

Bristol Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 27th September, 2022
at 5.00 pm at Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present:

Councillor Asher Craig	Cabinet Member for Children Services, Education and Equalities
Trish Dodds	Primary Governor Rep, Fishponds Academy
Simon Eakins	Academy Primary Head Rep, Cathedral Primary
Simon Holmes	Nursery Head Rep, St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Tracy Jones	Primary Head, Merchants Academy
Sarah Lovell (Chair)	Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep, Bristol Brunel Academy
Kate Matheson	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, St Barnabas
Steve Mills	UNISON
Aileen Morrison	PRU Head, St Matthias Park
Richard Penska	PRU Governor Rep, Northstar
Cedric Sanguignol	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Bishop Road Primary
Cameron Shaw	Secondary Head, Bristol Metropolitan Academy
Simon Shaw	Secondary Head, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Samantha Packer	Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) Early Years
Rebecca Watkin	Head, Special, LearnMAT
Aderyn Zajicova	Nursery Governor, The Limes Nursery School

In attendance from Bristol City Council:

Denise Murray	Director: Finance
Richard Hanks (RH)	Interim Director of Education and Skills
Angel Lai (AL)	Finance Manager (Children's and Education)
Alison Hurley (AH)	Senior Advisor: Education (Interim)
Travis Young (TY)	Senior Accountant
Samantha Wilcock (SW)	Clerk to Schools Forum

	Action
14. Welcome	
SL welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
15. Forum Standing Business	
a. Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received from: Karen Brown – Secondary Governor, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple Melanie Bunce – Primary Head, St Barnabas Chris Pring – Primary Head, Whitehall Primary School Stephanie Williams – Bannerman Road Community Academy Mick O'Neill-Duff – Primary Governor, Wansdyke Primary Emma Richards – Head Special Maintained, Claremont School Liz Townsend – Diocese of Bristol Board of Education	
b. Quorate	

<p>The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p> <p>c. Resignations There were no new resignations since the previous meeting.</p> <p>d. Appointment of New Members There were no new appointments since the previous meeting.</p> <p>e. Notification of Vacancies The following vacancies were noted: 2 Secondary Academy Governor Representatives for which an advert had been circulated with a closing date of the 20 October 2022. 1 Clifton Diocese Representative</p> <p>f. Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
16. Minutes of the Previous Meeting	
<p>RESOLVED – that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.</p> <p>Matters Arising (within the minutes)</p> <p>Insurance A breakdown of costs within the Risk Protections Arrangement (RPA) had been provided and circulated as requested.</p> <p>Task and Finish Groups The Early Years Task and Finish Group had met in early September. Anyone interested in becoming involved with those groups should contact the Clerk. ALL</p> <p>School Places Update RH reported that IB was expected to present the latest position to the Forum in November. IB, SW</p> <p>Family Hubs A brief update would be provided during the verbal update from the Director of Education and Skills later in the meeting. The subject will return to a future meeting. RH, SW</p>	
17. Update from Director of Education and Skills	
<p>RH gave a verbal presentation which outlined the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A panel of representatives with a broad range of roles and experience had been brought together within the ‘Belonging with SEND’ programme for 2022-2023. The Panel, focused on inclusion within mainstream schools and settings, had met initially to discuss the allocation of funding in line with a strong evidence base and in conjunction with sustainability, scalability, value for money as well as alignment with other strategies. The Forum were asked to support the incorporation of already identified (“oven ready”) 	

projects into the programme. It was recognised that some programmes may need to send feedback after the end of the 2022-2023 timeframe.

2. Maintained Nursery Schools and Early Years SEND funding agreed by the Forum meeting had been allocated to pieces of work within the sector. Updates would be provided to the Forum via the Early Years Working Group.
3. The application for funding for Family Hubs had progressed well. Funding would be released in two waves and updates would be provided to subsequent meetings as requested.
4. The two proposed new secondary schools had been agreed with planning permission sought for September 2022. Admission arrangements were being developed. Initial catchment areas had been cast wide to lessen impact on surrounding schools with conversations initiated regarding the longer term.
5. 142 specialist school places had been created within phase one, with 82 delivered and the remaining 60 to be online between September 2022 and March 2023. Phase two would deliver the Mayor's pledged 450 new places.

The following comments were raised in response:

1. The Forum were supportive of the use of the "oven ready" tried and tested programmes.
2. Where it would take longer than the academic year to see the long term impacts, requirements could be put in place to report back to the LA officers and the Forum.

18. Update on the Dedicated School Grant 2023-24

TY presented to the Forum and outlined emerging DSG funding levels for 2023-2024. It was highlighted that:

1. The figures were based on the current pupil data therefore subject to change.
2. Early Years had not formed a part of the announcement.
3. The Finance Sub Group would be reconvened prior to the next meeting of the Forum to consider the implications of the National Funding Formula (NFF) Factor values 2023-24 compared to the current local formula factor values and what it meant for Bristol schools.
4. BCC was considering adding School Improvement into the de-delegation consideration for 2023-2024. Consultation information would be released following agreement of the Schools Forum and return for consideration in November.

Following questions in response to the presentation, the forum was advised:

1. The consultation would cover 3 issues;
 - i. If the LA chose to use flexibility if it would be supported
 - ii. The funding formula impacting all schools
 - iii. Elements of de-delegation (for maintained primary and secondary schools).
2. Simon Eakins, Cedric Sanguignol and Richard Penska volunteered for the Funding Sub Group.

It was AGREED that the Schools Forum:

- a) **Noted the indicative 2023/24 funding levels**
- b) **Noted the transition to a hard NFF will begin in 2023-24 and the proposed restrictions relating to the DSG School Block**

- c) **Noted that the LA will consult with schools on items in the local formula, particularly MFG, transfers between blocks, and formula factors.**
- d) **Agreed to the introduction of a new de-delegated service area, for school improvement activities, following the cessation of the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant.**
- e) **Noted that the LA will consult with schools on their views on de-delegation, and then report the results of the consultation to Forum for their decision at the meeting in November.**
- f) **Agreed to the re-establishment of a Finance Sub-Group to consider funding formula proposals for 2023-24.**

19. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan Update including mitigations

CM introduced the report and highlighted to the following:

1. At the end of Q2 there was an in-year deficit of £19.9m with the forecast of a cumulative deficit at the end of the current year of £44.5m.
2. The DSG Management Plan forecast unmitigated deficit of £128.3million at the end of 2027/28.
3. It had been forecast that the upwards projection for EHCPs would level off at the end of the COVID pandemic, however that trend had not materialised so the current projections now reflected continuing increasing cost.
4. Mitigation plans were being outlined, explored and projected. If all mitigation plans were adopted it was forecast that the budget could balance by 2027/28 (although the deficit would still remain).
5. The DfE template provided a useful tool of evidence based strategic planning.

DM confirmed that as BCC had been prepared and ready to progress, they had been accelerated into wave/tranche 1 of the Delivering Best Value (DBV) programme. Officers were determined to keep moving forward and work collaboratively in order to reach sustainability.

CLlr Craig expressed her disappointment that BCC had not been allocated to be part of the 'Safety Valve' programme given the size of Bristol, the pockets of deprivation and the need for and request for financial assistance.

Officers confirmed that all proposed mitigations were in varying stages of development and required further consideration including quality control, equality impact assessments and consultation with key stakeholders. A communication plan would involve all elements of the Forum membership.

RH introduced the mitigation methods outlined within the second report and requested Schools Forum approval to engage and consult the sector on the mitigations for a six week engagement process to November 2022.

Some mitigations outlined within the report were existing pieces of work with fully established EQUI. Others were in development with EQUIs to be progressed as part of the process. RH outlined the seven key themes (A-G) and in response the following points were raised:

Theme B : Non-statutory Top and Early Intervention

- Schools applied for top up funding and where awarded could be for up to three years after which a review ascertained whether the child could be moved to ordinary provision or required a needs assessment.
- Officers planned to ascertain whether the process of Top Up funding has moved away from the original intention as it was not intended to supplement any backlog in the EHCP assessment and provision.
- Mitigations were specifically linked to the DSG. The Schools Forum funding previously agreed would provide support for the Early Years sector capacity for early intervention.

Theme E : Specialist Place Funding

- It was agreed that modelling information to provide of the number of children who could be potentially impacted would be important in terms of providing context within engagement information.

The Schools Forum confirmed they supported the themes as outlined, with the importance of the consultation highlighting potential impacts. The Schools Forum asked to be kept aware of the timeframe and methods of communication.

The Schools Forum:

- a) **Noted the update to the plan**
- b) **Noted the feedback and comments**
- c) **Noted the plan will be presented to Schools Forum, High Needs Working Group and Early Years Working Group regularly and at least on a termly basis.**

20. Update on High Needs (Delivering Best Value)

AH presented slides published within the agenda pack and highlighted the following key points:

1. BCC had been selected for wave one of the Delivering Best Value programme. That did not prevent a move into the Safety Valve programme at a later date.
2. The DfE partners assigned to assist BCC were consultancy firm Newton Europe, who focus on specialising on operational improvements, and CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting) who focus on financial scrutiny.
3. The programme had the key focus on sustainability and delivering better value within the SEND system. This included service efficiencies, early intervention and increasing capacity.
4. There were three modules. Module one involved historical data presentation for evidence led analysis. In mid October, module two would focus on the key areas that could have the highest impact to deliver better outcomes for children as well as financial sustainability for BCC.
5. Module three would commence from mid November alongside qualitative engagement to clearly identify areas for improvement for the biggest impact.
6. The resulting plan would help in forming the basis of a grant application to access funding from the DfE.
7. Engagement would dovetail with work ongoing within DSG Management Plan Mitigations and the High Needs Recovery Plan.

There were no questions raised and AH was thanked for her presentation. Updates would be provided to future meetings.

<p>21. DSG Budget Monitor 2022/23 Period 5 Quarter 2 (P5 Q2)</p>	
<p>AL presented the report which outlined year to date expenditure as of the end of August 2022.</p> <p>The following points were highlighted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The second quarter forecast showed an in-year deficit overspend of £19.906m compared to £15.618m in Q1 which represented an adverse movement of £4.288m. 2. The High Needs top up demand continued to rise with 204 new cases and re-banding requests from 106 cases. This totalled an additional £1.343m spend from the June Panel meeting. <p>-</p> <p>In response to comments raised, the following information was provided;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. There were three Panel meetings a year, the requests to June Panel had been higher than expected. 3. It had been hoped there would be a reverse trend in demand post COVID but in fact there had been an continued increase trend. <p>The Schools Forum noted the in-year 2022/23 position for the overall DSG.</p>	
<p>22. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>The Chair of the High Needs Funding Working Group reported that the group had met in early September. They had agreed that it was important for the mitigations work to be regularly reviewed using an appropriate format.</p> <p>The Chair of the Early Needs Working Group reported that the group had met in early September. They welcomed the Forum agreed funding for development work within Early Years. The Working Group had heard about options for improvements to the geographical groupings and systems within Early Years.</p> <p>SP highlighted the pressures of recruitment and retention within the high needs sector. SP reported that she and two colleagues would be visited by the DfE as an opportunity to deliver views and concerns from within the settings. Any additional comments/suggestions were welcome.</p> <p>The Chair reminded the Forum that the next meeting in November 2022 would be in-person at City Hall, College Green.</p>	

The meeting closed at 6.40 pm.