

**THE SOUTHWARK SCHOOLS FORUM  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

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**1. Attendance and Apologies**

See Annex A

- 1.1 The meeting welcomed Kamaljit Kaur from Southwark's Education, Schools & Childrens Finance

**2. The meeting was quorate**

**3. 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.

**4. Minutes of the Meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

These were agreed as accurate

**5. Matters Arising from Minutes**

- 5.1 Finance Handbook: The LA reported that this was now available on Southwark's website.
- 5.2 Headteachers Representative on Schools Place Planning: the Director was awaiting a nomination from secondary school Headteachers.
- 5.3 Review of Schools' Surplus Plans: Russell Dyer reported that the Local Authority had obtained the required information from the relevant schools and was in the process of deciding whether any funds should be clawed back. The key issue at the moment was the level of contingency held by a few schools that was in addition to the other funds held for specific purposes.

**6. Budget Monitor – 2017-18 Dedicated Schools Grant**

- 6.1 A report had been circulated prior to the meeting that gave the financial position as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017 for the 2017-18 Dedicated Schools grant (DSG) and this updated Members on the options to be used to reduce spend.
- 6.2 What was crucial was that the overall position still remained at a £3.5m deficit. The Chair reminded members that the Schools Forum should be mindful of this when being asked for funds for activities as these would only come from schools being allocated less funds in their school budgets, which for many schools will create difficulties as they are already struggling to find monies for the higher costs they are experiencing.

- 6.3 Russell Dyer said that with regard to the funding being received, there had been an improvement in the Early Years Block of the DSG due to additional funds being received thus reducing the shortfall now to £270k.
- 6.4 With regard to expenditure, the High Needs Block was still projecting a £3.5m overspend. The 0.5% transfer from the 2018-19 Schools Block to the High Needs Block that the Schools Forum agreed in October 2017 will decrease school budgets. This again reinforced the need for the Schools Forum to scrutinise any request from the LA for additional funding in either the centrally retained and/or de-delegated budgets.
- 6.5 It was noted that should there be any headroom in the 2018-19 overall DSG, then the priority will be addressing the deficit in 2017-18. This will be decided at the January 2018 Schools Forum meeting.

## 7. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) - Schools Budget 2018-19

- 7.1 This previously circulated report gave details of the proposals for the Schools Block of the DSG centrally retained and de-delegated budgets in 2018-19.
- 7.2 From the previous meeting, a key decision needs to be made about the de-delegated Maternity Cover Scheme for maintained primary and secondary schools. This was running a projected deficit of around £200k this financial year and would have to be carried forward to next year. Betty Joseph highlighted that this is a form of insurance scheme for possible unplanned for expenditure.
- 7.3 Mickey Kelly explained that academies have to make their own decisions at budget setting time as whether to seek third party insurance or budget themselves for known maternity costs that year and/or possible further unknown costs. This is the same with long term absence and supply in general.
- 7.4 As this de-delegation related to LA maintained primary and secondary schools the Schools Forum members representing these constituencies were asked whether the scheme should continue, the vote that followed showed:
- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| In Favour   | 2 |
| Against     | 1 |
| Abstentions | 1 |
- 7.5 The LA was then asked to explore and model the various options, shown separately for primary and secondary schools as to the amount that schools would have to find from their budgets to increase the Maternity Cover budget. Plus options that perhaps kept the budget as is but only paid out a proportion of the current payments made, for example 80%.
- 7.6 It was confirmed that there was no option on the de-delegated budget for Licenses and Subscriptions as the DfE charged the LA and this had to be passed on to maintained schools – therefore the DfE has moved this budget from de-delegated to one being centrally retained. Academies were charged by the DfE.
- 7.7 The School Improvement de-delegation for maintained primary schools will cease as this moves to a traded service. This budget did not apply to maintained secondary schools.

- 7.8 With regard to Summerhouse, Terry Segarty from LA said that as referrals were up they will be seeking a further £100k from maintained primary schools in order for the service to break even in 2018-19. The three maintained primary school representatives voted that they would be minded to support the current level of the budget for Behaviour Support Services, including Summerhouse. Increasing the level of funding for Summerhouse will have a number of implications for schools funding.
- 7.9 Secondary schools were concerned at the quality of support they received from the Behaviour Support Team, Jenny Brennan was concerned to hear this and asked for details and that should there be any more concerns to contact her directly.
- 7.10 Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility checking, the Schools Forum was concerned at the high cost of this service, Mickey Kelly would look at the cost for academies who are responsible for their checking of eligibility and report back to the next meeting of the Schools Forum.
- 7.11 The Schools Forum asked that when this item comes back to them in January 2018 to make the formal decisions whether to support or not the de-delegation that the tables clearly show the change to the amount per pupil cost compared to the previous year as just showing the budget year to year is masking the amount schools have to pay per pupil.
- 7.12 The Schools Forum chair, supported by other members, expressed concern about the quality of the audit work that schools contribute monies to. There are clear examples of schools getting good judgements by auditors when in fact there are proven concerns about those schools' processes etc.
- 7.13 It was suggested that the Statutory and Regulatory duties of the LA set out in Appendix B should make it clear with regard to Asset Management in Table 8c when it refers to ownership of buildings the difference in relation to voluntary aided schools.
- 7.14 The meeting then scrutinised the proposed centrally retained budgets and requested that there was no evidence provided to support the proposal to keep the budgets for both the growth fund and the falling rolls the same as the previous year. It was felt that they were clearly estimates but actual evidence is needed to support the figures.
- 7.15 Rebecca Sherwood highlighted that paragraph 5 raised her concerns about central retentions in the Early Years block, in particular the Early Help Service. In addition nursery schools were providing meals to those children whose parents are eligible for free school meals but are not receiving any funding for such, which is in fact a responsibility of the LA to provide. Russell Dyer said he will respond directly to the nursery schools on this matter.
- 7.16 Rebecca Sherwood then referred to Appendix F of the report which set out the service details for Early Years retention, which needed to be updated and requested a financial breakdown of the £557k being allocated to the Early Help Service.
- 7.17 It was confirmed that the formal decisions on the delegated and centrally retained budgets would be taken at the January 2018 meeting.

## 8. Schools Funding Formula 2018

- 8.1 The report on the Schools Budget and the Schools Funding Formula for 2018-19 had been previously circulated to members. The key issue in the report was the models that the Schools Forum had requested to illustrate how the shift of 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block could be reflected in the values of the relevant factors in the 2018-19 Schools Funding Formula. These were appendices B and C.
- 8.2 Steve Morrison explained that since the formula came into being the principle of a lump sum had been applied in that no matter the school size, there were certain expenditures that were common to all schools, for example every school has to have a Headteacher, Premises Manager etc.
- 8.3 The new National Funding Formula (NFF) accepted this principle, however at a reduced funding level to that used in Southwark. At the same time the NFF was moving to standardise the value of the other factors especially the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU), therefore it is advisable not to use a differential AWPU to achieve the LA's wish to move funding to the High Needs Block. As the NFF was reducing the Lump Sum it would be preferable for the Lump Sum to be used as the vehicle to reduce the monies in the Schools Block.
- 8.4 This logic was discussed. Anita Gallagher was concerned, however, about the impact on the small primary schools in the borough and the fact that the minimum funding guarantee does not apply to the lump sum component of the formula. Members were also concerned about the overall level of funding being reduced because of the impact to some schools of falling rolls, and the effects of the higher per pupil de-delegation being taken from their budgets.
- 8.5 Members were then asked to vote on the proposed option of a lump sum reduction (Option 1) to produce the necessary level of funds to be transferred to the High Needs Block.
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|-------------|---|
| In Favour   | 7 |
| Against     | 1 |
| Abstentions | 2 |

## 9. Southwark Scheme for Financing Schools

- 9.1 This draft copy for consultation with all schools was noted. The LA also informed the Schools Forum that the Department for Communities and Local Government was requiring councils to close the 2017-18 accounts two weeks earlier than the previous year. The Schools Forum was concerned that this was not achievable for most schools and that the rules on accruals meant that it distorted the total spend for the year and also their balances.

## 10. Date of Future Meetings

18 January 2018, 22 March 2018, 17 May 2018, 12 July 2018

## Annex A

## SCHOOLS FORUM ATTENDANCE SHEET

7<sup>th</sup> December 2017

## VOTING MEMBERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PRESENT
Anita Gallagher	Primary School Headteacher	Yes
Manda George	Primary School Headteacher	Yes
Pia Longman	Primary School Headteacher	Yes
Gregory Doey	Primary School Headteacher	Apologies
Vacant	Primary School Governor	
Vacant	Primary School Governor	
Rebecca Sherwood	Nursery School Headteacher	Yes
Simon Eccles	Special School Headteacher	Yes
Nicola Howard	Early Years – Private/Voluntary and Independent Settings	Apologies
Steve Morrison	Academy	Yes
Mickey Kelly	Academy shared	Yes
Simon Wattram		Yes
Vacant	Academy	
Maria Rodrigues	Special School Academy	Apologies
Yomi Adewoye	Pupil Referral Units	Yes
Sister Anne-Marie Niblock	Secondary School Headteacher	Yes
Kieran McIntosh	FE SEN	No
Catherine May	Diocese Board	Yes
Betty Joseph	Trade Unions	Yes

## Senior Officers in Attendance

Nina Dohel	Yes
Jenny Brennan	Yes
Terry Segarty	Yes
Russell Dyer	Yes
Kamaljit Kaur	Yes
Neil Gordon-Orr	Yes
David Cross	Clerk