

Bristol Schools Forum

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 16th January, 2024
at 5.30 pm at Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

	Action
<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>In attendance:</p> <p>Aileen Morrison St Matthias Park Alastair Brown Redcliffe Nursery Albert Gardiner Ashton Park Secondary Cllr Asher Craig Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Equalities Cameron Shaw Bristol Metropolitan Academy Chris Pring Whitehall Primary School David Otlet NEU – Teaching Union Del Planter St Mary Redclife & Temple Secondary School Esther Messinger Victoria Park Primary Jeff Sutton GMB – Non Teaching Union Jo Kingston Diocese of Clifton Dept for Schools & Colleges – Holy Cross Primary School Lee Hannan Brentry Primary Louise Nevers St Bernadette Catholic Secondary Mandy Cheshire St Bedes Catholic College Melanie Bunce Willow Primary Merche Clarke St John Primary Sarah Lovell Brunel Academy Simon Eakins (Vice Chair) Cathedral Primary Simon Holmes St Phillips Marsh Nursery Steve Hornsby (Chair) North Star Academy</p> <p>Officers</p> <p>Reena Bhogal-Welsh Director Education & Skills Denise Murray Director Finance and Section 151 Officer Travis Young Finance Manager Education and Children Steven Goodwin Finance Manager Education and Children Su Coombs Head of Services (School Partnership Education & Skills) Claudette Campbell Democratic Services Clerk to School Forum Guy Marshall Finance</p> <p>Welcome:</p> <p>The Chair, Steve Hornsby, welcome all to the meeting.</p>	
<p>2. Forum Standing Business</p> <p>Forum Standing Business</p> <p>a) Apologies for Absence</p>	

<p>Apologies received from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jo Grayson substitute Jo Hill • Tonya Hill <p>b) Confirmation meeting is quorate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Quorum is 40% of 25 active Forum Membership in attendance • Meeting met the threshold see attendance list above <p>c) Appointment of new members/resignation</p> <p>The following vacant seats have been filled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary Maintained Governor Rep – Louise Nevers for St Bernadette Secondary • Secondary Academy Governor Rep – Albert Gardiner for Ashton Park Secondary part of Excalibur Trust • Primary Head Academy Rep – Esther Messenger rep for Victoria Park Primary for Cathedral Trust • Primary Governor Maintained Rep – Merche Clarke for St John Primary <p>Resignation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rep for Special Academy Jo Grayson <p>d) Notification of vacancies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Head Academy • Primary Governor Academy • Special Academy <p>e) Declaration of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum Members were reminded that the procedural rules set out in the council constitution directs all to declare where an item under discussion or to be put to the vote could make a material difference to that school or where they may have a personal or prejudicial interest. 	
<p>3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p>	
<p>a. The Minutes of the meeting held on the 28th November 2023 was resolved as a correct record.</p> <p>b. Matters Arising/Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers confirmed that the meeting reports covered the actions identified in the minutes. 	
<p>4. Director of Education & Skills Update</p>	
<p>The Director Education & Skills, Renna Bhogal-Welsh shared a presentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report will be shared following the meeting and attached to the minutes. (Action: Clerk) <p>The presentation outlined the following:</p>	<p>Clerk (1)</p>

- a) DSG update and High Needs Deficit – summary of the schemes including the Deficit Management Plan
 - i Shared the mitigated and unmitigated position with regards the deficit
 - ii Gave assurances that the mitigations identified have been verified and based on improving outcomes & experiences for children, young people and families of SEND.
 - iii That the plan recognised the need to ensure financial sustainability to enable better outcomes
 - iv The ask is for the whole system, to input to support the plan
 - v Provided a review of the workstreams currently in operation
- b) SEND Improvement and Implementation FTE conversation.
 - i Provided an update and explanation of the application of automation to the SEND administrative process
- c) Belonging in SEND
 - i Updated and provide clarity on the funds allocated to the programmes; explain how the £51k was to be used; that a summary report on the learning from the wide and varied projects would be shared with Forum.
- d) Inclusion Hubs
 - i A report was shared in the papers for the meeting in response to the request from Forum for a fuller explanation on the operation of the Inclusion Hubs.
 - ii Confirmed that the sums allocated to support the establish the hubs, was not new money but from funds available to the service.
 - iii ALP will deliver the Inclusion Hub as a free resource for schools; Support will be provided to students at the point prior to them being at risk of permanent exclusion
 - iv The proposal covered the period December 2023 to March 2024 and would impact 219 children

The following was noted from the discussion that arose:

- e) The Inclusion Hub project supported students and was not intended to replace top up funding. The issue of non-statutory top up funding was subject to an ongoing consultation; the use of such funding evidenced that need was not being met in a sustainable way and the aspiration to create a sustainable model.
- f) Confirmed that all stakeholders were consulted, on the creation and implementation of Inclusion Hub, including Bristol Association for Secondary Heads and Principles and FAP Fair Access Panel **(Action: RBW)** Details of when Heads and/or SENCOs were briefed about the introduction of the Inclusion Hub and what opportunities were provided for input into the creation of the project.
- g) **(Action: RBW)** To provide contact details of the key project leaders, to be provided to Forum in the first instance and then disseminated out to settings & leaders.
- h) The Inclusion Hub pathway did not include early years needs; the future aspiration and vision is to widen service to include early intervention.
- i) Forum sought an explanation of the 15.47FTE capacity release amidst concerns that it would result in a loss to the workforce available to support the SEND Service.
- j) RBW gave assurances that the use of robotics would allow the service to utilise the skills of the workforce more appropriately.

RBW(1)

RBW(2)

Chair thanked the Director for the Report and Update.

Resolved to Note the Report

5. Dedicated Schools Grant Allocation 2024/25

Steven Goodwin, Finance Manager, addressed the report that had been shared with members prior to the meeting.

The report provided an overview on the DSG for 2024/25; provided details of the result of the consultation on the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF); it also set out the details on the proposals for Central Services spend.

The report set out LA's recommendation at section 2.1

- The ESFA released the allocations on the 19th December 2023 to inform the report and the final decision making
- Forum were advised that there was a slight change in a number of unit values that were recommended in November
- Table 1 in the report details the DSG Allocation breakdown for the sum of £491.736m

The following was noted from the discussion that arose:

- a. Clarification was sought on the Early Years hourly rate increase to £5.97 (s.4.13) but the report stated that only £5.08 (s5.3) was to be allocated to providers for 2024/25.
- b. Officers understood the position to be that the difference is the agreed 5% retention used to support core functions delivered to the early years setting. The actual calculation on the figures reported translated into retention of 15%. Far greater than the 5% stated. It was explained that the variance was highly likely due to the hourly rate equivalent figures for supplements, such as Deprivation, that were not detailed on the report. For transparency the full breakdown will be provided to Forum.
- c. Agreed that Officers would provide an explanation for the 15% retention. **(Action: Finance Officers)**
- d. A discussion followed on the views expressed in the consultation response to the base rate allocated to 3-4 years; 66% of responders disagreed; Officers were aware of the dissatisfaction expressed in the consultation and provided an explanation at section 5.4 in the report; that the sum was set by the DfE and not by the LA.

Finance(1)

When put to the vote:

Resolved to:

- a. Note the 2024/25 funding levels
- b. Agreed the final transfer between blocks
- c. Agreed in principle the allocation to the Early Years National Funding Formula
- d. Agreed the Central Services Block Allocation of:
 - i. LA Core Functions £1.223m
 - ii. School Admissions £0.592m
 - iii. Schools Forum £0.023m
 - iv. Combined Services £0.382m
- e. That the following comment was provided to Cabinet:
 - i. that Forum was sympathetic and would agree with the responders to the consultation on the base rate allocation to 3 & 4 years
 - ii. that Forum supported the transfer of funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, to support the ongoing deficit and that they were fully committed to supporting the ongoing mitigations; that also applied to the funds in smaller block combined services

<p>6. Schools Block Allocation 2024/25</p>	
<p>Steven Goodwin, Finance Manager, addressed the report that had been shared with members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The report sought to inform and seek agreement on the final application of the funding formula for maintained schools and academies for 2024/25. The forum decisions will form part of the decision to be main by Cabinet during the budget discussion on the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).</p> <p>Forum considered the LA recommendation in the report at 2.1 to 2.3 before moving to discuss the de-delegation recommendation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum was asked to note that the figures given in November 2023 had to be remodelled to take into account the support required for Key stage 4 secondary provision. • To note the sum to be distributed, of £344.3m. • To note the final funding settlement <p>The following was noted from the discussion that arose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was not known the exact numbers of schools subject to minimum funding level; finance officer agreed to report back (Action: Finance Officers) • The funding guarantee ensures that no school is disadvantage and that the allocation meets the directive given by the DfE. • The £2m Growth fund, of which £1.2m committed with £0.8m remaining; the question was asked whether the remaining balance could be used elsewhere. Officers explained that the fund was restricted; that it was anticipated it would support those schools currently crafting growth plans; • Pupil Forecast is central to the decisions made by the Forum and in order to assist in assessing impact of decision-making, pupil forecast report should be brought on a regular basis. (Action: Future Agenda item RBW) • Support was expressed for scenario 2 that was outlined in the report, which is the LA recommended option. The scenario outlined protected primary settings at a time that more financial assistance is needed and at the same time accomplishes the objective of moving the formula factors closer to the NFF values. <p>Resolved when put to the vote:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Agreed to support the LA recommendation Option 2 formula model for 2024/25 mainstream funding formula ii. Approved the arrangements set out for 2024/25 mainstream funding formula together with the sum set aside for the Growth Fund iii. That Cabinet and Council are advised that Forum have concerns about the ongoing financial challenges being experienced by schools <p><u>De-Delegation to Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools</u></p> <p>Forum Maintained members deferred this item from the November 2023 meeting with instructions to Finances Officers for further fuller explanation on the areas of De-delegation. Email information was shared prior to the meeting and answers provided to questions posed over the ensuing weeks.</p> <p>The following was noted from the discussion that arose:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Finance(2)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">RBW & Clerk (2)</p>

- a. Trade Union Facility Time – proposed de-delegation £4.15**
- b. The fund had a credit balance of £192K
- c. The discussion centred around the proposed allocation of funds to a pot with a large surplus: Officers acknowledged the surplus and proposed that members did not support the proposed de-delegation for 2024/25; no further invoices would be raised for payment from Academies for 2024/25, however any outstanding invoices relating to 2023/24 or earlier must be paid without delay; Officers would review the mechanism in place to manage this fund and related matters during the course the next financial year.
- d. Academies voluntary buy-in to the arrangement; Many are aware of their obligation to provide TU rep to rep members in Academies Trust settings; many procure trade services via an alternative mechanism; assurance was given that the fund was for school settings to cover the cost of staff and is not given directly to union organisations.
- e. Clarification was sought on the ‘right off’ of invoices for Academies; the proper explanation is that some academies were invoiced when they had not bought into the service.
- f. Union rep confirmed that they would support not having a de-delegation for 2024/25
- g. **(Action: Finance Officer):** To report back to on the outcome of the planned Review on the operation of Trade Union Facility Time fund; that a report is brought to the Forum in good time prior to any future decision-making.
- h. School Improvement Services**
- i. Concerns were expressed by the maintained setting members about the lack of information given to settings on the re-modelled school improvement services. Assurances were sought from Officers that there would be equity across settings and an explanation of the new look to the service.
- j. Su Coombs, Head of Services (School Partnership Education & Skills) was invited to address the concern expressed. In her presentation she confirmed that an interim model had been introduced; that all models of operation were under constant review; learning would feed into implementation; assured members that current and relevant information is to be shared in the coming days to all settings; that there was a co-production workshop planned for February 2024; that this would enable an improved offer for all settings.
- k. RBW acknowledged that there had been a lengthy delay that gave rise to justifiable frustration and apologised sincerely for the delay; RBW gave assurances that the intention was to move from one school improvement officer to ten across phases; that the recruitment process was well underway to have colleagues in place to deliver the new model; to ensure that it was properly embedded and was sustainable; RBW assured members that what was to be implemented would be far superior to the service that existed up to this point.
- l. Secondary Maintained Representative from St Mary Redcliffe, confirmed that he spoke on behalf of the one other Secondary maintained setting, St Bernadette Catholic Secondary, this was confirmed by the governor rep from that setting, recently appointed to the Forum. That the update on SI Service was welcomed but that they had agreed not to support the de-delegation to the service.

Finance(3)

Decision Making

When the recommendation for de-delegated services allocation, as listed in the report at 2.4 & 2.5, was put to the vote;

The Chair moved for a vote from the Primary Maintained Representative on the recommended de-delegation:

Resolved to Approve the de-delegation to the following services:

- i. Employee and Premises insurance
- ii. Assessment of eligibility for free school meals
- iii. Maternity supply cover
- iv. Schools in financial difficult
- v. Education Psychology
- vi. School Improvement Services

Resolved to Reject Officer Recommendation to the following service:

- i. **Not to approve a de-delegation** to Trade Union facility time services and
- ii. For the surplus sum of £192k to be rolled over for 2024/25

The Chair moved for a vote from the Secondary Maintained Representative on the recommended de-delegation:

Resolved to Approve the de-delegation to the following services:

- i. Employee and Premises Insurance
- ii. Maternity supply cover
- iii. Health and safety roving reps
- iv. Education Psychology

Resolved to Reject Officer Recommendation to the following services:

- iii. **Not to approve a de-delegation** to Trade Union facility time services and
- iv. For the surplus sum of £192k to be rolled over for 2024/25
- v. **Not to approve a de-delegation** to School Improvement Services

7. Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Monitor

Steven Goodwin, Finance Manager, addressed the report that had been shared with members prior to the meeting.

The reported updated forum on the 2023/24 DSG position as at Period 07 to end of October 2023.

Forum were asked to:

- a. Note the period 07 forecast position
- b. Note that the forecast position, for maintained schools remains as reported at November 2023 School Forum

Highlighted the following:

- Net deficit on the nursery position at table 2
- In response to a request made at the 28th November 2023, details of the 3 Schools with approved licenced deficit plans are shown in table 3. The table summarised the repayment profile.

The following question was addressed in the brief discussion that followed:

- The report referenced the sum of £0.675m additional grant being provided to support LA maintained schools in difficulty but no explanation as to how this was to be applied.

- The forum will be provided with further details on how this fund will be applied as soon as the process is known; it will be sign off against this financial period 2023/24.

The Chair moved that Schools Forum Note the report.

8. Chair's Final remarks and Close

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.