

# Bristol Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 24th November, 2020

at 5.00 pm at Virtual Meeting - Zoom Committee Meeting with Public Access via YouTube

## Present:

Karen Brown	Maintained Secondary Governor Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Marian Curran	14 to 19 Citywide Partnership
Rob Davies	Nursery Governor Rep, Speedwell and Little Hayes Nursery Federation
Simon Eakins	Academy Primary Head Rep, Cathedral Primary
Rob Endley	Recognised Teaching Professional Associations (NASUWT)
Kris Hristakev	Special School Governor, Woodway Association
Simon Holmes	Nursery Head Rep, St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Sarah Lovell	Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Learning Federation
Kate Matheson	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, St Barnabas Primary
Garry Maher	Non School Member, Diocese of Clifton Rep
Aileen Morrison	Pupil Referral Unit Rep, St Matthias Park
Steve Mills	Non School Member, UNISON
Ruth Pickersgill	Academy Secondary Governor Rep, City Academy
Chris Pring	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Primary
Emma Richards	Special School Head, Claremont School
Cedric Sanguignol	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Bishop Road Primary
Simon Shaw	Maintained Secondary Head Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Christine Townsend	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Whitehall Primary
Stephanie Williams	Academy Primary Head Rep, Bannerman Road Community Academy
David Yorath	Academy Secondary Governor Rep, Cotham School

## In attendance from Bristol City Council:

Graham Booth	Finance Manager
Corrina Haskins	Clerk to Schools Forum
Alison Hurley	Director of Education & Skills
Ali Mannering	Trading with Schools Manager
Denise Murray	Director of Finance
Travis Young	Corporate Finance

	Action
<b>1. Welcome</b>	
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
<b>2. Forum Standing Business</b>	
<b>a. Apologies for absence</b> Apologies for absence were received from: Trish Dodds - Academy Primary Governor Rep, Fishponds Academy, Councillor Anna Keen - Bristol City Council Cabinet Member – Education and Skills	
<b>b. Quorate</b>	

The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.

### c. Resignations

There were no resignations to report.

### d. Appointment of New Members

The Clerk advised of the following new members:

Rob Endley – Trade Union Representative

Melanie Bunce – Maintained Primary Head Representative, St Barnabas

### e. Notification of Vacancies

The Clerk advised of the following Schools Forum Vacancies:

- One Primary Academy Head
- Two Primary Maintained Heads
- Two Primary Academy Governors
- Two Secondary Academy Heads
- One Secondary Academy Governor

### f. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 3. Chair's Update

The Chair asked Members to undertake the Department for Education produced Schools Forum self-evaluation in order to produce useful feedback on how the Forum could improve. She asked Members to complete the evaluation by the end of the calendar year.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/888263/Schools\\_forum\\_self-assessment\\_checklist.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888263/Schools_forum_self-assessment_checklist.pdf)

## 4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

**RESOLVED** - that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

## 5. Verbal Update from Director: Education and Skills

AH gave a verbal update as follows:

- Acknowledged the ongoing challenges faced by schools as a result of the Covid pandemic and thanked representatives for attending the meeting;
- Confirmed that, although some time had been diverted to Covid related work, the key priorities of the education transformation programme were still being met;
- SEND system transformation update:
  - The LA was continuing to respond to the Written Statement of Action;
  - There had been a virtual monitoring visit during November from DfE and NHS England;
  - There had been 89% completion/near completion against the 66 milestones and a summary would be made public in the local offer as well as being sent to Heads through the bulletin and there would also be a full milestone update to Schools Forum in January;

- Although 89% compliant, the key area of where milestones had not been met was the strategy to develop additional specialist provision. This strategy, to expand and repurpose space within existing specialist and mainstream schools, was launched in February and 78 expressions of interest were received. However, a setback had occurred during the first lockdown as onsite feasibility studies could not be completed. Although some of the work had since been carried out, further challenges caused by Covid meant that work would be delayed until the spring term.
- Alternative Learning Provision Review: was coming to an end and there would be a report back on the outcome of the review. AH thanked everyone who engaged in the process.
- Y7 sufficiency in East Central: DfE had been unable to progress with opening of the school in Temple Quarter due to delays in securing planning permission. The Council was now working closely with Cabot Learning Federation to identify additional space and capacity and there was a report going to Cabinet in December to look at relocating Sixth Form students in a single site to free up additional space.

AH responded to questions as follows:

- In relation to the sufficiency places, once space in existing schools had been created, the additional 140 students would remain there for the rest of their secondary school education;
- Alternative Provision in mainstream schools would be funded through a service level agreement;
- The relocation of Sixth Form students would this take place from September 2021.

**RESOLVED** that the verbal update be noted.

## **6. Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Budget Monitor 2020-21 (Period 7)**

GB introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

- Period 7 was the period up until the end of October;
- Since the previous period, there had been change in relation to the High Needs Block with the in-year overspend now being forecast as £8m;
- The overspend had largely been associated with top ups due to an increase in both numbers and costs and further details were outlined in appendix 2;
- In special schools there were over 100 more pupils receiving top ups and 400 more in mainstream schools with more pupils in the higher bands. Also Sixth Form colleges had a significant increase in the last couple of years at the cost of an extra £1m per year to the High Needs Block.

AH confirmed that:

- the Education Transformation Programme was designed to improve the SEND system rather than cut costs;
- the increase in number of EHCPs being processed had therefore led to an increase in costs;
- there was also a national trend for an increase in requests for ECHPs;
- in the longer term the financial position would be more stable as the right provision was in place.

In response to a question about what the Local Authority was planning to do to reduce the

deficit in the High Needs Block and why the level of deficit was not identified earlier, the following points were made:

- the position was not sustainable and the LA were looking at a number of options, including lobbying for additional government funding as this was a national problem where the level of funding did not meet the increase in demand for SEND provision;
- The work of Transformation Programme would address the sustainability of the High Needs Block e.g. the LA was investing capital funding into increasing places in the right settings;
- The DfE had issued a deficit management plan for Local Authorities which was a useful tool would be used in conjunction with the longer term business plan;
- The information on how Bristol City Council spent its capital allocation was not the remit of the Schools Forum, but this information could be shared at future meetings;
- Although the increasing deficit had been predicted for a while, a lot of work had needed to be undertaken from a data perspective to give the full picture.

The following responses were given in response to questions raised by Forum Members:

- The increase in deficit was partly due to clearing the backlog of ECHP applications, 639 had been processed so far in the current year compared to 410 for the whole of the previous year;
- It was also acknowledged that schools were not able to meet SEND needs from their budgets and there was a big piece of work linked to ordinarily available provision in schools and part of that was setting a strong foundation that was equitable and consistent across schools; the “belonging strategy” - a wider strategy to make sure SEND students could attend school and have their needs met; the workforce development programme to meet a wide range of needs as part of everyday funding;
- More work was needed to understand the full picture of why there was an increase in applications for both top up funding and EHCPs;
- Bristol was unique in having non-funded ECHPs and this was something that needed to be reviewed;
- In relation to Bristol pupils in other Local Authorities, the banding was based on the individual;
- Local Authorities were still lobbying the government about the lack of SEND funding for further education colleges and it was noted that the work to try and get young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) back into education would impact the SEND funding in colleges;

In response to concerns raised that there was an increasing number of SEND children entering early years/nursery who were not able to see a paediatrician or health visitor to enable them to access early support, AH confirmed that there were some actions in the Written Statement of Action and milestones on early intervention and undertook to provide a detailed update to SH.

DM summed up from a financial perspective:

- The overarching financial position was a significant increase in-year and further work was required to establish whether this would increase further by the end of the year;
- Further work was also required to analyse if any of the additional SEND expenditure was Covid related and therefore whether any additional support from government was available as a Covid response grant;
- In relation to Early Years, it was noted that in previous years the EY block had an underspend and this year there was a forecast overspend which was largely contributed

to SEND;

- Bristol City Council had made significant representations to government, including the monthly returns to the MHCLG; the comprehensive spending review and the Mayor had also written to the Secretary of State;
- Deficit management plan allowed for a longer term recovery as the reality was that the scale could not continue to grow at the current level. Bristol City Council would need to start discussions with auditors as the DSG deficit now exceeded the level of school reserves for the first time.

In response to questioning on the school reserves, DM confirmed that this did not include academy reserves and also that the reserves would have been greater in previous years when the majority of schools were local authority maintained.

**RESOLVED** that the in-year 2020/21 position for the overall DSG be noted.

### **7. Schools Block School Funding Formula 2021/22**

The Chair asked members for a steer for the Schools Block/funding formula for 2021/22 in advance of final decisions being taken at the Forum meeting in January.

GB outlined the following:

- The final DfE allocations would be available in January and the data in the report and appendices was provisional based on October 2019 data;
- The rules were largely similar to previous years with a few minor amendments;
- There was still a wish to move to a hard national funding formula, but for 2021/22 there was still discretion for a local funding formula;
- There had been a change to the basis for assigning IDACI bands;
- The teachers' pay and pension grants had been subsumed into the DSG and tweaks had been made to ensure schools would get an additional amount per pupil;
- The view of Forum was sought on a block transfer to High Needs of 0.5%;
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee could be set between +0.5% and 2% and last year an MFG of 0.5% had been agreed;
- A proposed block transfer of 0.5% was proposed to the High Needs Block to fund education transformation work;
- It was proposed to keep the lump sum at £125k;
- Members were asked to support a disapplication for Avanti Gardens. Avanti Gardens used to be an all through school (Steiner School) and was now primary only and so without the disapplication the school would be protected at a higher level rather than being based only on primary factors;
- There had been a consultation with schools in the beginning of November and a summary of the responses was included in Appendix B;
- There was no proposal to re-establish the falling rolls fund as very few schools would be eligible.

In response to a question about how the schools block subtotal of £280m for 2021/22 compared with the 2020/21 allocation and the overall percentage increase, members were advised that it was difficult to compare, but taking off the £2m allocated for the Growth Fund, the block had increased by 3.1%.

In response to a question about whether some of the gains that schools may get for additional

funding may be lost from IDACI re-bandings, it was confirmed that the rebasing would result in less money being given out through the formula but the minimum funding guarantee was still positive and so schools would not lose out.

It was clarified that the extra capacity planned for Year 7 in East Bristol was not included in the growth fund table as this was a future proposal rather than a known commitment.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) the changes in the formula methodology for 2021/22 be noted;
- (2) the following proposed arrangements for the 2021/22 mainstream funding formula be AGREED subject to a final decision in January 2021:
  - a. transfer 0.5% to High Needs Block;
  - b. set MFG at 0.5%;
  - c. retain lump sum at current level (£125k);
  - d. allocate any spare funding (after mandated items) to AEN;
  - e. allocate £2m to Growth Fund;
- (3) the submission of the disapplication of the present MFG and use of a recalculated MFG for Avanti Gardens in 2021/22 be agreed.

## 8. De-delegation

On behalf of the Maintained Primary School representatives, CP reported that it had been agreed to continue with the Employee and Premises Insurance until the end of the contract, but requested that the LA look at Risk Protection Arrangements in school in the future. It had also been agreed that although the representatives supported the de delegation of Trade Union facility time, the contribution be paused in the current year in order to use up the reserves.

Rob Endley made a statement on behalf of the joint teaching unions in support of de-delegation of Trades Union facility time.

- (1) Forum noted the outcomes of the consultation on school funding arrangements;
- (2) **Maintained primary school representatives of Schools Forum** voted on the de-delegation of the following services at the amounts per pupil indicated for 2021-22:
  - a) Employee and Premises Insurance £31.06 AGREED
  - b) Assessment of eligibility for free school meals £1.14 AGREED
  - c) Maternity supply cover £31.17 AGREED
  - d) Schools in financial difficulty AGREED to de delegate but carry forward from previous year
  - e) Trades Union facility time AGREED to de delegate but carry forward from previous year
  - f) Education psychology NOT AGREED
- (3) **Maintained secondary school representatives AGREED** the de-delegation of the following services at the amounts per pupil indicated for 2021-22:
  - a) Employee and Premises Insurance £39.38;
  - b) Assessment of eligibility for free school meals £1.14;
  - c) Maternity supply cover £45.27 ;
  - d) Trades Union facility time £3.85;
  - e) Health and safety roving reps £0.91;
  - f) Education psychology £5.63.

## 9. Trading with Schools Annual Report

AM introduced the Trading with Schools (TwS) Annual report and drew attention to the following:

- The Annual Report was an opportunity to focus on the quality and quantity of work carried out by the TwS;
- As manager, AM was proud of the achievements, it had been a challenging year as there had been a significant change before Covid when TwS was moved to the Commercialisation Team followed by the rapid transformation of ways of working as a result of the Covid pandemic;
- A number of services were moved out of TwS but a single point of contact was retained for the benefit of customers;
- What went well: customer retention remained high and TwS was the provider of choice for many educational settings;
- TwS continued to work towards BCC priorities;
- TwS was preparing 21-22 services and organising a virtual event for annual orders;
- TwS had recently been transferred back to Education and Skills under the management of AH;
- AM thanked all colleagues for their continued support.

**RESOLVED** that the Trading with Schools Annual Report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.13 pm.