

Bristol Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 30th November, 2021
at 5.00 pm via Zoom

Present:

Melanie Bunce	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, St Barnabas
Rob Davies	Nursery Governor Rep, Speedwell and Little Hayes Nursery Federation
Simon Eakins	Academy Primary Head Rep, Cathedral Primary
Simon Holmes	Nursery Head Rep, St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Tracy Jones	Academy Primary Headteacher Rep, Merchants Academy
Sarah Lovell (Vice-Chair)	Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep, Bristol Metropolitan Academy
Kate Matheson	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, St Barnabas
Steve Mills	Non School Member, UNISON
Aileen Morrison	Pupil Referral Unit Rep, St Matthias Park
David Otlet	Recognised Teaching Professional Association (NEU)
Sam Packer	Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) Early Years
Chris Pring	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Primary
Emma Richards	Maintained Special School Headteacher Rep, Claremont
Cedric Sanguignol	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Bishop Road Primary
Simon Shaw	Maintained Secondary Head Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Jeff Sutton	Non School Member, GMB
Liz Townend	Diocese of Bristol Board of Education
Rebecca Watkin	Academy Special School Headteacher Rep, LearnMAT
Stephanie Williams	Academy Primary Head Rep, Bannerman Road Community Academy

In attendance from Bristol City Council:

Abioye Asimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager
Councillor Asher Craig	Cabinet Member for Children Services, Education and Equalities
Samantha Flowers (SF)	Programme Manager, Education Transformation
Corrina Haskins (CH)	Clerk to Schools Forum
Alison Hurley (AH)	Director of Education and Skills
Denise Murray (DM)	Director of Finance
Angel Lai (AL)	Finance Manager (Children's and Education)
Travis Young (TY)	Principal Accountant

	Action
1. Welcome	
SL (Vice-Chair) chaired the meeting in the absence of a Chair.	
Cllr Craig was welcomed to the meeting as the new Cabinet member for Children Services, Education and Equalities.	
2. Forum Standing Business	
a. Apologies for absence	
Apologies for absence were received from:	

<p>Trish Dodds, Academy Primary Governor Rep, Fishponds Academy Cameron Shaw, Academy Secondary Head Rep, Bristol Metropolitan</p> <p>b. Quorate The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p> <p>c. Resignations The Clerk reported the resignation of Ruth Pickersgill, Academy Secondary Governor Rep, City Academy.</p> <p>d. Appointment of New Members There were no new Members to report.</p> <p>e. Notification of Vacancies The following vacancies were noted: 2 x Academy Secondary Governor Rep Academy Primary Governor Rep PRU Governor Rep Clifton Diocese Rep</p> <p>f. Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p>	
<p>RESOLVED - that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Teachers pay and pensions grant TY confirmed that the Forum Member who had raised this issue had now received a separate response with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).</p> <p>Education Transformation Programme Update It was noted that a representative of FLORA had attended the Early Years Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>Members agreed that it would be useful to include the Written Statement of Action RAG rating at the next meeting.</p> <p>In response to a request for evidence of input from Health colleagues, AH undertook to circulate the outcome of the formal monitoring visit against the Written Statement of Action which captured education, care and health input and impact.</p>	<p>AH</p> <p>AH</p>
<p>4. Director of Education and Skills Update - to include proposal for Schools Forum to continue to support Education Transformation Programme in 2022/23</p>	
<p>AH introduced the report and drew attention to the main points as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In terms of a summary of the programme to date, a lot of the early transformation work 	

was in line with the Written Statement of Action which addressed the issues raised in the 2019 SEND Inspection.

2. As a consequence of the increase in compliancy, there had been an increase in spend in the High Needs block so phase 2 of the programme was reframed into the DSG Management Plan to support development and delivery of mitigations to manage long term cost pressures and ensure best value.
3. Financial impact and forecast mitigations would be discussed under the next agenda item and a decision whether to agree in principle to the transfer of 0.5% to the High Needs Block to support phase 3 of the programme would be taken later in the meeting under the Schools Block item.
4. As part of the alignment of DSG Management Plan a DfE self-evaluation had been undertaken by Bristol City Council, and other local authorities who had experienced increased deficit budgets, as a safety valve agreement.
5. As part of this process, it was recognised that some of the projects not fully covered by phase 2 needed to be the focus for phase 3 (if funding was approved).
6. There had also been a number of discussions with Heads and the Excellence in Schools Board about how to improve inclusion across the city and be more creative about how funding is targeted. Looking at Strengthening early support and intervention.
7. This review was timely as settings were seeing more emerging needs as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
8. If funding was approved, phase 3 would be different in key areas:
 1. A smaller amount would be retained by the local authority to deliver current projects and to focus on the red/amber areas.
 2. The majority of the funding would be made available to the sector to develop a more sustainable system. This would build on citywide workforce/development to respond to emerging needs and give the sector the opportunity to share specialist knowledge through peer-to-peer programmes. The sector would identify the area of focus and there would be a bid system for funding to test and deliver programmes.

In response to a question about the application process, AH responded that there would be a formal process and a board of key stakeholders would be established to oversee applications. Once applications had been submitted and reviewed and funding allocated there would be an impact assessment and see which programmes could be scaled up for the future.

Forum Members welcomed the proposal for greater involvement by the education sector.

5. DSG Management Plan Update

AA introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

1. Schools Forum had received a detailed paper in June which described the mechanism for the DSG Management Plan.
2. Since June, the forecast position had changed following further detailed work regarding demand and analysis and an altered framework from the DfE and the latest plan, with no mitigations, showed an £89m deficit by 2025/26.
3. It was believed that, with mitigations, a reduction could be achieved to bring down the deficit to £45m in 2025/26.

As Chair of the Early Years Task and Finish Group, RD summarised the discussions held at the recent meeting:

1. There was a declining birth rate that would impact on Early Years in the first instance, but it was important to note that the birth rate varied across the city and was higher in the more deprived areas.
2. The long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was difficult to predict.
3. There was other projects going on simultaneously in the Early Years sector, so it was important to be mindful of that alongside the DSG Management work.
4. A representative of FLORA had attended the meeting and explained the value of the work and how it could be developed.

As Chair of the High Needs Task and Finish Group, AM summarised the discussions held at the recent meeting:

1. The group discussed the increase in complexity and demand, demand management and how to work collaboratively so that interventions could be put in where needed.
2. There were an increased number of applications coming through the system.
3. There was better SENCO training and as a result, more needs were being identified.
4. Bristol City Council was issuing a great number of plans which was good, but there was not always the right provision available.
5. There was more demand than capacity within the team.
6. The increase in High Needs demand and spending was a national issue and Bristol was in a similar position to a lot of other local authority areas.
7. There was a need for increased funding from Government as funding had not kept up with demand.

Schools Forum noted:

1. **the update to the Plan.**
2. **that the consultation with Schools Forum regarding the Plan following review by High Needs and Early Years Task & Finish Groups would continue.**
3. **that the Plan was intended as a dynamic document that would continue to evolve in future iterations.**
4. **additional stakeholder engagement, coproduction and engagement was required as the Plan evolved, and including Schools Forum, education institutions, parents and carers, children and young people, elected members and health partners.**
5. **the next version of the Plan would be brought to Schools Forum in the Spring term 2022.**

6. DSG Budget Monitor (P6)

AL gave an update on the DSG position as at period 6 (end of September) and confirmed that the October position would be published as part of the papers for the Cabinet meeting taking place on 14 December. She confirmed that there was a £14.5m overspend mainly due to pressures in the High Needs block.

AGREED that the in-year position for the overall DSG be noted.

7. Schools Block School Funding Formula 2022/23 including feedback from Finance Sub-Group

TY introduced the report which requested a steer from Forum Members about how to apply the funding formula. He reported that:

1. Due to tight timescales for submitting information to the ESFA in January, it was important to get an early steer on how to apply the funding formula.
2. The issues requiring a steer were whether to transfer money to the High Needs block to support the Education Transformation Programme and if so, how much; the value of the minimum funding guarantee; what value to set on funding factors including a lump sum; whether to prioritise any sector and allocate any funding for growth fund.
3. There was no proposal for a falling rolls fund.

SE reported that the Finance Sub-Group had met and looked at these issues in detail and summarised the recommendations of the Group as follows:

1. The pressure on the High Needs Block was recognised and it was agreed there should be a 0.5% transfer, however the Group requested evidence to see how the money had been spent in previous years and whether there had been an impact. It was noted that this had been addressed by the update report considered earlier in the meeting.
2. The Group had also discussed retaining the lump sum at the current level, the minimum funding guarantee and the allocation of spare funding. The Group supported maintaining the MFG at 0.5% as if it was set too high, schools would get more protection if their deprivation levels dropped.
3. In terms of the allocation of spare funding and how best to allocate, it was noted that there was not one option that was best for all schools. The Group supported more money going towards the deprivation factors and that option also benefitted the most schools.
4. The Group also had a discussion on the Growth Fund and had agreed that, where a school had come to an agreement with a local authority to expand and would be funded for a certain period to support this, it would be unfair to subsequently withdraw funding.

In response to a question about consultation with schools, TY confirmed there had been 37 responses as follows:

- 23 favoured the block transfer of 0.5% to the High Needs Block
- 36 supported the MFG set at 0.5%
- 31 preferred preserving the lump sum and supporting Additional Educational Needs (AEN);
- 18 supported favouring all sectors in the unit funding and 19 favoured supporting the primary sector.

Schools Forum members supported the proposals, subject to a final decision being made at the January meeting once funding levels had been confirmed by the EFSA.

AGREED:

1. **The changes in the formula methodology for 2022/23 be noted.**
2. **The following proposed arrangements for 2022/23 be agreed in principle, subject to a final decision at the January meeting once the final figures had been confirmed:**
 - a. **transfer 0.5% to High Needs Block.**
 - b. **set MFG at 0.5%**
 - c. **to retain lump sum at current level.**
 - d. **to allocate any spare funding (after mandated items) to AEN.**
 - e. **to allocate £2m to Growth Fund.**
3. **The potential changes to the National Funding Formula for 2023/24 be noted.**

<p>8. De-delegation 2022/23</p> <p>TY introduced the report and confirmed that Maintained Schools had been consulted and the outcome was included in the report.</p> <p>In response to a question from a Maintained Primary School Representative about the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) for schools and how that offer compared with de-delegated insurance services, it was agreed a decision be deferred pending further information being available in advance of the January meeting.</p> <p>In response to a question in relation to Free School Meal eligibility and whether this was checked regularly to see if family circumstances, AH undertook to look into this issue and report back to the next meeting.</p> <p>In considering the other issues, it was agreed that there should be a nil contribution in 2022/23 in relation to Schools in Financial Difficulty in view of the fact that there a surplus balance.</p> <p>David Otlet made a statement on behalf of the joint teaching unions in support of de-delegation of Trades Union facility time and confirmed the money was used to reimburse the schools which employed elected representatives. He confirmed that, in relation to the current surplus, this was not an accurate position as a lot of schools were behind in submitting claims. In view of this it was agreed that Trade Union facility time should be de delegated at the recommended amount per pupil, but that schools be encouraged to submit claims in time to ensure that Schools Forum is making a decision based on accurate data in future years.</p> <p>AGREED: Schools Forum Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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 2022-23: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Employee and Premises Insurance – £31.05 – DEFERRED until January meeting b) Assessment of eligibility for free school meals – £1.14 – AGREED c) Maternity supply cover – £31.18 – AGREED d) Schools in financial difficulty - AGREED to de delegate but carry forward balance from previous year e) Trades Union facility time - £3.85 - AGREED f) Education psychology – £5.74 - DEFERRED until January meeting 3. Maintained secondary school representatives of Schools Forum voted on the de-delegation of the following services at the amounts per pupil indicated 2022-23: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Employee and Premises Insurance - £39.38 - AGREED b) Assessment of eligibility for free school meals - £1.14 - AGREED c) Maternity supply cover – £45.27 - AGREED d) Trades Union facility time - £3.85 – AGREED e) Health and safety roving reps – £0.91 - AGREED f) Education psychology – £5.74 - AGREED 	AH
<p>9. Revision to Scheme for Financing Schools</p>	

<p>AA introduced the report and confirmed that maintained schools had been consulted and 11 out of 69 had responded.</p> <p>In response to questioning, he confirmed that updates to the financial regulations for schools and delegated budgets would be synchronised from 1 April.</p> <p>It was noted that some of the references in the scheme were outdated such as the Local Authority's Health and Safety Manual for schools and it was agreed that references should be checked prior to the next revision.</p> <p>Maintained Schools Representatives AGREED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the outcome of the consultation on the proposed Scheme for Financing Schools be noted. 2. That the revision to the Scheme for Financing Schools be approved to take effect from 1 April 2022. 	
<p>10. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>There were no items of other business.</p>	

The meeting closed at 6.44 pm.