

Bristol Schools' Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26th November 2019
at 17.00 hrs at City Hall

Present:

Karen Brown	Maintained Secondary Governor Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
William Brown	Union Rep, Bristol NEU
Rob Davies	Nursery Governor Rep, Speedwell and Little Hayes Nursery Federation
Simon Eakins	Academy Primary Head Rep, Cathedral Primary
Kris Hristakev	Special Schools Governor Rep, Woodway Federation
Simon Holmes	Nursery Head Rep, St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Sarah Lovell	Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep, Bristol Metropolitan Academy
Garry Maher	Diocese of Clifton Rep
Ruth Pickersgill	Academy Secondary Rep, City Academy
Chris Pring	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Primary
Carew Reynell	Academy Secondary Governor Rep, Henbury
Cedric Sanguignol	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Bishop Road Primary
Simon Shaw	Maintained Secondary Head Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Christine Townsend	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Whitehall Primary
Wendy Weston	GMB Union
David Yorath	Secondary Academy Governor Rep, Cotham School

In attendance from Bristol City Council:

Graham Booth	Finance Manager
Corrina Haskins	Clerk to Schools Forum
Alison Hurley	Director of Education & Skills
Ali Mannering	Trading with Schools Manager
Denise Murray	Director of Finance
Mark Williams	Human Resources Manager
Travis Young	Corporate Finance

Observers:

Ruth Campbell
Alderman Brian Price
Kaye Palmer-Green
Karen Rose – Speedwell Nursery School
Jen Smith

	Action
1. Welcome and introductions	
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2. Forum standing business	

<p>a. Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received from Marian Curran (16-19 Partnership), Patricia Dodds (Primary Academy Governor, Fishponds Academy), Peter Evans (Special School Head Rep, KnowleDGE), Cllr Anna Keen (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills), Aileen Morrison (Pupil Referral Unit Rep, St Matthias Park) and Samantha Packer (Private Voluntary Independent Early Years)</p> <p>b. Quorate The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p> <p>c. Resignations There were no resignations to report.</p> <p>d. Appointment of New Members The following new Members were welcomed: William Brown NEU Rob Davies – Nursery School Governor Ruth Pickersgill – Secondary Academy Governor Stephanie Williams – Primary Academy Head (from January 2020)</p> <p>e. Notification of Vacancies The Clerk advised of the following Schools Forum Vacancies which would be advertised through the Heads/Governors Bulletins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Primary Academy Head • Three Primary Maintained Heads • Two Primary Academy Governors • Two Secondary Academy Heads <p>f. Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interests.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th September 2019</p>	
<p>RESOLVED - that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.</p> <p><u>Matters Arising</u> Hope School: The Chair reported that he and the Vice-Chairs would keep the issue under review and report back as necessary. Recruitment: Members were asked to publicise the Schools Forum vacancies. Place Planning: Members were advised that this would be included on the agenda for a future meeting. Financial Transparency: GB confirmed the response to consultation had been submitted with no changes.</p>	
<p>4. Update from Director: Education and Skills</p>	

<p>It was agreed that, in view of the links with item 6 in terms of the strategic allocation of resources, the update from the Director: Education and Skills would be considered alongside that item.</p>	
<p>5. Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Budget Monitor 2019-20</p>	
<p>GB introduced the report and drew attention to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been little movement since the last monitor report; • There was a forecast underspend in the Early Years Block and overspend in the High Needs Block; • The Early Years underspend included the forecast to spend the additional resources as detailed at the previous meeting; • There were emerging pressures in High Needs and the overspend was likely to increase in the next period; • Schools Forum was asked to take a view on transferring funds from the Early Years Block to the High Needs Block as part of the DSG 2020/21 (minute number 6). <p>RESOLVED – that the latest in-year 2019/20 position for the overall DSG be noted.</p>	
<p>6. Draft Proposals for the use of DSG 2020/21</p>	
<p>GB introduced the report and drew attention to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to DSG for 2020/21, the Department for Education (DfE) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had made a number of announcements with indicative figures for most of the blocks (with the exception of the Early Years Block) but this had stopped due to the pre-election period; • Based on this information, indicative figures for 2020/21 were set out in Table 1 of the report including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools Block: there was a substantial increase of £8.2m; ○ Central services: there was a reduction of £200k due to ESFA unwinding some of its historic commitments such as prudential borrowing and utilising it elsewhere; ○ High Needs: there was a significant increase in funding of £6.6m although it was predicted that this block would be under pressure again and even with a modest increase in cost pressure of 1.8% the budget would still be in an adverse position. The first call on the funding would be paying back the advance funding from the current year; • These figures were indicative and would change once the October census figures were available in December; • Along with the indicative figures, Government guidance and regulations had also been released, most of the regulations were the same but there were some restrictions to moving between blocks; • In view on the pressure on the High Needs block, Forum would be asked to consider whether to transfer money from the other blocks. <p>In response to questions about the reason for the Early Years underspend it was clarified that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding was based on censuses throughout the year and income was based on 2 whereas 	

- expenditure was based on 4 and therefore falling rolls would generate a surplus;
- There would be a presentation on the Early Years block at the next meeting of the Schools Forum.

In response to a question about the emerging pressures in Out of Area Placements and Alternative Provision (AP), GB clarified that some of these pressures were starting in year e.g. the termination of the contract by provider, Catch 22. He undertook to provide Forum with additional information in relation to AP expenditure.

GB

Concern was expressed that the surplus in Early Years did not reflect the situation on the ground and a more strategic piece of work was required relating to encouraging families to take up their free entitlement of education for two year olds which was particularly low in areas of high deprivation and for families with English as an additional language. It was noted that an increasing number of children were entering Early Years with High Needs and investment at this age, including the training of staff to meet complex needs, would take the pressure off funding in later years.

At this point in the meeting, the Chair asked AH to give an update on the strategic overview for education which addressed some of the points raised by Members.

Strategic Overview of Education

AH circulated a report which followed on from the presentation at the last meeting on the system wide transformation of Bristol's education provision and reported that:

- The report contained more detail, but it was still relatively high level;
- The detail would be co-produced in partnership with stakeholders;
- She was unable to report back on the outcome of the Department's SEND Inspection as Inspectors had prevented this being published until after the election;
- In terms of internal progress, the self-evaluation form submitted by the Council as part of inspection was open and transparent and detailed the work that had already started to in relation to SEND improvement before her appointment as substantive Director;
- The Education and Skills Department had been restructured into learning city; accessible city; inclusive city and learning, employment and skills. This was not a cost saving exercise but was realigning the priorities with the core priorities of the Council;
- A recruitment campaign had begun and 20 new appointments made which would increase capacity to drive improvement within three high level delivery and investment components:
 - SEND Statutory Assessment, Planning and Review – investment to streamline services;
 - Performance and Standards (SEND & Inclusion) – this was critical and would include the detailed analysis of place planning and disadvantaged two year olds accessing Education;
 - SEND Improvement and Programme Delivery Team - to use the broad range of data.
- There was a total ask of £2.9m, £1.7m which had been provisionally identified but was subject to approval in the Council budget;
- The proposals would not be the complete solution but would start the journey.

In response to questioning, it was clarified that:

- although not included in the financial report, £1.5m had been included as an in year pressure that could be used for the proposals;
- If transferring between blocks was restricted in future years, the Government would need to come up with an alternative solution for funding SEND.

The following comments were raised by Forum Members:

- There was a need for a joined up approach between Council departments and to identify areas of high need. E.g. the Housing Department would not repair a roof which ended up falling in and damaging the nursery which cost the Council more than the initial repair;
- It was premature to make a decision on funding prior to the presentation on Early Years Funding to give Members an understanding of the issues and before the publication of the SEND Inspection;
- Agree this is a vision but it needs resources and Forum is being asked to take resources away from Early Years;
- Welcome the strategic approach but the High Needs Block should not be the only source of funding for Inclusion, there should be income from Health and funding should not be taken away from schools;
- It would be useful to have a success criteria to measure against the proposals;
- It would be useful to see the impact of these proposals on the ground.

AH responded that it was important to start implementing the improvement plan as soon as possible, further work would include action planning; key performance indicators and a shared set of objectives but an immediate decision was needed on transferring funds to the High Needs block to accelerate improvement. DM advised the Forum that there was a legal timescale in relation to consulting on budget proposals in advance of a Council decision in January and that that a decision needed to be taken at this meeting to allow for consultation with schools.

On voting for the recommendations in the report to transfer funds to the High Needs Block:

- (1) the transfer of £0.333m funding from School Central Block to the High Needs Block in 2020/21 was agreed (13 in favour and 0 against);
- (2) the transfer of £1.300m funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2020/21 was agreed on a conditional basis, subject to further information on how the money will be spent (12 in favour and 2 against);
- (3) on voting for the possibility of transferring funding from the Early Years Block to the High Needs Block in 2020/21 this was NOT CARRIED (1 in favour and 11 against).

RESOLVED – that

- (1) the potential 2020/21 indicative funding levels be noted;
- (2) the proposed restrictions relating to the DSG be noted;
- (3) the transfer of £0.333m funding from School Central Block to the High Needs Block in 2020/21 be agreed (13 in favour and 0 against);
- (4) that the transfer of £1.300m funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2020/21 be agreed on a conditional basis, subject to further information on how the money will be spent (12 in favour and 2 against);

(5) the possibility of transferring funding from the Early Years Block to the High Needs Block in 2020/21 be rejected.

7. De-delegation

The Chair reminded Members that on those representing maintained primary and secondary schools could vote on de-delegation, and confirmed those present as: Primary: Chris Pring; Christine Townsend and Cedric Sanguignol and Secondary: Karen Brown and Simon Shaw. It was clarified that de-delegation did not include maintained nursery schools or special schools.

A concern was expressed that nursery schools were disadvantaged by not being able to claim for maternity cover, especially as a larger percentage of nursery school staff were young women.

GB confirmed that a de-delegation consultation had been carried out, the results of which were detailed in the report.

Concern was expressed that there was a £400k underspend, but no set of accounts to identify the area of underspend. It was clarified that this was partly due to the schools in difficulty area of de-delegation and would be carried over as in previous years. GB undertook to provide the information in the future outturn reports to allow regular monitoring.

It was agreed that the issue of schools in difficulty needed looking at strategically as part of a place planning exercise to see if schools with falling rolls could use capacity to meet other education demands.

In response to questions relating to maternity insurance cover, it was noted that it was a pooled pot of money that was carried forward year on year and Trading with Schools (TWS) responded to claims with an assurance from schools that the money was used for the proper purpose. AM undertook to look into why this had increased and report back to Schools Forum.

William Brown addressed Members on behalf of Trade Unions to emphasis the benefits of de-delegation in relation to trade union facility time and asked Members to support the proposals.

On voting for the recommendations in the report, maintained primary school representatives of Schools Forum agreed unanimously to all areas of delegation with the exception of "Schools in financial difficulty" (1 in favour 2 against). Maintained secondary school representatives agreed unanimously to all areas of de-delegation.

RESOLVED

- (1) that maintained primary school representatives of Schools Forum agree to de-delegation of the following services at the amounts per pupil indicated in Table 1 for 2020-21:
 - a) Employee and Premises Insurance (unanimous);
 - b) Assessment of eligibility for free school meals (unanimous);
 - c) Maternity supply cover (unanimous);
 - d) Trade Union facility time (unanimous);
 - e) Education psychology (unanimous).

- (2) that maintained secondary school representatives of Schools Forum agree to de-delegation of the following services at the amounts per pupil indicated in Table 1 for 2020-21:
- a) Employee and Premises Insurance (unanimous);
 - b) Assessment of eligibility for free school meals (unanimous);
 - c) Maternity supply cover (unanimous);
 - d) Trade Union facility time (unanimous);
 - e) Health and Safety Roving Reps (unanimous);
 - f) Education psychology (unanimous).

8. Schools Block 2020-21

TY introduced the report and confirmed that these were was not the final data; the position would be made clearer by the ESFA in December/January which would allow Schools Forum to take a decision at the January meeting.

Funding Formula Proposals

The Forum noted that the Finance Sub-Group had looked at different options in detail and recommended:

- (1) a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of +0.5% to allow all schools/academies to gain to some degree, whilst allowing the greatest amount to be targeted to local priorities;
- (2) the proportion of funding allocated on AEN factors should increase, either by using the NFF or by changing the weightings in the local formula.

The following comments were raised by Forum Members:

- Concern was expressed about the presentation of the information; there had been an error in the original report which stated that the lump sum was included (subsequently clarified by an updated report) and a large number of spreadsheets which were difficult to read. It was noted that the Finance Sub-Group had looked into the options in great detail and it was not possible to do that at the wider Forum meetings;
- The financial information needed to be accessible to educational professionals;
- If agreed, would the Council need to submit a disapplication? As the proposal was to meet set a positive MFG of 0.5%, there would not be a need to submit a disapplication.

There was a vote on the following funding formula proposals to go out to consultation with schools/academies before a final decision in January:

- (1) a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of +0.5% to allow all schools to gain to some degree, whilst allowing the greatest amount to be targeted to local priorities; (10 in favour, 0 against - CARRIED)
- (2) consulting on both the below options with the preferred option being either:
 - (a) to uplift only the 2019/20 AEN per-pupil factor unit values, preserving the AWPU and Lump Sum as they are (1 in favour - NOT CARRIED) or
 - (b) use all the NFF unit values as a starting point and uplifting all to use the available funding (7 in favour - CARRIED)

It was agreed that further guidance was required on what members could vote on what issues and changes to the constitution made if necessary.

Clerk

RESOLVED that schools/academies be consulted on the following proposals:

- (1) a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of +0.5% to allow all schools to gain to some degree, whilst allowing the greatest amount to be targeted to local priorities;
- (2) the following options:
 - (a) uplift only the 2019/20 AEN per-pupil factor unit values, preserving the AWPU and Lump Sum as they are;
 - (b) use all the NFF unit values as a starting point and uplifting all to use the available funding;
- (3) Schools/Academies be advised that the initial view of the Forum was that 2 (b) “use all the NFF unit values as a starting point and uplifting all to use the available funding” was the preferred option.

Growth Fund

The Chair advised Forum Members that the position in relation to the Growth Fund was moving from a position where it had been relatively generous in Bristol to where there may be a shortfall. He advised that this had been discussed in the Finance Sub Group and two options had been identified, either the shortfall coming out of the schools block or revisiting growth fund payments.

TY confirmed that this had not been included in the report as the unit values would not be known until January and a recommendation on the size of the growth fund would be included in the papers for the January meeting. It was noted that this would not give the opportunity for consultation with schools and there may also need to be advice for schools in the January report.

Disapplication

The Forum was also asked to express a view on Disapplication in relation to the following schools:

Steiner Academy: The School was currently consulting on changing from a 4-16 school to a 4-11 Primary School and if agreed, the Council would submit a disapplication of the MFG so the school would not be protected at a Secondary funding level.

In response to a question about where students from the Steiner School would go if the school were to close its secondary facility and if other schools would be requested to increase their PAN, Council Officers did not have any information at the current time as the closure had not been confirmed.

In response to a question about how through schools were funded, TY advised that the funding would take into account that the school was part primary and part secondary and the whole school cohort would get averaged out.

Trinity School: the Council had submitted a disapplication request in respect of Trinity School to disapply the MFG due to the fact that as a new school, proxy pupil characteristics were used in 2019/20 to establish their formula share and, if approved; actual pupil characteristics could be used.

<p>A comment was raised that it may be better to have proxy pupil characteristics based on the Bristol average, rather than base data on one year group.</p> <p>A concern was raised that all schools should be reassessed to see if the pupil characteristics reflected the current cohort. It was noted that 25 schools had been continuously funded on legacy MFG levels for the last three iterations of the formula, and that this could be considered at a future meeting of the Finance Sub-Group</p>	<p>Finance Sub-Group</p>
<p>9. Trading with Schools Annual Report</p>	
<p>Ali Mannering (Trading with Schools Manager, Bristol City Council) drew members attention to the Annual Trading with Schools Report April 2018-19 and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report demonstrated the outstanding work of TwS colleagues and the strength of customer relations; • TwS had 187 loyal customers; • Financial achievements: traded income generated 69% of annual turnover; • What went well: coping with the challenge of ongoing change by looking at delivery models, processes and new systems: meeting statutory demands; • What could have been better: increased use of customer feedback and utilising customer events; achieving key performance indicators; increased use of the Dean Field Study Centre; • What next: preparing the catalogue of services for 2021 to include new services including a translation service and fleet service; utilise technology and improve the website. <p>Members asked the following questions and AM answered as follows:</p> <p><i>Can we get breakdown of teams and income?</i> This information was available last year and could be included in future years.</p> <p><i>What happens to the surplus, does it go back to schools?</i> It doesn't go directly to schools but goes to the general fund and therefore supports children within the city.</p> <p><i>Was the profit as high as the Council wanted it to be?</i> It was short of the forecast, the Council agreed to reduce the profit target when as it was clear that it would not be met.</p> <p><i>How are you trading against the forecast this year?</i> TwS is on track and in line with the same time last year, but a significant amount of trading is required to meet the target.</p> <p><i>Does the figures in the table on page 5 of the report relate to the number of schools buying services over and above?</i> Yes, apart from the NQT induction which refers to the number of teachers rather than schools.</p> <p><i>In relation to the 3,600 penalty notices issued by TwS, what impact has that had on attendance?</i></p>	<p>AM</p>

<p><i>Where does the money go?</i> Attendance was a complex area and it was difficult to say if there was a direct impact. The income from penalty notices funded the administration of the service.</p> <p><i>The number of 518 children who were electively home educated was concerning. What can the Local Authority do to discourage home education?</i> AH acknowledged that this was a wide and complex area that would be included in the wider strategy for Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED – that the report be noted.</p>	
<p>10. HR System: iTrent</p>	
<p>Mark Williams, (Human Resource Manager, Bristol City Council) gave an update on the new Council payroll system, iTrent. He acknowledged that it had been a difficult transition and there had been issues for schools during the first three months of the financial year. In response to a question about whether any lessons had been learnt around procurement he confirmed that procurement had not been the issue, problems were due to a lack of communication and managing expectations.</p> <p>CP questioned whether the automated monthly report from iTrent had been sent to schools and undertook to look into this and report back to the next meeting.</p> <p>The Chair drew Members attention to the need for schools to complete payroll reconciliations on a monthly basis to ensure that they were aware of under or over payments and adjust the monthly budget monitor accordingly.</p> <p>RESOLVED – that the report be noted.</p>	<p>CP</p>
<p>11. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>There was no other Business.</p>	

The meeting closed at 19.57