

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 20 November 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
Louise Browning – Headteacher, Norbury Primary School
Rutinder Mahil-Pooni – Headteacher, Kenmore Park Infant School
Anna Smakowska – Headteacher, Woodlands School
Christine Robson – Portfolio Holder, Young People & Schools
Sue Maguire – Headteacher, Hatch End High School

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:

Rebecca Hastings – Headteacher, Cedars Manor School
Keven Bartle – Canons High School
Anne Monahan – Headteacher, St Anselm's Primary School
Geraldine Higgins – Headteacher, Sacred Heart Language College
Mike Baumring - Headteacher, Kenmore Park Junior School
David O'Farrell – Headteacher, St Bernadette's Primary School
Jo Deswani – Headteacher, Whitchurch Primary School

The order of the agenda was agreed.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 16 October 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2018 were agreed as an accurate record

3. Matters Arising

a. Quorum

Due to a number of apologies received for the meeting as well as a number of additional members who did not attend there was query as to whether the meeting was quorate. This has since been checked and the quorum is 9 (40%) – this is equal to the number of voting members who were in attendance.

b. Review of EHCP funding

POD reported that work is still underway with a view to implementing from 1st April 2019. Schools Forum requested data to demonstrate the potential financial impact for each school.

ACTION JF

4. 2018-19 DSG Budget Monitoring Setting 2019-20

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

Schools Forum noted the overall response to the consultation undertaken by the LA in respect of three specific areas for decision for the 2019-20 DSG budget setting.

RMP queried whether the factor values will change for 2019-20. JF confirmed that they will remain the same with the exception of the 'lump sum' figure.

Minimum Funding Guarantee

Schools Forum noted the outcome of the consultation which had a 73% response in favour of setting an MFG of -1.5%.

JF explained that the DSG allocation to the LA will increase by 0.5% per pupil. However, as the local flexibility is to set the MFG between -1.5% and +0.5% per pupil the total increases may not be passed onto all schools depending on the impact of the NFF to each school.

IN queried what would happen if there was additional funding after MFG is applied. JF explained that this could be distributed across to all schools as a one off adjustment. It was agreed that this can be reviewed in January 2019 when the 2019-20 DSG settlement is known.

It was noted that at present the teachers' pay and pensions grant are excluded from the NFF.

Growth Fund

Schools Forum noted the indicative growth fund allocation and commitment. JF explained that it is projected that the allocation will be sufficient to cover the commitments in 2019-20. It was agreed that this can be reviewed in January 2019 when the 2019-20 DSG settlement is known.

High Needs Block – Transfer from Schools Block

A number of queries were raised in respect of the data provided in the report to demonstrate the increase in high needs spend and activity.

Schools Forum acknowledged that there had been a growth in numbers and spend since 2015. PG queried the growth in baseline budget between 2015-16 and 2018-19 to understand whether the growth in spend had been funded. JF explained whilst the budget had increased between years (figures not available in the meeting) the baseline starting point was already too low and the rate of growth has not kept up with the growth in numbers and spend.

In respect of the tribunal data JF confirmed that 'successful' referred to the outcome in relation to the LA and not the parent/family.

Schools Forum noted the outcome of the consultation which had a 77% response not in favour of transferring 0.5% of the Schools Block into the High Needs Block.

SH queried whether Schools Forum wanted to consider a vote to transfer 0.25% in 2019-20 to offer transitional protection. This was not agreed.

Schools Forum took a vote to decide whether to transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block into the High Needs Block in 2019-20.

No – 7

Yes – 1

Abstain – 1

Schools Forum did not agree to the transfer.

High Needs Block – overspend in 2018-19

Since the start of the financial year there has been a projected overspend on the High Needs Block. At its meeting in October Schools Forum considered a report which showed the projected DSG overspend at the end of 2018-19 to be £1.754m (High Needs Block overspend of £2.129m partially mitigated by an underspend in the growth fund of £0.375m). The LA has asked Schools Forum to consider using the uncommitted brought forward contingency of £2.663m to offset the projected deficit. Schools Forum discussed the use of the contingency to fund the deficit. It was acknowledged that a significant proportion had arisen as a result of underspends in early years and high needs in 2017-18.

Schools Forum took a vote on the options set out in the paper

Option 1 – 7

Option 2 – 1

Option 3 – 0

Abstain – 1

Schools Forum agreed to Option 1, funding up to £1.754m projected net overspend from the contingency, with the unspent contingency of £0.909m to be applied to the school funding formula for 2019-20.

High Needs Block – Transfer of first two £6000s into Schools Block

Schools Forum noted the outcome of the consultation which had a 69% response rate in favour of not funding the place element of the first two EHCPs.

Any Other Business

Schools Forum requested that dates of future meetings be recirculated to members

ACTION JF

Next Meeting and Agenda Items

The next meeting will take place on 15 January 2019 at 1pm at Whitmore High School.

The meeting closed at 2.40pm