

## Appendix 2 Anonymised responses to consultation on the changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools

### Response 1

As a school Bursar I would like to respond to the Consultation on changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools. I am mainly concerned with the practical aspects of complying with the proposed changes in 2.3:

**"2.3 Submission of budget plans:** It has been decided that only the governing body can approve the formal annual budget plan, previously it could be a committee of the governing body."

There is usually a very short time between final end-of-year figures being made available and the deadline for submission of the new year budget plan. In 2016 the figures were available on May 3rd and the budget plan needed to be submitted by 18th May. It is hard enough to schedule a Finance Committee meeting in that window in order to approve a new budget, but if schools also have to schedule a Full Governing Body meeting this could be very difficult. If all schools are going to ask for these Full Governing Body meetings to be clerked by BLT then I imagine that BLT will have a problem supplying clerks too.

In any case, dates for FGB meetings are already set for Summer 2017 and many will be in the second half of the term. However, their previous meetings in the second half of the Spring term will be too early to approve a budget.

On a more personal note, I also work in several schools, so have a compounded problem of scheduling this several times over. Would e-mail approval from the FGB members be a possible solution to replace an actual meeting before budget submission?

### Response 2

#### *2.3 Submission of budget plans*

Each school is required to submit a plan to the authority by dates published on Schoolsweb, showing its intentions for expenditure in the current financial year and the assumptions underpinning the budget plan. The plan should take account of any estimated surplus or deficit balance accumulated by the school as at the previous 31 March. Schools must notify the authority of any revision to their financial plans agreed by the governing body during the course of the financial year.

Plans must be submitted in a form notified by the authority and in accordance with the Consistent Financial Reporting Framework. Guidance is available in the Local Management Handbook.

The school's formal annual budget plan must be approved by the governing body.

Financial Forecasts for the current year are required at specified points throughout the year, but will not be required more often than once every 3 months.

**This is unclear – previously the governing body has delegated approval to the Finance committee with ratification at the next FGB. The wording here does not necessarily preclude that although there are a number of scenarios that could arise from this guidance:**

- 1. That there has to be a clerked FGB between the issuing of the budget in late March (it has been as late as 31 March in the past) and approval by May. This means that all schools in Bucks would need to develop their budget and have a clerked FGB in a very short window which would be logistically challenging for governor services to be able to deliver.**
- 2. That a non clerked FGB could meet for one agenda item in place of a finance committee and agree the budget – this would not replace the ‘regular’ FGB.**
- 3. Email approval by FGB of the plan after agreement by the finance committee.**
- 4. The status quo where authority is delegated to the finance committee and then approved at the next scheduled FGB.**

**Of these, I see option 1 as being very difficult for schools to deliver if they are to be in line with the new manual. I would not support this route.**

**Option 2 would be a possibility – is there legitimacy in the fact that it would not be clerked?**

**Option 3 would secure approval – but e-mail routes tend not to invite discussion in the same way as a meeting and may still cause issues with a lack of clerking.**

**Option 4 recognises that the FGB has delegated this decision to the finance committee, but still retains veto in a clerked meeting (although this may well be after the submission deadline). This is the most practical route for schools and does not appear out of step with the wording of the new handbook, but clarity is needed.**