

**THE SOUTHWARK SCHOOLS FORUM
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
Thursday 6th July 2017**

1. Attendance and Apologies

See Annex A.

2. Declaration of Interests

Members were asked to declare any pecuniary or other interests they might have that were greater than the interests of other members of the Forum in any matter on the agenda for discussion. There were none.

3. The meeting was quorate

4. Minutes of the Meeting of 23rd March 2017

These were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes

- 5.1 Finance Handbook: The LA reported that this was now completed and will be issued for the new academic year.

6. Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Monitor for 2016-17 and 2017-18 Update

- 6.1 A report prepared by Russell Dyer had been circulated that showed that due to the in-year overspend and planned use of reserves, the balance on the DSG reserve as at 31 March 2017 was £1.2m. Of that balance, part is earmarked (£0.7m) to provide support to the Council run day nurseries until changes are made to ensure sustainability and full elimination of DSG subsidy by the end of 2017-18. The remaining balance on the reserve of £0.5m will be held as a contingency for any in year pressures/grant changes.

- 6.2 Members asked about the pressures that the High Needs Block that were impacting on funds in the Schools Block. In particular the number of young people going out borough which are at a higher cost than if they were in a Southwark provision. The Director confirmed that Southwark was looking at expanding in-borough provision but this is proving difficult as the DSG was expanded to include young people aged 19-25.

- 6.3 The Chair asked members to note the current financial position especially when they are asked by their constituents about additional funding for any particular purpose.

The report was noted.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant 2017-18 and 2018-19

- 7.1 The previously circulated report gave the latest budget position on the DSG for 2017-18. This showed that it was finely balanced with if there is any significant

overspend then it would move the DSG to a deficit position. The positions regarding the Early Years Block and the High Needs Block are in the relevant reports later on in the meeting. The LA undertook to provide detailed budget monitoring reports to each meeting of the Schools Forum so that early intervention measures could be put in place to curb potential overspends.

- 7.2 Individual Schools Budgets do not directly impact on the DSG as a whole, however the centrally retained budgets do.
- 7.3 The Schools Forum was concerned that the DSG has a top sliced Growth Fund for additional places whilst a number of schools have considerable number of vacancies and falling rolls and wished that there be Headteacher representation in the borough's School Place Planning process. This was acknowledged by the LA.
- 7.4 The Schools Forum agreed to the LA recommendation that a detailed report on Summerhouse be prepared by the Head of SILS as supplementary funding is sought by them from the Schools Block of the DSG.
- 7.5 The LA was looking to tightening the criteria for accessing the "Schools in Difficulty and Intervention Funds" and would wish to involve the Schools Forum in this.
- 7.6 The budget the LA suggests for in-house "Maternity Insurance" is exceeded each year and believes that other options of providing this service should be considered. These include moving to a traded service, perhaps only providing a % of the cost or commercial insurance. Once again the LA would like to set up a working group. The following members offered to assist: Janice Babb, Sister Anne-Marie, Rebecca Sherwood, Simon Eccles (or Theresa Neary) and Mike Antoniou.
- 7.7 The LA explained that the DfE was still preparing for the implementation of a National Funding Formula (NFF) and to this end asked every LA to carry out a baselining exercise for the 2018-19 DSG using 2017-18 budget data. This had demonstrated a number of negative funding issues in the both the Early Years and High Needs Blocks that would mean moving funds out of the Schools Block.
- 7.8 It was agreed that more detail is needed about the NFF for 2018-19 and accepted that that this may mean a radical re-think by the LA on what it seeks funding for and how it delivers services.

8. Early Years Funding 2017-18

- 8.1 A further report on the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) had been circulated that set out the progress made as well as information on the Disability Access Fund, 30 hours funding and the maintained Nursery School Assurance Exercise.
- 8.2 The LA has now identified the various hourly and supplementary rates for the range of providers. In addition the new SEN Local Inclusion Fund had to be consulted upon. This has meant £300k being used of the Early Years Block to resource funding the expected applications to the fund which is aimed at Early Years SEN children.
- 8.3 Rebecca Sherwood was concerned that the Early Years Block was going to be used for children with complex needs that should be funded from the High Needs Block,

the LA confirmed that this fund is aimed at low level needs. It was also stated that nursery schools have to do a lot of work to get EHCPs for children that by the time they are allocated the funding, they are about to move on to primary school. In addition they do not use the Early Help Group service. The Director offered to meet with maintained nursery schools to go through their concerns.

- 8.4 The LA had come up with options on how to fund the administration of the SEN Local Inclusion Fund scheme and asked the Schools Forum for the one they should use. It was agreed that asking a school to volunteer to do the assessment at no charge was not likely to be viable.
- 8.5 The Schools Forum felt that the 12% administration cost was a high levy to apply as it meant a cost of £36k – the LA felt that this was an appropriate cost. The option to have a buy-back scheme, subscription or pay as you go was difficult to consider but should be looked at. Following a vote the Schools Forum approved the 12% admin fee but with two abstentions.
- 8.6 The details of the Disability Access Fund and Additional Hours 30 hours free were noted. The LA is aware that Council run day nurseries were not viable and were looking at urgent measures to reduce the level of subsidy from the Early Years Block. Rebecca Sherwood said that they might wish to speak to the maintained nursery schools as they may be able to assist with their review.
- 8.7 The use of the government's Maintained Nursery School Supplementary funding and the Assurance Exercise were noted.

8. High Needs Block 2017-18

- 8.1 A report had been circulated that gave the current financial position of the 2017-18 High Needs Block highlighting the current pressures and risk areas.
- 8.2 The various budgets are very much subject to demand and demographic changes and these have both been increasing. The overall DSG reserve is only likely to be £0.5m and a main budget pressure is the post 16 SEND responsibility that now falls to the LA to resource.
- 8.3 A number of one-off use of DSG reserves in 2016-17 ceased in 2017-18 and the LA is actively looking at savings strategies as the likely level of government resourcing for the High Needs Block in future years is going to be insufficient to meet need. The Schools Forum supported the LA wishing to set up a working group of the Schools Forum to examine all possibilities and develop proposals for consideration at the October 2017 meeting.
- 8.4 This block also provides the funding for Pupil Referral Units, which in Southwark is SILS and who had provided the Director with a written case for increasing the top up funding per student as the existing level is insufficient to meet all costs. The Chair thanked the Head of SILS for a very detailed submission to the LA to support their request.
- 8.5 It was accepted that the roll would fluctuate at SILS and that the place funding element would be based on an average for the year, with the roll likely to be lower at the beginning of the academic year and higher at the end. Also, that the school

would not be able to immediately respond to roll change in staffing so would sometimes have to have a higher staffing level at certain parts of the year.

- 8.6 It was also noted that although SILS does support primary schools the largest volume of its work was at KS3 and KS4. The Chair commented that there were only three maintained secondary schools in the borough, so the vast majority of SILS students would come from academies – this was acknowledged.
- 8.7 With all schools the principle of the funding follows the pupil applies and this is built into recent academies' funding agreements, although this did not apply to early academies and so the LA has to enter into separate agreements with them. Mike Antoniou, who represented academies, said that perhaps the costs the SILS have need to be examined in order to determine if the level of the top up was appropriate. A question was posed that perhaps SILS needs to be able to say that they are full when reaching total capacity.
- 8.8 The Schools Forum then voted on the question: Does the Schools Forum request the LA to use more of the High Needs Block to be allocated to SILS as a long term solution to their funding shortfall:
- | | |
|--------------|---|
| In Favour: | 4 |
| Against: | 4 |
| Abstentions: | 1 |

9. LA Maintained School Balances – 2016-17

- 9.1 The circulated report gave the detail of the maintained school balances as at 31st March 2017.
- 9.2 The LA reported that all schools are required to have a LA approved plan for committing those balances when they exceed 5% for secondary schools and 8% for all other maintained schools. At the same time those in deficit have to have in place an approved Recovery Plan.
- 9.3 The LA will report back in October 2017 on these expenditure surplus plans also the deficit recovery plans that schools have submitted.

The report was noted

10. Reconstitution of the Schools Forum

- 10.1 The clerk reported that the mechanisms were in place for the various constituencies to reconstitute the Schools Forum for 2017/18.

11. Date of Next Meetings 2017/18:

12 October 2017, 7 December 2017, 18 January 2018,
22 March 2018, 17 May 2018, 5 July 2018

Annex A

SCHOOLS FORUM ATTENDANCE SHEET

6th July 2017

VOTING MEMBERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PRESENT
Janice Babb	Primary School Headteacher	Yes
Craig Voller	Primary School Headteacher	Resigned
Keith Fox	Primary School Headteacher	Apologies
Gregory Doey	Primary School Headteacher	Apologies
Vacant	Primary School Governor	
Omolayo Sokoya	Primary School Governor	Yes
Rebecca Sherwood	Nursery School Headteacher	Yes
Simon Eccles	Special School Headteacher	Sub Theresa Neary
Paulette Bertram	Early Years – Private/Voluntary and Independent Settings	No
Steve Morrison	Academy	No
Mickey Kelly	Academy	No
Mike Antoniou	Academy	Yes
Yomi Adewoye	Pupil Referral Units	Yes
Sister Anne-Marie Niblock	Secondary School Headteacher	Yes
Vacant	FE SEN	
Catherine May	Diocese Board	Yes
Betty Joseph	Trade Unions	Yes

Senior Officers in Attendance

Nina Dohel	Yes
Russell Dyer	Yes
Sue Emmons	Yes
David Cross	Clerk