepting could mean a long delay in getting a school place. RA said that places offered aren't always accepted so still remain vacant. PB said they recognise that the need to take up offered place hasn't been presented correctly and this is now being addressed. Parents are now being given 3 days to consider and decide whether or not they wish to accept the place.

- 4.6 Special Schools top-up funding. This was agreed by the SEN Sub Group to equalise top-ups for all schools and was for noting.
- 4.7 Early Years Single Funding Formula – The proposal to restore the deferred 3% increase in the deprivation supplement is to be presented to Early Year's Sub Group before it is brought to the Schools Forum for noting. The restoration will be funded from the savings that will be achieved from the Summer 2013 Term adjustments for full time places. Forum will recall a proposal to increase this supplement by 5% in 2013/14 in addition to a 5% increase in 2012/13
- 4.8 Recommendations:
1. To introduce capping and scaling factor – **this is to be addressed as part of the consultation with schools and brought back to the additional October Schools Forum.**
 2. Comment on the proposed mechanism set out in Section 3 to move the current Primary: Secondary ratio of 1:1.09 towards the national average – **these need to be exemplified in the consultation to schools and brought back to October Schools Forum.**
 3. Agree to repeat 2012/13 de-delegations – **The reports are to be refreshed and to be brought back to the next meeting for all services that can be de-delegated.**
 4. Comment on proposed £1m provision for in-year growth funding – **This does not appear to be sufficient funding set aside in line with 2013/14 requirement and further details of 2013/14 forecast was requested.**
 5. The equalisation of top-up funding for special schools - **this was noted.**

5.0 Budget Review of Admissions and Pupil Support

- 5.1 PB presented this report explaining that the report is brought to the

Schools Forum for consultation and to provide update on the service funded from the DSG allocation. She highlighted that the officers are aware there has been many problems with the service and explained how these have and are being addressed. There continues to be pressures on school places and the officers are encouraging parents to take school places offered within the timescale. The 2011 census has shown an increase of 18% in Brent residents. An online application system has been introduced and parents are being encouraged to apply on-line. There were problems with the schools phone at the beginning of September and this has now been rectified with an opportunity to leave messages. Schools are asked not to give the number dedicated to schools to parents as this ties up the line and causes difficulties for schools when contacting the team. This has been improved to ensure that resources are not put on answering telephones at the cost of offering school places.

- 5.2 PB referred to Section 5 of the report which provides details on benchmarking carried out with other local authorities. She said this proved difficult to compare due to the way the services are managed in each authority. Brent had twice as many applications compared to 9 authorities out of the 16 that responded.
- 5.3 SK asked what the rationale was to separate the service from Pupil Parents Service to Customer Services. PB replied that this was part of One Council project where they wanted to keep all customer contacts in one place. Admissions policy and appeals are all still managed by Pupil Parent Service.
- 5.4 SL said that Oakington Manor School is managing its own admissions as LA was not admitting pupils in time to fill up vacancies. PB reiterated that there are areas that have not worked well and are in need of further improvements which officers are aware of and are currently working to improve on. She said that they are not hiding anything but being honest about the areas that need to be improved.
- 5.5 LB asked what the end to end processes are in other boroughs to which PB replied this question was not asked in the Benchmarking questionnaire but can be asked.
- 5.6 GB asked if a cost of processing per application has been identified and compared against other boroughs as the ratio of staff to applications received was lower in Brent and may need to be reviewed depending on the benchmarking outcome. PB replied that again this was not asked but was happy to carry out this



benchmarking. AC said running costs such as printing and salaries should be included in the costing. SW added including staff in Pupil Parent service that work on admissions should also be included in the costing.

5.7 The benchmarking should be taken into account in keeping within the total 2013/14 allocation.

6.0 Any Other Business

6.1 KJ said that she is the Chair of Brent Schools Partnership (BSP) and it was agreed at the last BSP meeting that a Governor from the Schools Forum should also attend to represent the Forum. MH asked what the timescale was and what level of commitment is required. KJ said there is time to reflect and consult with the governors. The meeting takes place every half term during the day. Cllr MP agreed and said this is an excellent idea as some positive decisions are made at this meeting. KJ wanted to know what the mechanism was for deciding who that would be. It was agreed that KJ contacts all Governor representatives to find who is able to join. DP to provide KJ with the contact e-mails.

6.2 The meeting ended at 7.40pm

Action Log

No	Action	Completion Date	Owner
1	Provide contact emails for BSP to approach SF Governors seeking a volunteer to sit on the BSP	ASAP (Matters arising)	Devbai Patel
2	Confirm if the De-delegation refers to Schools in Financial Difficulty or Schools in Difficulty	October 2013 Forum (Matters arising)	John Voytal / Devbai Patel
3	School Funding Reforms – 2014/15 Update. Report back to SF following a consultation with individual school	October 2013 Forum	John Voytal/ Sara Williams
4	Reports on 2014/15 De-Delegation requests	October 2013 Forum	Budget Holders/ Sara Williams
5	Report on adequacy of Growth Funding in 2013/14 to inform provision for 2014/15	October 2013 Forum	Carmen Coffey/ Sara Williams
6	Benchmarking of End to End process and cost per pupil in processing admissions application	December 2013 Forum (Matters Arising from Sept 2013)	Paula Buckley/ Margaret Read
7	Review of Early Intervention Team – to be presented to EY Sub Group prior to being presented to Schools Forum	December 2013 Forum	Sue Gates
8	Budget Review of Alternative Education Service – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To present partnership model that oversees devolved funds • Develop further proposals to introduce a rewards and incentives funding framework 	December 2013 Forum	Sara Kulay
9	Strategy for Full-Time Nursery Places - to be presented to EY Sub Group prior to being presented to Schools Forum	December 2013 Forum	Sue Gates
10	Schools Forum Membership to be recalculated if any more schools convert to academy. Otherwise refresh for the start of the year using the latest (January) census	As and when required / March	Devbai Patel
11	Low Carbon Schools Programme Update Report	September 2014	Emily Ashton