



# Minutes

# BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY, 24<sup>th</sup>  
OCTOBER 2019, AT KIRK BALK ACADEMY**

**PRESENT**

**Headteacher Representatives**

Nick Bowen and Kirsty Wordsworth.

**Governor Representative(s)**

Adrian England, Margaret Gostelow, Jackie Milliner, Mark Pawson and Michael Sanderson

**Early Years Representative**

Melanie Szoke

**14-19 Years and Further Education Representative**

Tom Smith

**Alternative and Special Provision Representative(s)**

Molly Beever and Josh Greaves

**Local Authority Elected Member Representative(s)**

Councillor Jake Lodge and Councillor Caroline Saunders

**Officers**

Josh Amahwe

Strategic Finance Manager (Core Services Directorate) Barnsley MBC

Nina Sleight

Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention)

Shafeek Khan

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

## **1. INTRODUCTIONS**

Prior to the commencement of business, members of the Forum introduced themselves and Mr Sanderson formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Formal apologies for absence were received from Ms Baggley, Mr Buckley, Mr Crook, Ms Drinkhill, Mrs Gilmore, Mrs James, Mr Whitaker and Mrs Wilks.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PECUNIARY INTEREST**

Representatives from the Forum declared their interest concerning Agenda Item 4 of today's meeting relating to Schools Budgets.

## **4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE FORUM**

### **RESOLVED**

**(1) The minutes of the meeting of the Forum, held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 were agreed as a correct record.**

## **5. MATTERS ARISING THROUGH CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES**

No matters arose through consideration of the minutes of the previous meeting.

## **6. SCHOOLS BUDGETS**

### **Schools Budget (2019/20): Latest Forecast Outturn**

Mr Amahwe indicated the latest forecast outturn on the Schools Budget which included reference to the following:

- The total value of the revised DSG Budget and centrally retained Budget
- The total of surplus balances for primary and secondary schools, compared to the previous year's outturn position.
- Key budget variances, particularly those attributable to the High Needs Block

Mr Amahwe advised that the steps which the Local Authority was taking to manage the financial risks attributable to the High Needs Block would be considered as part of a separate report in today's agenda.

Mr Amahwe added that the DfE had recently opened a consultation on changing the conditions of grant and regulations concerning the DSG with the proposal that any deficit which a local authority incurs on its DSG account will be carried forward to future years and need not be covered by the local authority's general reserves or through additional investment.

### **RESOLVED**

**(2) The Schools Forum notes the latest, projected outturn position on the various elements of the schools budget (2019/20).**

### **Schools Block Formula (2019/20): DfE Benchmarking**

Mr Amahwe presented a report which set out the Borough's position concerning the National Funding Formula, benchmarked against other local authorities. In

particular, Mr Amahwe commented on the comparison in relation to the following funding factors:

- AWPU funding
- Minimum per pupil funding
- Prior attainment
- Deprivation
- Looked after children
- English as an additional language
- Pupil mobility
- The primary and secondary schools funding ratio
- Notional SEN Budget
- Growth fund

## **RESOLVED**

**(3) The Schools Forum notes the Borough's position in comparison to other local authorities on the funding factors in the National Funding Formula, together with those funding factors to be the subject of local review.**

### Schools Funding Arrangements and Forthcoming Consultation

Mr Amahwe's final report set out details on the schools funding settlement for 2020/21, including the provisional allocations and key changes in the funding for the schools block, high needs block and central schools services.

Mr Amahwe alerted the Forum to the Local Authority's impending consultation with schools on proposed changes to the local funding formula which would take place over a 3 week period, commence next week. Discussion arose over the funding factors which should be reviewed as part of the consultation upon which Mrs Smith argued the importance of including schools' were satisfactorily funded for resourced provision.

Responding to Mr Greaves queries concerning the hypothecation of funding into the High Needs Block and the prospect for multi-year financial plans, Mr Amahwe commented that the Local Authority was presently undertaking financial modelling on future expenditure and affordability concerning special educational needs. Mr Amahwe added that the DfE was looking to implement 3 year spending plans for schools and it was widely anticipated that this would provide a greater level of certainty for the sector.

Referring to the arrangements for the consultation, Mr Amahwe said that details would be directed at head teachers, based upon the assumption that they would alert and obtain the perspective of their governing bodies or MAT Boards. Commenting on Mr Sanderson's query concerning response rates, Mr Amahwe confirmed that this had been under 30% in recent years yet this was similar to the response rate for similar consultations in other local authorities. Inevitably, there tended to be a cluster of responses from specific areas of the Borough to such consultations.

Mr Amahwe then confirmed that the consultation would also consist of a proposal to transfer a percentage of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in order to mitigate recurrent cost pressures. Any agreed percentage transfer amounting to over 1% would need to be approved by the DfE.

**RESOLVED**

- (4) The Schools Forum notes the implications of the recent schools funding settlement (2020/21) upon the Borough, together with the purpose and arrangements of the Local Authority’s impending consultation with schools on the local funding formula.**

Update on the High Needs Budget

Ms Sleight presented a report on recent developments which had taken place to manage demand; foster system-wide improvements and mitigate the cost pressures in the High Needs Block, as a result of rising demand for the provision of services for children and young people with special educational needs.

In particular, Ms Sleight referred to the recent creation of the Borough Special Educational Needs (SEN(D)) Oversight Board whose purpose would include ensuring that the objectives of the SEN(D) Quality Improvement Plan were achieved. These included effective early help and improving both the quality and effectiveness of the EHCP process as well as the capacity of local mainstream schools to meet such specific needs.

In the ensuing discussion, Mr Greaves and Mr England gave credit to the Local Authority’s decision to invest in the High Needs Block in order to help mitigate cost pressures and whilst Mr Bowen echoed this sentiment he felt it imperative that the impact upon individual schools of transferring a percentage of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block was minimised. Mr Amahwe added that the Minimum Funding Guarantee would protect smaller schools from the impact of any proposed transfer.

**RESOLVED**

- (5) The Schools Forum notes the recent developments which have taken place through the SEN(D) Oversight Board and Quality Improvement Plan in order to manage demand and cost pressures in the High Needs Block.**

**7. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent matters were raised during today’s meeting.

**8. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS OF THE FORUM (2019/20)**

Members of the Forum noted that the next meeting had been re-scheduled from Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> December to Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December and that the venue for the meeting would be confirmed nearer the time.

In concluding today’s meeting, Mr Sanderson thanked members of the Forum for their attendance and contribution and also expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the staff of the Northern Education Trust at Kirk Balk Academy for their hospitality in hosting today’s meeting.

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Signed by the Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum