

# Bristol Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 30th March, 2021

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
Melanie Bunce	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, St Barnabas
Josh Connor	Non School Member, UNISON
Rob Davies	Nursery Governor Rep, Speedwell and Little Hayes Nursery Federation
Trish Dodds	Academy Primary Governor Rep, Fishponds Academy
Simon Eakins	Academy Primary Head Rep, Cathedral Primary
Lorraine Gibbs	Non School Member, UNITE
Simon Holmes	Nursery Head Rep, St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Garry Maher	Non School Member, Diocese of Clifton Rep
Kate Matheson	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, St Barnabas
Aileen Morrison	Pupil Referral Unit Rep, St Matthias Park
Sam Packer	Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) Early Years Rep
Ruth Pickersgill	Academy Secondary Governor Rep, City Academy
Chris Pring	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Primary
Cedric Sanguinol	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Bishop Road Primary
Simon Shaw	Maintained Secondary Head Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Christine Townsend (Chair)	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:

Abioye Asimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager (Children's and Education)
Corrina Haskins (Clerk)	Clerk to Schools Forum
Alison Hurley (AH)	Director of Education and Skills
Denise Murray (DM)	Director of 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: Rob Endley, Tracy Jones, Cllr Anna Keen, Emma Richards and Sarah Lovell.	
<b>b. Quorate</b> The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.	
<b>c. Resignations</b>	

There were no resignations to report.

**d. Appointment of New Members**

There were no new members to report.

**e. Notification of Vacancies**

The Clerk advised of the following Schools Forum vacancies which would be subject to changes following the discussion on the Composition (item 6):

- One Primary Academy Head;
- One Primary Maintained Heads;
- Two Primary Academy Governors;
- Two Secondary Academy Heads;
- One Secondary Academy Governor;
- One Special School Governor.

**f. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

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

Matters Arising

AH confirmed that the Early Years information relating to the Education Transformation Programmed had now been progressed.

In response to concerns raised at the previous meeting in relation to the change in census days to determine Pupil Premium funding, DM confirmed that the profile of this issue had been raised and a letter had been written to the relevant Government department. CP confirmed that he had received a response that the change in dates had been to allow pp funding to be calculated earlier and therefore form part of the budget setting process, however there would be no tangible impact as the schools would not be receiving the figures until June.

**4. Update by Director of Education and Skills**

AH gave an update as follows:

- It had not been possible to bring the outcome of the Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) Review and Action Plan or the DSG Management Plan to this meeting as more work was required on financial modelling and engagement with partners and stakeholders;
- She proposed the establishment of Forum task and finish groups relating to (1) High Needs Block (including AP) and (2) Early Years with a view to ensuring that the Forum Members were involved in the financial elements of the co-production;
- a work in progress report wasn't considered appropriate due to the need for the joint ownership of the work and actions and to publish the actions without the accompanying plan could create concern and anxiety;
- In view of the challenges of timings, it was proposed that the Schools Forum meeting scheduled for May be replaced by a meeting in June to bring these two reports forward.

The Chair advised that she had been contacted by a member of the public and the Chair of the

People Scrutiny Commission expressing concern that the ALP Review report was not available for this meeting. She questioned why this was not known at the Scrutiny Commission meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> March, especially in view of the importance and sensitivity around this issue in the community. AH/DM responded that, on internal review, the reports were not ready to be signed off and did not have the appropriate level of engagement with stakeholders and that a delay was necessary to create more meaningful and credible documents. AH also confirmed that People Scrutiny Commission would have an opportunity to scrutinise the detail of the ALP review.

Following further questioning, it was confirmed that there would be sufficient notice of changes post-engagement and the action plan would reflect the timescale and lead-in time for decisions. It was agreed that the timescales would need to be taken into account when agreeing the date of the next Schools Forum meeting. In response to concerns raised about the impact of delay on students and their families, AH confirmed that some of the actions could be moved on quite quickly.

DM confirmed that there was not a specified deadline to submit information, but the Council would look to inform the DfE of the revised timeline and the indicative date for the next stage of the process.

Forum Members agreed that concerns be recorded about the delay in reviewing ALP services and the impact on the lives of the young people and their families.

The following members volunteered to participate in the proposed Task and Finish Groups:

1. High Needs:

Aileen Morrison, Ruth Pickersgill and Christine Townsend.

2. Early Years:

Rob Davies, Simon Holmes and Sam Packer.

It was agreed that the Clerk would contact all Members to ask if anyone else would be interested in participating in the groups.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) that the update be noted;
- (2) that a High Needs Task and Finish Group and Early Years Task and Finish Group be set up to look at the detail of the DSG Management Plan and ALP Outcome of Review and Action Plan prior to these reports being considered at the next meeting of Schools Forum in June.

**5. DSG Budget Monitor 2020-21**

AA introduced himself as the new Finance Manager for Children's and Education Services and highlighted the key issues in the report as follows:

- this was the position at the end of period 9, December 2020, and there had not been much movement since the last report;
- The High Needs and Early Years Blocks continued to be the main risks;
- Early Years – there was a significant risk to the expected income from this block arising from lower January 2021 census numbers;
- High Needs – the impact of panel meetings may add further pressure to the budget as

well as import/export adjustments for Bristol children educated outside of the local authority area and children from outside the area educated within Bristol.

Forum Members expressed concern about the Early Years funding situation and asked what the Local Authority had been doing to escalate these concerns. AH confirmed that Bristol City Council was lobbying the DfE on this issue in a number of different forums.

Representatives from Early Years thanked Bristol City Council for its support, in particular the COVID-19 Sustainability Grant which had been welcomed by the sector at this difficult time. It was also acknowledged that COVID-19 had a big impact on the most deprived areas and poorest people and Forum members asked that consideration be given to addressing inequalities in terms of funding mechanisms. Members also raised the issue of the national underspend in Early Years funding of £62m and expressed the view that this should be reallocated to the areas that needed it.

As AP representative, AM also raised a similar funding issue in relation to the AP sector and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic where the lack of pupil referrals was having an impact on the budget and AP was facing a large deficit. She appealed for help from the local authority to help bridge the gap. AA clarified that in relation to the COVID-19 sustainability grant, the Council did not have any discretion about the government funding but had supported maintained settings in the bidding process.

CP raised the issue of De-delegated funding and undertook to send through a template for having a set of accounts for the services that are de-delegated with a view to this being included on the agenda for the next meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## 6. Composition

AH introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

- The composition was reviewed on an annual basis to take into account any changes in pupil numbers;
- The composition had not changed for a number of years and the proposed reduction in size brought Bristol Schools Forum into line with other areas as well as addressing the ongoing difficulty in filling vacancies;
- The changes had been suggested in consultation with the Council's legal and equalities officers;
- The changes also took into account the priorities going forward in terms of the High Needs block;
- There was minimal change in current membership;
- Any changes could occur when terms of office expired and members would not be asked to stand down if their position was not in the amended composition.

AH responded to comments and questions raised by Forum members as follows:

- *As the number of representatives from high needs has increased, why was consideration not given for parental representation?*  
It was felt that non-school representation did not need changing.
- *Concern at the proposal to reduce the representation of maintained secondary school representatives from 1 head and 1 gov to 1 across the board for the following*

*reasons:*

- *Despite vacancies in other areas, these roles have been filled and representatives have made a valuable contribution to Schools Forum;*  
The proposal was made on the basis of data, there are 2 maintained secondary schools and 20 academies and so there was a need to reflect pupil numbers.
- *The 2 maintained secondary schools are both faith schools and so this should also be taken into consideration;*  
There are also 2 Diocese non-school members.
- *Why is pupil numbers data taken into consideration for schools and academies places but not published for other positions;*  
The regulations require that certain sectors are represented regardless of pupil numbers.
- *There may be a perception that an increase in representatives from AP may be more likely to agree proposals from the LA for budget movement to the high needs block;*  
The increase in AP representation reflected previous discussions at the Schools Forum to focus on High Needs. Also, mainstream providers also support pupils with SEND.
- *It was important that Forum members represented their sectors and more work was needed to ensure governors/trustees in the city were engaged in the work of the Forum.*

## **7. Results of Self Assessment**

The Chair proposed that a Task and Finish Sub-Group be set up before June to consider the results of the self-assessment and review the constitution in light of new composition and asked the clerk to make the necessary arrangements.

## **8. Any Other Business**

### **1. Impact of covid-19 on the budget of AP settings**

This was discussed under item 5.

### **2. Amendment to The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations**

The Chair reported that the regulations had been amended to make permanent provisions to enable schools forum meetings to be held remotely, with the caveat that consideration be given to how interested parties who do not have telephone or online facilities could access meetings.

In response to questions about how the Council were planning to hold meetings in the future and whether there was a possibility of holding a face to face meeting with virtual access, DM confirmed that the Council was not in a position to deliver hybrid meetings at the moment, but was investigating what technology, room facilities and investment was required to make this an option in the future.

Members agreed that it would not be possible to return to physical meetings in the same way as before the pandemic as the facilities would not allow for social distancing

<p>and it was further agreed that meetings should continue to be held virtually for the remainder of the academic year and the return to physical meetings be considered for September.</p>	
---	--

The meeting closed at 6.40 pm.