

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 5 March 2019 **at 1.00 pm at Whitmore High School**

Members Present: Sue Hammond – Headteacher, Whitmore High School (CHAIR)
Pam Virdee – Headteacher, Longfield School (VICE CHAIR)
Patrick O'Dwyer – Div. Director Education Services (Special Needs Services)
Paul Gamble – Headteacher, Harrow High School
Claudia Calogero – Governor, Hillview Nursery School
Ian Nutch – Academy High School Finance Manager
Anna Smakowska – Headteacher, Woodlands School
Christine Robson – Portfolio Holder, Young People & Schools
Sue Maguire – Headteacher, Hatch End High School
David O'Farrell – Headteacher, St Bernadette's Primary School
Rebecca Hastings – Headteacher, Cedars Manor School
Nigel Hewitt – Association of Harrow Governing Bodies

Officers in Attendance: Jo Frost - Finance Business Partner

SH opened the meeting.

1. Apologies and Order of the Agenda

Apologies were received and accepted from:

Rutinder Mahil-Pooni – Headteacher, Kenmore Park Infant School
Anne Monahan – Headteacher, St Anselm's Primary School
Louise Browning – Headteacher, Norbury Primary School
PK Maselino – Headteacher, The Helix Centre
Geraldine Higgins – Headteacher, Sacred Heart Language College
Mike Baumring - Headteacher, Kenmore Park Junior School

The order of the agenda was agreed.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 15 January 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2019 were agreed as an accurate record

3. Matters Arising

Claudia Calogero (Governor, Hillview Nursery School) explained that she was resigning. She proposed that she be replaced by Jackie Halpin (Acting Headteacher, Hillview Nursery School). This was agreed.

4. 2018-19 DSG Budget Monitoring Quarter 3

JF introduced the report which set out the latest position on the DSG budget for 2018-19.

The report showed a forecast net overspend on the DSG of £586k which is an improved position from the variance reported at Quarter 2.

Early Years Block

Schools Forum noted the in-year budget adjustment in relation to pupil number changes from the January 2018 Early Years Census.

Schools Forum noted the progress in relation to the distribution of EY SEND Inclusion Fund.

High Needs Block

Schools Forum noted the forecast pressure on the High Needs Block of £960k which is an improved position from the pressure reported at Quarter 2. This is partially due to an in-year additional funding allocation from the government of £606k.

JF also explained that the explanation for some of the additional reductions are as a result of delayed placements to the new financial year so whilst this is a benefit in 2018-19 there will be a cost in 2019-20.

Contingency

JF set out the proposed position on the contingency at the end of 2018-19. This makes an assumption that the pressure on the HNB in 2018-19 will be funded from the contingency. In addition, the LA requested that the additional £606k funding announced in December 2018 be carried forward and earmarked for High Needs in 2019-20 as there have been delays in young people being placed in independent and non-maintained specialist provision which means there will be significant pressure in 2019-20. SH explained that this decision would need to be considered in the context of the proposals in Item 6 on this agenda.

5. 2019-20 Budget Setting

JF introduced the report which set out the latest position on the DSG budget setting for 2019-20.

Schools Forum noted the 2019-20 DSG allocation and proposed budgets

Schools Forum noted the final schools funding formula

Schools Forum noted the additional funding.

Schools Forum noted the position on the High Needs Block and explained that the decision to transfer 0.25% of the Schools Block into the HNB as agreed in January may need to be revisited in the context of the proposals in Item 6 on this agenda.

In relation to the growth fund a query was raised regarding funding for secondary bulge classes and what this might look like. It was agreed that this would need to be looked at for future financial years but was not likely to be needed for September 2019. It was agreed to revisit this discussion after offer day to determine if there is an issue this financial year.

6. Funding of Education Health & Care Plans in Mainstream Schools

JF introduced the report which set out proposal to consult on the realignment of place funding of £6000 for Education Health & Care Plans for pupils in mainstream schools and academies to the new National Funding Formula for Schools and High Needs.

The following points were raised

- Timing is wrong and possibly illegal
- Needs to be worked through properly
- SEN Working group has still to engage and deal with element 3 for EHCP funding

- There is already underfunding of Element 3 which represents only 60% of what a TA actually costs
- Unfair to bring this proposal after Schools Forum has agreed to the HNB transfer for 2019-20 and agreed to fund 2018-19 overspend from the contingency
- Proposal could lead to most inclusive schools not taking pupils with additional needs

JF explained that the reason that this proposal had not been brought earlier is because it had not been considered until now. JF explained that the LA has sought legal advice on the timing and whilst the timing is unfortunate the HNB cannot continue to fund provision for which it is not funded.

POD explained that the SEN working group had been engaged in Element 3 funding and a proposed matrix to be consulted on for Element 3 funding had already been shared with Schools Forum and at Heads & Directors meeting and is currently awaiting a legal position on the consultation process.

Schools Forum broke into short groups to discuss and the LA officer & Portfolio Holder left the room.

The feedback from these smaller groups covered three main areas:

- Timing is inappropriate and possibly illegal
- Unfair and inappropriate to discuss this in isolation to Element 3
- Schools Forum would need to revisit the decision to agree to fund the 2018-19 HNB overspend and 2019-20 0.25% transfer to the HNB if this proposal goes ahead in 2019-20.

Schools Forum strongly advised the LA that whilst there is recognition that this issue needs resolving it needs time to work together to get it right and implement any changes from 2020-21 in conjunction with any changes to Element 3.

Any Other Business

None

Next Meeting and Agenda Items

The next meeting will take place on 5 March 2019 at 1pm at Whitmore High School.

The meeting closed at 2.30pm

Future Dates

7 May 2019

2 July 2019

Academic year 2019-20 dates to be agreed at Schools Forum 2 July 2019.