

Bristol Schools' Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 2nd April 2019
at 17.00 hrs at City Hall

Present:

Karen Brown	Maintained Secondary Governor Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Emma Cave	Special School, Governor Rep, Claremont
Simon Eakins	Academy Primary Headteacher Rep, Cathedral Primary
Peter Evans	Special School Headteacher Rep, Knowle DGE
Simon Holmes	Nursery Head Rep, St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Sarah Lovell	Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep, Bristol Metropolitan Academy
Garry Maher	Diocese of Clifton Rep
Kate Matheson	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, St Barnabas Primary
Aileen Morrison	Pupil Referral Unit Rep, St Matthias Park
Chris Pring	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Primary
Cedric Sanguignol	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Bishop Road Primary
Christine Townsend	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Whitehall Primary
Wendy Weston	Support Staff Rep
David Yorath	Academy Secondary Governor Rep, Cotham School

In attendance from Bristol City Council:

Corrina Haskins	Clerk to Schools Forum
Sally Jaeckle	Service Manager, Early Years
Cllr Anna Keen	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Alan Stubbersfield	Interim Director Education Learning & Skills Improvement
Mary Taylor	Business Manager, SEND
David Tully	Interim Finance Business Partner
Travis Young	Corporate Finance

Observers:

Alderman Brian Price

	Action
1. Welcome and introductions	
In the absence of Carew Reynell, Chair of the Forum, the meeting was chaired by Sarah Lovell, Vice-Chair. SL reported that Billy Forsythe was standing down as Clerk after 10 years and thanked him for his work in supporting the Forum SL introduced the new Clerk, Corrina Haskins.	
2. Forum standing business	
a. Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were recorded from Jamie Barry, Trish Dodds, Ruth Pickersgill, Carew	

<p>Reynell (Chair), Simon Shaw and Lorraine Wright</p> <p>b. Quorate The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p> <p>c. Resignations The Clerk confirmed there was 5 number of resignations from members since the last meeting.</p> <p>d. Appointment of New Members The Clerk reported the appointment of Lorraine Wright – Primary Academy Head (Elm Lea).</p> <p>e. Notification of Vacancies The Clerk advised of the following Schools Forum Vacancies which would be advertised through the Heads/Governors Bulletins: 1 Secondary Academy Head 1 Secondary Academy Governor 2 Primary Maintained Heads 1 Primary Academy Governor</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th January 2019</p>	
<p>RESOLVED - that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Voting It was agreed that during any future voting at Forum Meetings, abstentions should be recorded in addition to the number of votes for and against.</p> <p>Growth Fund AS referred to the percentages quoted by CT relating to the number of students from out of the Bristol area at Colston Girls School and St Bedes and clarified that he did not dispute the accuracy of the figures, but rather he did not consider them a secure basis for policy change. He apologised if anyone was given the impression that the figures quoted by CT were incorrect.</p> <p>Following further discussion it was: RESOLVED - that data relating to out of area children being educated in Bristol schools be shared with Forum.</p> <p>SEND 1-5 Year Olds In response to a question of clarification about what the figure “1092 number of 1-5 year olds” referred to during the debate about SEND, it was agreed that this be confirmed at the next meeting.</p> <p>Funding of the Hope School Further to a question raised at the previous meeting about the funding of the Hope School, this</p>	<p>AS</p> <p>SJ to include in EY report</p> <p>DT</p>

<p>was discussed under the agenda item “High Needs Block”.</p>	
<p>4. Correspondence</p>	
<p>SL confirmed there was no correspondence to report to Forum.</p>	
<p>5. Chair and Vice Chairs’ Proposals for Future Forum Training</p>	
<p>SL reported that the Chair (CR) and Vice Chairs (SL and CT) had met to discuss proposals for future training for Forum and recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum meetings to start with a brief training session on the different funding streams; • Forum members to ask for further training if required following these sessions; • The Finance Sub Group to be reconstituted; • Sharing key websites to assist Forum Members in their role; • From September 2019, to produce an induction pack to support new members; • Officers to give more attention to the style of report in terms of content and accessibility and to share reports with Chair and Vice Chairs at an early opportunity. <p>SL undertook to raise the reconstitution of the Finance Sub Group under “any other business”</p>	
<p>6. Presentation on Schools Block Funding</p>	
<p>TY gave a presentation on Schools Block Funding as the first of the training sessions for Forum:</p> <p>Schools Block:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Schools Block was one of the 4 blocks in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the others being High Needs; Early Years and Central School Support; • Mainstream schools were funded by Schools Block, but they could access other blocks if they had pupils that attracted the funding, e.g. SEND pupils for the High Needs Block or nursery provision for the Early Years Block; • For every pupil in primary or secondary mainstream, there was allocated an amount of money which together comprised the Schools Block; • There was increasing pressure on the High Needs Budget and a decision had been taken to transfer from other blocks for 2019/20 and so of the £261m of Schools Block funding, £259m would be for mainstream and £2m for High Needs; <p>Schools Formula/National Funding Formula:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding was allocated to the Local Authority (LA) by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the LA allocated the funding to schools on the basis of the October census using a local formula; • The LA, in consultation with Schools Forum, decided on the factors to be used in the formula within the constraints of the National Funding Formula (NFF); • The NFF was an attempt by Government to regulate funding for all schools; • The LA submitted the school budget to ESFA in January. The ESFA then checked the budget and recouped the funding for academies and free schools; 	

- Maintained school budgets were then issued by the LA by 28th February;
- There were a lot of factors in the formula and for the second year running LAs had been able to choose the level of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) from a fixed range of -1.5% to +0.5%;
- In terms of “additional needs funding”, LAs needed to use a deprivation factor but other factors were optional. The NFF also included options for “School-led funding” and “geographical funding”. Bristol’s area cost adjustment was slightly skewed at 1.014.

Minimum Funding Guarantee

- The MFG gave schools funding stability but only on per pupil funding and did not protect against falling rolls;
- The MFG guaranteed that a school could either receive the same as the previous year or in line with the formula; whichever was the higher of the two;
- If a school got more funding through formula then this would be the basis for the MFG calculation for the following year;
- A new school would initially get proxy school data (based on Bristol averages) on which funding was calculated, but was soon replaced by real pupil data. The first year cohort would set the MFG but a disapplication of the MFG could be provided if appropriate and approved
- The LA needed to calculate the MFG and allocate the remaining funds;
- The MFG could lead to discrepancies where funding is based on the characteristics of a previous cohort rather than the current cohort;
- Bristol schools were getting MFG ranging from 0%-11% most being 2%-3 %;
- In 19/20, the school that gained the most from the formula did not get as much as it would through the MFG and this made sense of the comments raised at the previous meeting where schools that should have benefitted from the formula due to the characteristics of their current cohort, didn’t seem to do so.

TY responded to questions from Forum Members as follows:

- The NFF was still in its “soft phase” and so there was still an element of local discretion over which factors LAs could use in the formula, however when in its “hard phase” there would be no local discretion;
- Bristol City Council was still using a local formula rather than the NFF and current funding was above the NFF level. He would clarify the actual amount at a future meeting;
- The percentage of SEN funding was notional and although the Bristol SEN notional budget constituted 16% of total funding, which was higher than most areas, the percentage made no difference to the amount of overall funding schools received, however, Forum may wish to consider changing the balance of percentages in the future;
- Split site funding was discretionary and relied on individual schools making a case for this funding.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Finance Sub Group look at the discretionary criteria within the funding formula;
- (2) Forum members to advise the Clerk if they require any additional training on the Schools Block Fund. – Action for forum members

Forum Members

7. Report on Schools Block Funding

<p>DT introduced the report and drew attention to 2 points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Since the previous Schools Forum meeting, a discrepancy had been identified and the Council approached ESFA to ask if this could be amended. ESFA had agreed and as a result the Council had an extra £900k headroom, bringing the total to £1.5m. This increase meant that 54 schools (rather than 32) would benefit from the additional funding. This would have a positive impact on the 19/20 and 18/19 DSG budget position. 2. The report contained observations about the formula and had been developed in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairs to meet the information requirements of Forum. <p>In response to a question about how the discrepancy occurred and whether any lessons could be learnt to avoid this happening again, DT explained that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the error had arisen in data from the ESFA in January 2016 relating to 2 schools that had opened in September 2015; • the ESFA had mistakenly calculated a part-year budget twice for the new schools giving them a higher protected funding figure; • that this had resulted in a huge spike that had been picked up by officers and successfully resolved with ESFA. <p>CT reminded Forum that a previous Forum meeting had challenged the figures which had resulted in a reassessment by officers.</p> <p>In response to further questioning, DT confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers did recognise that while characteristics such as deprivation, EAL and prior attainment were separate, they could also be linked e.g. prior attainment being affected by deprivation; • No disapplications had been submitted for 2019/20, but if they had this would have taken place in the Autumn. <p>RESOLVED - that Schools Forum note the report and refer the issues raised in it to the Sub-Group for further consideration.</p>	
<p>8. DSG Overview 2018-19 and 2019-20</p>	
<p>DT introduced the report and drew attention to the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18/19 position: due to the reimbursement to the Schools Block as discussed earlier there was now forecast a net surplus of £1.5m on the overall DSG position although there was a deficit of £1.3m in the High Needs Block. There was not a definitive position on the Early Years Block but it was looking like a £1m underspend and the final position would be confirmed at the May meeting; • 19/20 position: a deficit position of £1.4m was forecast. <p>Action - In response to comments about an error in the Early Years census with extended hours not being picked up, SE undertook to discuss this with DT after the meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED – that the Schools Forum note:</p>	<p>DT / SE</p>

- 1) the 2018/19 financial position as at Period 10 set out in Table 1 of the report, which includes:
 - a) An improved financial position for Schools Block, because of a reimbursement from Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of funding for two academies which had been over-recouped since 2016/17; and
 - b) An improved forecast surplus at 31st March 2019 of £1.5m.
- 2) the 2019/20 position for the overall DSG, with a revised forecast deficit position of £1.4m, on current funding decisions and known and expected commitments, at 31st March 2020.

9. High Needs Block

MT introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

- The period 10 forecast position for 2018/19 and the adverse changes since period 7;
- The 2019/2020 High Needs Budget which currently forecast a cumulative deficit of £3.672m by March 2020.

MT welcomed the comments of the Forum on the High Needs Transformation Project Planning.

In response to a question about how the deficit would be met by the Council, AS confirmed High Needs was one part of the DSG block but if there was a net deficit to the DSG in the future, this would be of concern to the Council. He confirmed that the function was needs led and as a result of increasing demand, the Education Secretary had announced an additional £350m for SEND, but this was still not sufficient to meet demands.

In response to questioning about why the situation had changed since period 7, MT responded:

- Places only expenditure: increase by £133k due to a review in current commissioned places. Places continued to be monitored through 6 weekly cycle reviews but were dependent on the local area needs and parental preference;
- SEN Top-Up expenditure: increase by £127k due to increase in pupil numbers and adjustments to existing top up bands;
- Alternative Provision (AP) Top-Up expenditure: increase by £117k due to increased demand for pupil referral units, but MT was looking to tighten up on the payment process;
- Other SEN provision expenditure: decrease as a result of post 16 placements reducing or contingency cases not being required, however, contingency projections still had to be built in to the budget;
- Other AP provision: increase by £190k due to an increase in demand;
- SEN Services: increase by £16k reflecting demand for therapy and assessment services, but this had been partially offset by staff vacancies.

In response to a question about the Capital Strategy behind the High Needs funding and the importance of consultation with specialist providers to discuss the needs and trends, MT/AS confirmed that:

- Council officers were currently drafting a paper about the Capital Strategy which would identify the key areas over the next 5-10 years to plan the provision for the city;
- The report would need to go through the Council's decision pathway to secure funding;
- There was a commitment to a full consultation and high level dialogue with providers;

- MT would be available to attend Special Partnership Meetings as part of the consultation process;
- There was a need for a greater investment in the future of High Needs along with quality assurance and cost avoidance.

In response to a question about how Bristol was paying for the top up for special schools in terms of banding and if every specialist provider in Bristol was funded on the same basis, MT confirmed that there had been no change to the top up process in this academic year, but it was being reviewed as part of transformation programme and the Forum would get regular updates.

The Forum raised the following comments:

- There was a need for a vision for AP as Bristol was currently spending more on AP than any other city outside of London;
- Clarity was needed on the funding arrangements for the Hope School and the proportions by which the virtual school was funded by:
 - central services;
 - government grant to carry out statutory duties;
 - pupil premium funding;
 - general fund;
 - high needs budget.
 - Action - MT/DT to provide at next meeting
- Concern was expressed that there were increasing demands on the High Needs budget to fund more areas and it was agreed that the presentation at the next forum meeting should include a comparison over the previous 3 years with more detailed information on the different components of the budget. Action - DT/TY to provide at next meeting

DT

MT

MT clarified that the elements of the transformation programme were ongoing; the Sensory Service Review had already started; the Early Intervention Base (EIB) review had started with a stakeholder meeting in March and the Hospital Education Review was due to start in January 2020.

RESOLVED – that the Schools Forum note:

- (1) the 2018/2019 High Needs budget position as at Period 10;
- (2) the 2019/2020 High Needs Budget which currently forecasts a cumulative deficit of £3.672m by March 2020;
- (3) the progress made with the High Needs Transformation Project Planning;
- (4) the High Needs Presentation at the next meeting include clarification on:
 - a. Funding Arrangements for the Hope School;
 - b. Information on the High Needs Budget containing a comparison over the previous 3 years with more detailed information on the different components.

10. Place Planning/Growth Fund/Capital Funding

AS introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

- Primary school numbers had peaked in 2016 and the wave of growth would continue through to secondary schools;

- Place planning was required to meet the additional demand for secondary places and drop in demand for primary places;
- As a short term solution, secondary schools had been asked to admit over their PAN;
- In the longer term, new secondary schools would be opening in the next few years;

Forum Members made the following comments:

- It was important to start the planning process from birth and consider nursery provision as part of the planning process;
- The nursery sector was seeing an increase in the number of children with complex needs and this needed to be taken into account when considering future provision at primary and secondary level;
- Another key issue was the amount of development planned in the Bristol area to meet the additional housing needs as reflected in the aspirations of the One City Plan;
- As well as planning for mainstream places it was also important to plan for special school places;
- There needed to be a strategic approach to the drop in primary school places and the use of the physical space to consider whether this could meet High Needs demands or support bringing children educated outside of Bristol back into the city;
- It was important to consider place planning in the long term as, in the past, schools had been closed due to falling demand only for new schools to be opened once demand increased;
- It was requested that a report be provided to the Finance Sub Group to include projections from birth and a breakdown of predicted demand by geographical area, including new housing developments.

In response to comments AS/AK confirmed:

- Place planning did start early with birth rate data;
- Place planning should include special school places;
- The Council recognised the increased complexity and proportions of children with SEND and this would be considered as part of the planning process;
- New developments were difficult to plan for as timescales often changed, but there was a formula used for predicting the number of school age children in new developments and the Council was aware of school place planning as an important part of new housing developments;
- There was a predicted shortfall of 150 places next year and extra places were secured by schools agreeing to offer above their PAN;
- 2020 would be a challenging year as the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) had delayed the opening of the new central school.

RESOLVED –

- (1) that the Schools Forum note the contents of the report and the effects of falling primary rolls;
- (2) that a report be provided to the Finance Sub Group to include projections from birth and a breakdown of predicted demand by geographical area, including new housing developments.

AS

<p>11. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>1. Teachers Pay Award PE advised the Forum that special schools were considered separately to mainstream schools in terms of the teachers' pay award and expressed concern that consultation had only taken place on 19 March. He expressed further concern that the level of funding was based on DfE figures and did not align with LA figures and as a consequence, schools were facing a deficit. DT confirmed that consultation had taken place earlier, the results of which had been circulated in the latest Heads' Bulletin. He confirmed that the LA had proposed to use the latest figures relating to pupil numbers, but that there was an anomaly with the ESFA in how Hospital Education had been counted, and that place numbers in Bristol High Needs settings had increased since the DfE counts. He confirmed that the LA had distributed the funding received and would go back to the ESFA to challenge the anomaly. In response to a question about whether schools would be consulted on the second part of the pay award, DT recommended waiting until a response had been received from the ESFA.</p> <p>2. School Health Nurse Role EC raised the issue around the change/reduction in the school health nurse role, the role of health in providing this service and the additional nursing/medical requirements needed in special schools. She reported that special schools often had to employ someone else to provide the service which had an impact on budgets.</p> <p>3. Funding for Pensions In response to a question about funding for pensions, DT reported that the DfE had consulted in January 2019 about the principle of providing a Teachers Pension Grant, but the outcomes of this and how any grant would be distributed had not yet been confirmed.</p> <p>4. Reconstituting the Finance Sub Group SL asked the Forum to agree reconstituting the Finance Sub-Group. RESOLVED – (1) that the Finance Sub Group be reconstituted; (2) that Christine Townsend, Chris Pring, David Yorath, Simon Eakins and Garry Maher sit on the Group along with any other interested member of the Forum. (3) Action – Chair and Vice chairs to produce a draft set of terms of reference for the forum to review and approve at the next meeting.</p>	<p>DT to provide at next meeting</p> <p>AS to look into this with a view to reporting back</p> <p>Forum Members CR/SL/CT</p>

The meeting closed at 7.22pm