

DRAFT MINUTES – TO BE CONFIRMED

Schools Forum Meeting

**Thursday 2nd July 2015 commencing at 1.30 p.m.
at Hawkley Hall High School**

Present:

Members: A. Hardy (Chair) J. Seddon, F. Quinlivan, D. Winstanley, V. Birchall, A. Dawson, Mr A. McGlown (deputising for H. Phillips) , D. Lythgoe, P. McGhee K. Pilkington, R. Lewis, J. Holland, A. Wells and P. Rimmer (deputising for A. Isherwood).

Authorised Observers: and M. Atkins (NUT) and C. Gore (GMB),

LA Officers In Attendance:

K. Rufo (Head 0-19 Standards)
C. Peeling (Service Manager)
C. Myers (Group Finance Manager)
F. Gore (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from P. Dahlstrom , G. Hayes, R. Halford, A. Isherwood, H. Phillips; and from T. Warren (Liverpool Archdiocese) Cllr J. Platt (Cabinet Member); and J. McDonald (Strategic Finance Manager)

2. Items for inclusion under AOB

Review of the Performance of School Forums

3. Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 14th May 2015:

It was agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2015 be approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Minute 4 (2) Bids by Schools for Supplementary Funding

Mr Myers reported that the LA did not meet the costs of any pension related enhancements and paid only that sum it was contractually obliged to do so in respect of the support provided to schools in meeting staff redundancy costs.

Minute 7.1 : SEN Recoupment Arrangements

Mr Myers reported that the LA had asked schools about any problems they had experienced regarding SEN recoupment from other Local Authorities. Only one response had been received which suggested the problem was not widespread or of particular concern to the majority of schools.

4. Review Summary, Findings And Proposal For Future Use Of The Children Looked After (CLA) Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) Funds.

Ms C. Peeling presented a report reminding members of the decision taken by the Schools Forum on 6 March 2014 regarding the use of Children Looked After (CLA) Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) funding in 2014-15. A copy of the agreed offer to schools was appended to the report.

The report gave the following information:

- A summary of PPP spend in 2014-15
- A summary of the outcome of a review involving schools and other stakeholders, to assess the effectiveness of the service provided by the Virtual Schools Team (VST) during 2014-15 and help identify future service/funding options.
- Details of proposed revised offer from July 2015 including commissioned work from other services to enhance the CLA education offer 2015/16 together with details of the planned funding allocation.
- Information on planned staffing resources to support the revised offer, including the responsibilities and required outcomes of a 0.6 post of Virtual School/Children Looked After Educational Psychologist

Members were informed that it was planned to adopt a single system for all schools in the Borough and schools that provided out of Borough placements, whereby they would receive £1,000 per CLA and would need to apply for any of the additional £900 funding retained by the LA to provide for CLA. The LA would continue its present policy not support independent school provision for CLA.

Subject to approval of the revised offer it was planned to conduct a further detailed review of the service in January 2016 with a view to making any required changes to the offer in readiness for the 2016-17 financial year.

It was agreed: (1) That the report be accepted and the revised offer be adopted.

(2) That the outcome of the above mentioned review in January 2016 be reported to the Forum.

5. School outturn / balances 2014-15

Mr Myers presented a report (circulated) informing members of the level of Schools balances held as at 31st March, 2015. The report showed the following movement of balances, analysed by sector in the 2014/15 financial year.

Balances	Primary (£)	Secondary (£)	Special (£)	Total (£)
As at 31/3/14	8,221,332	4,648,131	1,107,530	13,976,993
As at 31/3/15	8,751,924	4,533,335	906,782	14,192,040
Annual Increase / Decrease (+/-)	530,592	-114,796	-200,748	215,047
Annual % Increase / Decrease (+/-)	6.45	-2.47	-18.13	1.54

Number of Schools	93	13	6	112
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Average Balance 31/3/15	90,226	348,718	151,130	126,715
Average Annual Increase	5,470	-8,830	-33,458	1,920

Academies, Free School and closed schools had been excluded from both March 2013 and March 2014 data to enable a fair comparison to be made.

An appendix to the report showed that there had been an increase in carry forward of £0.465m into school balances including special schools. Of this sum £0.600m had been earmarked for allocation to schools (supplementary fund) during 2015-16 in response to budgetary pressures, as per previous Forum decision; and a carry forward of £1.670m relating to contingency / central expenditure

A member referred to the underspend in 2013-14 and 2014-15 in the High Needs Block and that at a time when school budgets were under great pressure it was important to review the level of allocations in all categories of funding. The Chair reminded Members that the Funding Sub-Group would meet on 10th September 2015 to commence that review process for 2016-17.

A member commented that it was important to view the figures shown against a backdrop of uncertainty about future schools budgets and prudence shown by schools in an effort to protect education provision in the longer term. There was a need for a narrative to inform the data and explain why schools held balances, including future commitments and potential reductions in revenue due to falling roles or potentially reduced DfE allocations etc.

It was agreed: That report be accepted.

6. AOB

Review of the Performance of School Forums

The Clerk reported the outcome of a review of Schools Forums nationally compiled from 227 visits to Forums by the Education Funding Agency. Members were reminded that an officer from the EFA had visited this Forum in 2013-14.

The national picture showed that

- all Forum's were well Chaired;
- 30% of the Chairs of Forum's were from academy schools;
- there was no evidence of discrimination against academies;
- 84% of Forum's were good at making their papers open to the public; and
- all Forums' were seen to have influence on decisions by their LA's.

It was agreed: That report be accepted and the findings welcomed.

7. Dates and times of meetings 2015-16

It was agreed: That the following schedule of meetings be agreed for 2015-16:

10/9/15 (meeting of Funding Sub Group) 11.30 a.m. – at Bedford High School
8/10/15 1.30 p.m at Bedford High School
3/12/15 1.30 p.m at Hawkley Hall High School
28/1/16 1.30 p.m at Hawkley Hall High School
10/3/16 1.30 p.m at Bedford High School
12/5/16 1.30 p.m at Hawkley Hall High School
7/7/16 1.30 p.m at Bedford High School

8. Thanks to Forum Members

The Chair reported that this would be the last meeting of the Forum before Mr Peter Dahlstrom retired at the end of the summer term. He paid tribute to the great service Mr Dahlstrom had given to special education in the Borough over many years and to the services he had given to the Forum as both a member and as Vice-Chair. On behalf of the Forum he wished Mr Dahlstrom well for the future and a long and happy retirement.

The Chair also reported that Mrs Janet Seddon had indicated that she planned to resign as a representative on the Forum in order to facilitate a phased retirement. He thanked Mrs Seddon for the positive and active contribution she had made to the work of the forum over a number of years. On behalf of the Forum he wished Mrs Seddon well for the future.