

Minutes

SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON FRIDAY 8 JANUARY 2016 IN THE LEWIS ROOM (SEMINAR ROOM 1), GREEN PARK, ASTON CLINTON, COMMENCING AT 9.30 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.30 PM

PRESENT

Headteachers	Pete Rowe (Vice-Chairman) David Hood Susan Hartley Olwyn Davison-Oakley Sue Stamp Alan Rosen Steven Sneesby Kevin Patrick Andy Gillespie Owen Lloyd	Princes Risborough School Cressex Community School Spinfield School Seer Green Church of England School Long Crendon School Aylesbury High School Kite Ridge House PRU Chiltern Hills Academy Burnham Grammar School Iver Heath Junior School
Governors	Tessa Haddon (Chairman) Simon Kearey David Letheren Anthony Ogden Katy Simmons Gaynor Bull Andrew Nobbs	Newton Longville Church of England Combined School Great Kingshill Church of England School Wycombe High School Chesham Grammar School Cressex Community School Haddenham St Mary's Church of England School Ashmead School
Representative	Michael Moore Wendy Terry Mark Mayne	Catholic Diocese of Northampton Manor Farm Pre-School Sir William Ramsay School
Observers	Tim Lee Vincent Murray Dr David Gamble	Sir William Ramsay School The Grange School
In Attendance	Zahir Mohammed	
Officers	John Huskinson, Emma Wilding, Atifa Sayani and Nicholas Wilson	



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Debra Rutley, Karen Collett, Katherine Douglas, Angela Coneron, Claudia Glasgow, Annette Pryce and Rebecca Richardson.

The Chairman welcomed Owen Lloyd, Iver Heath Junior School to the meeting as Junior School Headteacher representative.

Nicholas Wilson, Interim Director of Education for Buckinghamshire County Council was also welcomed to the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2015 were agreed subsequent to the following amendments:

School Support Staff Pay Increase

Concern was expressed that schools could not afford to fund the support staff pay increase.

Members of Schools Forum:

Voted in favour of a 1% pay increase for all pay ranges in April 2016 to be amended to '**voted in favour of the proposed increase being put out to vote**'.

Schools Forum Funding Group update – modelling of the Formula changes

The consultation document was approved by the Schools Forum on the basis of prior attainment being at £1200. Subsequently a mistake was identified which led to the authority changing the consulted amount for prior attainment to £1400. The change has not been seen nor agreed by Members of Schools Forum.

Members of the Forum requested that the minutes be amended to reflect the debate and views about the proposed changes to the Funding Formula and the consultation, including dissenting opinions.

Action: Member Services Officer

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no Matters Arising.

5 DBS CHARGES' REVIEW

A paper was presented updating Schools Forum on the likely service offerings for schools and academies from Business Services Plus for 2016-17.

Schools Forum was asked to comment on:

- The proposed changes to services
- The average price increases which will be in the region of 2%-3% across the services
- The current situation with the charging mechanism

The following questions were asked and comments made.

1. Why are academies charged more for Business Services Plus?
2. Why are small schools charged less – there was some feeling that small schools are adequately taken care of through the schools funding formula and therefore should not be subject to special treatment. It was felt that this was an issue that could be addressed for 2017-18.

These questions would be forwarded to the appropriate officer to provide a response for the March meeting.

Action: Emma Wilding/Sharon Griffin

Members AGREED that the current charging mechanism should continue this year and alternative modelling was to be requesting for the subsequent year.

6 ADMISSIONS APPEALS

Members were advised that the Department of Education is proposing to make a change to section 6.2 of the Scheme for financing schools guidance, to include admission appeals as one of the services in which a local authority can charge school budgets for agreed services.

The options are:

1. The local authority can continue to retain the funds centrally, or
2. The centrally retained monies are shared with all schools and then all schools are charged for their admission appeals.

The impact on schools

Option 1: If this option were followed then voluntary aided, foundation and academy schools could no longer be charged for appeals.

Option 2: all schools would be charged for appeals (having had finances distributed)

The full impact of each option would be considered before a final decision was made. The impact would therefore not be until 2017-18.

Recommendation from Schools Forum Funding Group

That if the proposed change comes into force, during 2016/17 Buckinghamshire Local Authority would consult all schools and seek the approval of the members of the Schools Forum representing maintained schools as to their preferred way of managing appeals charges from 2017/18.

The following questions were asked.

Would consultation take place with all schools or just voluntary controlled schools? Clarification would be obtained.

Action: Emma Wilding

Would the centrally retained monies be shared with all schools? This would depend on the option chosen.

7 DISAPPLICATION TO DFE FOR AYLESBURY VALE ACADEMY

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

8 SCHOOLS FORUM FUNDING GROUP UPDATE

The following items were discussed at the Schools Forum Funding Group meeting on the 10 December 2015.

- Admissions Appeals
- High Needs funding
- Remaining Central budget
- Modelling of Formula changes
- Legal position of current Schools Funding consultation

The minutes of the meeting are attached for information.

9 DSG 2016/17 PROPOSALS

Members of Schools Forum were referred to the Central Spend report which gives details of the proposed Dedicated Schools Grant central budget for 2016-17.

Members are asked to agree the central budgets as follows:

- Central Schools – Schools Forum decision
- De-delegation – Primary and Secondary Maintained Schools decide for their phase
- Early Years Central – Schools Forum decision
- High Needs – for consultation only

Emma Wilding highlighted the following key points in the document.

Central Spend

The corresponding spreadsheet sets out the activity, the permanent budget, regulations, the initial proposed changes, the final proposed changes and the final changes in budget for 2016-17 since the confirmation of the funding settlement being received from the DfE. As a result of the budget announcement, Buckinghamshire has received just under £6m extra funding due to the increase of 1285 pupils. Some High Needs monies has also been received (approximately £0.5m nett)

Rates reserve

The rates reserve was within the formula for the forecast overspend. The value of the rates for each school needed to be set. There had been an issue with some academies not sending rate returns to the EFA and in turn, the Local Authority not being informed of the payment amount required. A figure had been set aside for two years in anticipation of this payment.

Following recommendation by the Schools Forum Funding Group that the DSG budget

be reduced by 5% in 2016-17, budget holders were asked to provide full justification of their budgets. A business case was requested if the 5% saving for 2016-17 was unable to be met which included the impact on service delivery. If sufficient information was not provided for Schools Forum to agree to give back the additional 5%, the assumption would be the 5% saving would be taken. A model was produced sharing the 618k on an equal basis between lump sum and AWPU. A paper outlining the model was tabled at November meeting of Schools Forum.

Admissions advised that they were able to make a 5% reduction. It was not possible for Bucks Learning Trust to make this reduction due to the nature of the contract.

Members of the Schools Forum Funding Group were advised that despite some last minute announcement from the DfE regarding extra high needs funding (worth c £1m to Bucks in 2016/17) as part of a £90m+ national pot, the growth in high needs results in a significant net pressure which needs to be funded. To avoid having to ask schools to fund this in 2016/17 from schools block, it was suggested that the £3.3m remaining capital contribution from DSG for pre-existing capital schemes could be rephased, so that instead of it being £3.3m in 2016/17 then £0 thereafter, it became £1.65m for 2016/17 and 2017/18 then £0 thereafter.

Licences

A paper on the changes to Licences costs was presented at the November meeting of Schools Forum.

Following discussion Members agreed that a 2% increase in cost assumption for the increased cost of licences was sufficient, and therefore agreed to top slice an additional £140k for licences.

Dedelegation

This activity is relevant to maintained schools only.

The activities being considered are Contingency (£10.61), Union (£1.21); Jury Service (28 pence per pupil)

The three options are as follows.

- Option 1 – funding to remain the same
- Option 2 – reduce funding by 5%
- Option 3 – stop small schools cover funding altogether

Early Years Central

A 5% cut to this budget.

High Needs

There are additional pressures in this area especially in Special Schools. A lot of reductions are being used to cover high needs pressures. Proposed changes to funding amount to a net increase of £351,975 in High Needs budgets. During discussions, the following questions were asked and comments made.

In terms of Buckinghamshire receiving an extra £6m for new pupils, the document shows that £432,000 is being put into recoupment? What is recoupment? The local authority has special needs pupils in other local authority schools. Buckinghamshire also receives income as there are out of county pupils at our schools. This is partly due to parental preference i.e. the family live on the border of Buckinghamshire; therefore they choose to go to a school in say, Oxfordshire, instead.

An update on Special Needs is to be added to the Forward Plan.

Action: Member Services Officer

What does the capital contribution include? Capital contribution mainly covers the building of new classrooms in schools with growing pupil numbers.

What is the process for academies who would like to develop pupil numbers and how is the spending decided? The School Place Planning team look at where pupil places are needed and approach the relevant schools. Funding is needed for an additional 665 pupil places next year (£771,000). Funding is given from September to March when requested.

Concern was expressed that money is allocated to schools when there is significant capacity in secondary schools where expansion has been funded. This comment would be referred to the School Place Planning team for a response.

Action: Emma Wilding

Does the spend go via Schools Forum for approval? Yes the spend is agreed by Schools Forum on a yearly basis.

Does Schools Forum sign off who the funding is allocated to or just the total amount of funding? Schools Forum signs off the total amount of funding.

There are places available in schools in local areas and some schools are fuller as a result of capital build. This question will be raised with Paula Campbell Balcombe.

Action: Emma Wilding

There are factors to take into account such as home to school transport cost. Paula Campbell Balcombe and Steve Chainani are to be invited to a future meeting of Schools Forum to give an update on forward planning for growth and the Capital Programme for schools for 2017/18.

Action: John Huskinson/Sharon Griffin

Are there any additional schools apart from those shown in the report?

Most of the schools in question have extra classrooms and pupils. The growth fund is revenue money which is given to schools who have agreed to increase pupil numbers.

Concern was expressed about the impact of the £70k reduction for School Meals and participation worker. This question would be taken back to the relevant officer for clarification.

Action: Emma Wilding

Members of Schools Forum voted as follows.

Central Schools-agreement of reduction of budget from £10.257m to £8724m

19 representatives were present at the meeting

For: 19 votes

Against: none

Abstain: none

De-delegation

Primary Maintained Schools

7 representatives were present at the meeting

- *Union*

Option 1 – retain funding – For: 7 votes

- *Contingency*

Option 1 – retain funding – For: 6 votes; Against: 1 vote

- *Small Schools Cover*

Option 1 – retain funding – For: 7 votes

Secondary maintained schools

2 representatives were present at the meeting

- Union

Option1 – retain funding – For: 2 votes

- Contingency

Option 1 – retain funding- For: 2 votes

- Small Schools cover

Option 1 – retain funding – For: 2 votes

Early Years Central

19 representatives were present at the meeting

19 votes in unanimous agreement of a reduction of £1.359m to £1.291m

Consultation on the changes to the Schools Funding Formula

John Huskinson advised that 4 additional responses had been received to the consultation since the report had been circulated; 3 responses were received with the deadline; 1 was received on the 7 January.

Members of Schools Forum expressed the following views about the consultation

- There is the danger of each question in the consultation being looked at in isolation when all of the questions are interlinked.
- The principles need to be established and decisions about funding need to be based on those principles.
- As much funding as possible needs to be directed to pupils in Buckinghamshire.
- The realities of the funding for schools and the current situation needs to be explained to all schools and parents in Buckinghamshire. There was an article in the Bucks Herald on the 22 December about the proposed changes.
- Does Schools Forum have a specific strategic objective? By default it seems to be trying to support the strategic direction of the local authority i.e. closing the gap
- Concern was expressed that some Members felt that they were not in possession of all the relevant information to enable them to make an informed decision about the consultation.
- Concern was expressed about the process for agreeing the models - following discussions at the SFFG meeting on the 9 October, Members agreed in principle to modelling taking place based on MFG protection neutralised by capping; at the SFFG on the 13 November the four new models were discussed and several models were discounted. A single option was then presented at the SF meeting on the 24 November. The expectation is that there would be a risk analysis and impact assessment of all of the 9 models presented.
- Members of the Forum should have received information about the model being presented in advance of the meeting held on the 24 November.
- The process was questioned. It was felt that Members of the Forum were not approached in an appropriate way to discuss the disbursement of £300million.
- Proper rationale behind the process was needed.
- It was felt that there was a lack of joined up thinking about the process. SF Members need to know the views of the Director of Children's Services and Bucks Learning Trust about the proposals.
- The proposal is being forced disproportionately on disadvantaged children.

- A response has not been received to a letter asking for confirmation that an Equality Impact Assessment had been done. A partial EIA has been done after the consultation. This doesn't make sense when the legality of the proposals is being considered.
- Disappointment was expressed that there was no legal representative at the meeting today.
- Proceeding with the consultation would expose the local authority to challenge from the DfE.
- Without the benefit of legal input, the local authority runs the risk of being exposed to further intervention from Ofsted.
- Lack of information, analysis and background information exposes Schools Forum to significant legal challenges.
- For the 19 January meeting, further information is required from David Johnston and a response from Amanda Taylor-Hopkins
- From a legal point of view, there are likely to be ramifications transferring a large amount of money from less affluent sector schools.
- There is concern about the affect the proposal would have on protected groups such as BME and disadvantaged children in Buckinghamshire
- It is clear there is a huge gap in the outcomes for disadvantaged children. This is one of the issues that needs to be looked at as part of the Equality Impact Assessment.
- Correspondence sent to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills included data about KS2 outcomes in Buckinghamshire for summer 2015. This data needs to be taken into account in terms of the local authority strategy working to address the most vulnerable children in Bucks.
- A year ago Schools Forum decided that additional funding should be put into AWPU and low prior attainment. Why after one year would SF members want to take the decision to move £10m back?
- A number of schools in Buckinghamshire are very similar to London schools. Part of the consultation should have been to try to understand the principles behind the proposals. This seems to have been missed It was surprising to hear that the proposals had had gone to public consultation. Surely the proposals should have been for Schools Forum to consult on once the principles were understood
- The principles in the consultation come over as options.
- What proportion of funding is allocated to EAL pupils in schools? The understanding is the local authority allocates £260k to primary schools and £260k to secondary schools which is considerably less notional than the funding received from the DfE. This is incomprehensible
- It comes back to principles and whether or not Bucks should deviate from the norm or not. Every child should receive broadly the same funding whatever area of the country they are in. If they move county, why can't they take the funding with them?
- The advice should be that all schools have appropriate funding to be successful but additional areas of data show there is the need for some areas to be addressed.
- It does not appear to have been understood that lump sum comes out of 2 different envelopes, Primary and Secondary.
- Primary deprivation and attainment indicators, in particular those for disadvantaged children need to be taken into account. From a primary point of view only a small number of children trigger these factors.
- It has been discussed several times that for years Bucks has put more and more funding into these areas is than received from the Government but the gap has still become wider. Bucks has always put more funding than the national average into prior attainment and disadvantaged children yet the gap is getting bigger. This shows there is something fundamentally wrong.
- Putting money into AWPU would make more primary schools able to address issues caused by disadvantaged children.

- It would be good to see the rationale for the decision made by SFFG and the options chosen.
- There was clearly some descent from members of SFFG on the options presented.
- There needs to be an element of trust in SFFG in terms of the debate taking place and the recommendations made. Members don't always agree on the outcome but this needs to be the best option for all.
- Members of the SFFG tried hard to look at best interests of all schools in Bucks.
- Transparency of discussions at SFFG and SF meetings can be difficult due to the numerous amount of meetings and paperwork. The only way to be totally transparent is to disband SFFG. It is impossible to bring all of the issues raised to SF for debate. The process of how SFFG works and the relationship with SF needs to be looked at.
- Members of Schools Forum wouldn't want to receive all of the papers discussed at SFFG but a proper rationale is needed behind the decision making process.
- The London Challenge is a good example of a school improvement programme. Bucks needs a more robust improvement strategy. Without significant funding secondary modern schools cannot cater for the variance of students. To remove funding from this sector puts any gains achieved at risk.
- Buckinghamshire is underfunded full stop. The extra money would top up what in effect is a deficit. Every school in Bucks is struggling with basic need.
- Some schools sent more than one response to the consultation. How was the decision made which response should be used? Members were advised that only two schools sent more than one response.
- Concern was expressed that the guidance given at BASH was that there should only be one response from every school but the public consultation was an open document to which anyone could respond. In terms of the outcome, the graphs are felt to be of use but care should be taken in reaching a conclusion in terms of the way the numbers add up. Members were advised that 71 schools responded in total. The figures in the table on the first page of the consultation document would be amended to reflect this.

Action: John Huskinson

- Were the responses to the consultation open for scrutiny by members of Schools Forum? Members were advised that a fuller version of the consultation responses was available.

John Huskinson explained that it was felt that a proper EIA couldn't be undertaken until the results of the consultation were known. A draft of the EIA has been circulated to SF Members. The principle of the consultation is about moving in line with the DfE i.e. prior attainment. There is a lot of data still to be looked at and fed into the ultimate decision to be made by the Cabinet Member. The legal department, Cohesion and Equalities Manager and the Policy and Equalities Manager have been involved in the consultation. The impact on the vulnerable groups has been taken into account. The extra evidence would be discussed by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and the Director of Education to identify any issues.

The analysis of the results and comments from the consultation showed that it was apparent that MFG and MFL were not fully understood.

There is a high amount of data to be analysed including data from statistical neighbours. Benchmarking doesn't necessarily give the answer. It helps make an informed view. A discussion took place whether the figure of £1400 was correct.

The Vice Chairman reiterated that there were tight timelines for the budget submission and that from a SFFG point of view, this was a consultation. The principle is about

whether or not the selective system makes Bucks unique enough. One change made at the November meeting was to agree the recommendation of Basic Need funding at 90% which is happening nationally; however in doing so other factors will be reduced. If Buckinghamshire adopts the national funding model, this would have a detrimental effect on other areas.

There needed to be recognition that Schools Forum and Schools Forum Funding Group were being asked to make the recommendation which was not of their choosing. It also needed to be recognised that whatever model was chosen, funding would be affected in other areas. Sometimes it was not within the remit or power of Schools Forum to channel money.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills thanked Schools Forum Members for the healthy debate around education. He said that it has been recognised that there was room for improvement. The general funding position is that Buckinghamshire is the lowest funded in the country. This needs to be challenged. The solution would not be perfect. There would be winners and losers.

The Cabinet Member thanked Dr Gamble for his contribution to the consultation and discussions. In terms of the KS2 figures, there is the awareness that Buckinghamshire is not doing well compared to the rest of England. Schools Forum can determine FSM and EAL but Pupil Premium is a different pot.

In terms of the different number of proposals, it is sensible for Schools Forum Funding Group to look at 2-3 proposals and put these forward for discussion at Schools Forum. Thanks were given to members of Schools Forum Funding Group for the work they had undertaken.

The Equality Impact Assessment would be taken into account as part of the consultation and decision.

A high number of responses from across all sectors had been received in response to the current consultation.

With regard to the change of funding position from the previous year, this is not set in stone. Consultation was currently taking place. There was no reason why there couldn't be another consultation.

10 CONTINGENCY GROUP UPDATE

Anthony Ogden advised the following.

17 applications for funding were received at the last Contingency Group meeting totalling £200,000.

One substantial application was not supported at the meeting; this may be presented to the Group at a later stage to reconsider.

There was a lot of discussion about the role of the Contingency Fund in terms of supporting schools to take on additional students and costs. A paper seeking guidance from members of Schools Forum will be presented at the March meeting.

Action: Emma Wilding

11 F40 UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills advised the following.

- A letter about the Fair School Funding campaign was sent to the Prime Minister. The response was circulated to members of Schools Forum.
- The Chair of the Education Select Committee and Chairman of f40 recently met to

discuss the proposed formula. The proposed formula will be presented to the Select Committee.

- There were announcements in the Chancellor's Spending Review about the Education Services Grant (ESG) and Dedicated School Grant (DSG). How these announcements will affect Buckinghamshire needs to be looked at as well as ways of addressing this. One area of concern are the statutory responsibilities within the Review.
- F40 funding proposals and formulas have been looked at. The preferred option would favour Buckinghamshire. The options would be consulted upon.
- High Needs funding was not discussed at the last F40 meeting. There could be some loss of funding under the High Needs block which is an area of concern.
- Members were asked to contact the Cabinet Member if there were any areas of concern they would like raised at the F40 group.

12 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Constitution with revisions from Legal is to be added to the agenda of a future meeting for agreement by Members of Schools Forum.

Action: Member Services Officer

13 DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting will take place on Friday 19 January 2016, 2.30am, Green Park, Aston Clinton.

Future meeting dates

15 March	27 September
3 May	29 November
21 June	

14 FORWARD PLAN

Member noted the Forward Plan.

CHAIRMAN