

# Minutes

## SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY 16 JANUARY 2018 IN AYLESBURY MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY CENTRE, FRIARSCROFT WAY, AYLESBURY, BUCKS, HP20 2TE, COMMENCING AT 1.35 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.30 PM**

### PRESENT

Headteachers	Mr P Rowe (Chairman)	Princes Risborough School
	Mr A Wanford	Green Ridge Academy
	Mr G Drawmer	Juniper Hill School
	Mr A Rosen	Aylesbury High School
	Mr S Sneesby	Kite Ridge House PRU
	Mr K Patrick	Chiltern Hills Academy
	Mr A Gillespie	Burnham Grammar School
	Mr O Lloyd	Iver Heath Junior School
	Ms K Tamlyn	Cheddington Combined School
	Ms J Antrobus	Newtown School
Governors	Ms S North	Aylesbury Vale Academy
	Mrs G Bull	Haddenham St Mary's Church of England School
	Mr A Nobbs	Ashmead School
	Ms C Stephenson	The Vale Federation of Special Schools
	Mr D Mortimer	Chiltern Way Federation
Representative	Ms C Glasgow	NASUWT
	Ms W Terry	Manor Farm Pre-School
	Ms S Stephens	National Education Union
In Attendance		
Officers	Miss L Dale, Mr J Huskinson, Ms J Nicholls, Ms J Try, Ms A Wellings and Ms L Nankin	

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from:

- Ms D Rutley
- Mr D Hood

- Ms S Skinner
- Mr S Kearey
- Ms A Coneron – Sent representative, Ms S Stephenson (Principal, Booker Park and Stocklake Park)
- Mr M Moore
- Ms K Duckworth
- Mr P Ward - Sent representative, Mr D Mortimer (Chiltern Way Federation)
- Ms L Grexhammer
- Ms S Callaghan– Sent representative, Ms L Nankin (Head of Fair Access and Youth Provision)
- Ms S Fahey
- Mr M Appleyard
- Ms J Freeman
- Ms J Nicholls

## **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

## **3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2017**

It was noted that Sarah Fahey (Brindley House) had given her apologies at the last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2017 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

## **4 SEND REVIEW UPDATE**

Ms A Wellings, SEND Reforms Strategic Lead, presented her report and gave a verbal update on implementing the SEND Strategy.

The following points were raised during discussion and in answer to the Forum Members' questions:

- Following the agreed budget proposals in relation to High Needs Block Funding, the Local Authority would aim to better meet additional needs by investing in local special and mainstream provision.
- The data presented showed that there would be a significant rise in pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) requiring support. and that this primary need was significant and increasing.
- 260-290 pupils were placed out of County.
- The targets suggested to keep children in County would equate to no more than 12 new independent places per year.
- The target budget set would mean a reduction of £20m by 2022.
- The Local Authority would invest in local schools and provisions which would

result in an additional 1800 in County places.

- An in depth discussion took place regarding the wide range of needs that were met by Additional Resourced Provisions (ARPs) and the predicted increase in pupils.
- Funding for mainstream schools would increase from £6.2m to £7.7m.
- There would be a potential increase in pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) from 1,300 to 1,550 over the next five years.
- The Forum discussed funding for schools that had children with additional needs as opposed to schools that would receive funding for children with an EHCP.
- Appendix 3 showed broadly where growth would be predicted according to primary need. This prediction was based on trends and needs across a five year period.
- The Forum noted the reduction in sensory and physical need and that these figures were predictions not real cases. The Forum discussed the advantages of using real cases for this report.
- A quarterly review of the data would ensure the robustness of the projections.
- It was noted that Buckinghamshire County Council would be benchmarked above statistical neighbours in terms of spending.
- The Local Authority would aim to reduce spend by meeting needs as locally as possible and supporting children in mainstream schools.
- An in depth discussion took place in relation to concerns raised by Forum Members about how the savings targets would impact on children whilst ensuring that needs would still be met. The Forum Members discussed the proposed action on page 13 where it had been recommended that Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) would be phased out and how the needs of these children would be met. This was as a result of discussions with a number of special school head teachers who had agreed that the designation of MLD did not appropriately describe many of their pupils.
- The Penn site is now owned by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and there were a number of partners who had shown interest in developing the site.
- The Forum Members discussed the importance of ensuring that designations were accurate and adequately met the needs of the children. It was suggested that this would need to be monitored and that a regular update be provided on the progress of the consultation.

**ACTION: Ms A Wellings**

- The money to fund mainstream schools to support children with high needs would come from the funding increase from £6.2m to £7.7m. This extra money would grow each year.
- In order to address costs that would not be funded by this increase, such as staff, the Local Authority would review extra needs funding and top-up funding.
- It was suggested that a report should be produced every quarter to show how many pupils were in independent placements, how many children were added and how many had left the system to ensure progress was tracked effectively.
- In the table on page 13 the third target date for completion was July 2020. It was

suggested that the word 'implement' was not appropriate and that this should be reworded.

- The Chairman raised the following question with Ms L Nankin which had been submitted by Ms K Simmons via email:

*'Could she confirm that this paper was written with the benefit of advice from the LA's legal advisors? If not, could she confirm that advice will be sought before this paper is shared more widely?'*

- Ms Simmons also asked for the following comments to be made available to members of Schools Forum:

*'I am concerned that, as the paper is currently written, it does not sit comfortably with the needs-driven framework of SEND legislation. In fact, some of the paper is at odds with that framework and, in my opinion, would be extremely problematic if presented for scrutiny at a SEND Tribunal.*

*To declare a 'target', for example, of 'an average of no more than 12 new places in independent schools per year' would, in my view, suggest that the LA is fettering its discretion and not looking primarily at the needs of the individual child, which is required in law.*

*Similarly the idea that the LA will 'target 3 young people to be brought back to Bucks schools/colleges' is unworkable in a context where parents may well resist such targeting and again claim at Tribunal that the LA is looking not to need but to budget, again, fettering its discretion.*

*There is no mention in the paper of Tribunal costs, which we know have increased significantly in recent years. The LA might consider whether increase in Tribunal costs would be likely to occur if advocates had access to this paper.*

*In my opinion, legal advice is needed before this paper is shared elsewhere.'*

- In answer to Ms Simmons questions, it was confirmed that the paper had not been reviewed by the Local Authority legal service. The targets were not set in stone and that the figures in the report were an indication of what the numbers may look like. Ms Wellings confirmed that she would amend the report to show that the figures were notional and were averages.
- Ms Wellings confirmed that she would re-issue a new version of the document with the suggested amendments to page 13 and further clarification of the figures provided.

**ACTION: Ms A Wellings**

- If the plan was successful, the SEN budget would decrease enough that the Local Authority would be self-financing within two years however there could be a pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant and High Needs due to demand. The schools budget would not pay for this unless there were exceptional circumstances.
- An in depth discussion took place in relation to ensuring that the budget and targets were adhered to should there be any pay increases.

## **RESOLVED**

**The Schools Forum AGREED an amended version of the draft would be reviewed by the Schools Forum Members to be agreed at the meeting to be held on 20 June 2018.**

## **5 SCHOOLS FUNDING AND NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE**

Mr J Huskinson, Finance Director, presented his report and provided a verbal update on Schools Funding and the National Funding Formula.

The following points were raised in discussion and in answer to Member's questions:

- The report showed estimated rates and school budgets after applying the agreed Funding Formula.
- The budgets had been modelled on the basis that the disapplication request for exceptional premises costs for small schools would be agreed.
- Funds had been allocated as agreed following the decision taken by Mr M Appleyard on Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools Funding in December 2017.

## **RESOLVED**

**The Schools Forum Members NOTED Mr Huskinson's report.**

## **6 AOB**

- An in depth discussion took place in relation to Buckinghamshire County Council's involvement with the F40 Group.
- It was agreed that an F40 update should be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

**ACTION: Ms L Dale and Mr J Huskinson**

It was noted that Mr Huskinson would be leaving the organisation and as such this would be his last meeting. The Chairman thanked Mr Huskinson on behalf of the Schools Forum for his hard work over the years and wished him the best in his new role.

## **6A EXCLUDED PUPILS**

Mr J Huskinson, Finance Director, Mr J Huskinson, Finance Director, presented his report and provided a verbal update on funding deductions for Excluded Pupils.

The following points were raised during discussion and in answer to Member's questions:

- Mr Huskinson explained that if schools were funded for a pupil who was then excluded then the funding should be taken away. If a school were to take on a child who had been excluded previously that school should then receive the funding.
- The Department for Education had given further clarification that the period for deductions would only be applicable for 1 financial year.

- It was suggested that schools should be asked for feedback on this to prevent unintended circumstances. The Forum Members discussed the possible implications of the recent guidance. There would be no fine to schools but instead there would be a calculation about how much the funding would change.
- Mr Huskinson and Ms J Try would discuss the calculations and bring their findings to the next meeting of the Schools Forum Funding Group to be held on 2 March 2018.
- The Forum decided that the Pupil Referral Units should be involved in this discussion and asked for their views.

**ACTION: Mr J Huskinson and Ms J Try**

**RESOLVED**

**The Schools Forum AGREED to delegate to the Schools Forum Funding Sub Group the review of the current local agreement and methodology and consider the options**

**7 DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

20 March 2018, 2.00 pm, Green Park, Knight Hall

**CHAIRMAN**