



Minutes

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY, 12th
DECEMBER IN THE BOARD ROOM, LEVEL 3, WESTGATE PLAZA 1**

PRESENT

Headteacher Representatives

Nick Bowen, Antoinette Drinkhill and Kirsty Wordsworth.

Governor Representative(s)

Adrian England, Margaret Gostelow, Sandra James, Mark Pawson and Michael Sanderson (Chair of the Schools Forum)

Early Years Representative

Claire Gilmore

14-19 Years and Further Education Representative

Tom Smith

Officers

Rachel Dickinson	Executive Director (People) Barnsley MBC
Josh Amahwe	Strategic Finance Manager (Core Services Directorate) Barnsley MBC
Nina Sleight	Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention) Barnsley MBC
Richard Lynch	Head of the Barnsley Alliance for Schools
Shafeek Khan	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Formal apologies were submitted by Ms Baggley, Mrs Beever, Mr Buckley, Mr Crook, Mrs Milliner, Councillor Saunders, Mrs Smith, Mr Whitaker and Mrs Wilks.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PECUNIARY INTEREST

Representatives from the Forum declared their interest in relation to Agenda Item 4 of today's meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE FORUM

RESOLVED

(1) The minutes of the meeting of the Forum, held on 24th October 019 were agreed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING THROUGH CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

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

5. SCHOOLS BUDGETS

Outcome Of The Recent Consultation By The Local Authority With Schools On Proposed Changes To The Local Schools Funding Formula (2020/21)

Mr Amahwe presented the first of two reports concerning the outcome of the recent consultation. The response rate to the consultation amounted to 54% (with responses from 47 out of 87 schools) and was the highest response from schools in the Borough to a consultation of this kind. Members of the Forum noted a summary of the responses generated by schools to the following questions, upon which discussion arose:

1. *Are there any excluded funding factors that should be considered for inclusion in the Formula and can you provide any justifiable reason for inclusion?*
 - Whilst, generally, schools were fine with the funding factors in the Formula, a number of primary schools would like the inclusion of the mobility factor within the Formula. Following further analysis undertaken regarding relevance, Mr Amahwe informed the Forum of the proposal to include the mobility factor at the NFF unit value, in Barnsley's Formula.
2. *Do you support the primary school/secondary school funding ratio of 1:1.31 which is higher than the National Funding Formula (NFF) ratio of 1.29? Reducing the ratio can be achieved by increasing the proportion of funding allocated through the pupil led funding factors for primary schools, including AWPU and Prior Attainment, most of which are already above or at the NFF level in Barnsley?*
 - Mr Amahwe explained the basis of the 1:1.31 ratio used in the consultation and subsequent analysis undertaken by the Council to determine the 2020/21 NFF primary/secondary ratio for Barnsley's schools. Mr Amahwe reminded the Forum of the agreed principle to align the Formula to the NFF and for schools to receive funding gains as expected under the NFF. As a result, the Council's proposal is to align the NFF and the funding ratio of 1:1.35.
3. *Do you support the proposal to increase AWPU values for primary, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 phases above the NFF level for 2020/21 as outlined above, noting the impact on the primary/secondary phase funding ratio?*

- In line with the expressed support for this proposal, Mr Amahwe reiterated the Council's intention to increase AWPU rates for primary and secondary schools by 4% and to align AWPU rates to the NFF. Mr Amahwe also confirmed that the 1:1.35 funding ratio already reflects this increase.
4. *Do you support the proposal to increase the minimum per pupil funding factor to the Government's mandated level of £5,000 for secondary schools and £3,750 for primary schools respectively for 2020/21?*
- Mr Amahwe explained the Government's intention to make MPG a mandatory funding factor, following a recent consultation. To ensure continued alignment with the NFF it is proposed to include the minimum per pupil funding factor in the Formula and at the recommended NFF rates.
5. *Do you support the following proposals:*
- (a) *To uplift the values for the FSM and IDACI deprivation measures whilst maintaining the proportion of funding at 8.5% (the same as in 2019/20) which is below the NFF level of 9%?*
- Mr Amahwe highlighted some of the comments received from schools in response to this question. The confirmed position of the Council is to uplift unit values for the FSM Ever 6 and IDACI measures in line with the NFF whilst retaining the proportion of funding at 9% (also in line with the NFF)
- (b) *To increase the proportion of funding allocated through the Prior Attainment factor (from 6.7% to 7.7%) as well as the unit values to NFF levels?*
- To further align Barnsley's Formula to the NFF position, it is intended to uplift the low prior attainment unit values to the NFF level and increase the proportion of funding distributed through this factor to 7.7%.
- (c) *To increase the EAL unit values for both primary and secondary school phases to NFF levels whilst recognising that the proportion of funding allocated (0.4%) is still below the NFF level of 1.2%?*
- Whilst schools were supportive of an uplift in unit rates for the EAL factor, concerns were expressed regarding the proportion of funding being allocated (0.4%) which is below the NFF level of 1.2%. Mr Amahwe explained how the 0.4% increase in the funding allocation had been determined which was due to the small cohort of the local school population with EAL needs.
6. *Do you support the proposal to increase the lump sum factor to the NFF level of £114,000 and for the same amount to be applied to both school phases?*
- There was overwhelming support by schools to increase the Lump Sum factor by £14,000 to the NFF level of £114,000 given the positive impact this would have on small primary schools. However, it was felt that this would shift significant funding away from pupil-led factors whilst disproportionately favouring primary schools. The view was, also, expressed that allowing such an increase would make it difficult to manage the impact of any funding transfer to the High Needs Block. In light of this, it was agreed to maintain the current lump sum value of £100,000.

7. *Do you support the proposal to set the MFG at 1.84% which mirrors the NFF funding floor and would ensure all schools see an increase in their pupil led unit funding compared to 2019/20?*
- This proposal was supported by the Forum, although comments made by Members regarding the impact on schools, particularly primary schools at the funding floor, were acknowledged. These schools would only see a funding increase of 1.84% which is less than the inflationary increases facing schools.
8. *Do you support the principle of capping and scaling funding gains to achieve a more equitable distribution of gains across all schools?*
- The responses from schools to this Question were mixed. However, given the position taken by the Council for greater alignment to the NFF, it was proposed not to apply any capping or scaling within the local Formula.

RESOLVED

- (2) The Schools Forum notes the outcomes of the recent consultation on proposed changes to the local schools funding formula and in doing so, acknowledges that the Local Authority's indicative position maximises pupil-led funding whilst, at the same time, enables the direction of funding to schools as anticipated through the NFF.**

Outcome Of The Consultation On The Proposed Transfer Of Funding From The Schools Block To The High Needs Block

Mr Amahwe added that the final questions in the recent consultation focused on the following:

- 9 (a) *In light of the increasing financial pressures in the High Needs Block in the Borough and taking into account the system changes and additional investment by the Council in SEN(D) services, do you agree or support the proposal to increase the level of transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to 2% for 2020/21?*
- 9 (b) *Do you support the changes to the formula factors and unit values, including AWP, Lump Sum and Prior Attainment) to manage the proposed 2% funding transfer?*

Mr Amahwe's report on this matter, outlined the current context, including reference to rising demand in meeting children's special educational needs through Education and Health Care Plans; the measures adopted by the Local Authority and its partners in managing and mitigating these pressures, together with forecasts on the future costs of meeting the need for school places.

Mr Amahwe went on to detail the impact of a 2% transfer in funding upon schools' budgets; how this would be mitigated through proposed changes to the Lump Sum and Prior Attainment funding factors and on how the proposal would not adversely impact upon the following:

- Basic entitlement
- Minimum per pupil funding
- Minimum funding guarantee

Mr Amahwe stressed that the proposed transfer would be set against a backdrop which would see a positive minimum funding guarantee in the Borough during

2020/21 with subsequent increases in per pupil funding and no reductions in school funding allocations. Moreover, the Government had confirmed grant funding for teachers' pay and pensions costs whilst both maintained schools and academies in the Borough would experience a significant reduction in non-teachers' pension contribution costs.

Whilst mindful of this context, the majority of schools who responded to Questions 9 (a-b) were not in favour of the proposed percentage transfer or the changes to funding factors and unit values through which the impact upon schools would be mitigated. The main reasons for this lack of support were highlighted in Mr Amahwe's report upon which further discussion emerged.

In particular, Mr Lynch exemplified the demand challenges facing the system, which had contributed to the cost pressures within the High Needs Block, namely the high demand for requests for assessments and the percentage of assessments which were leading to EHCPs in comparison to other areas of the country; the level of permanent exclusions from school among children with SEN(D) which was above the National Average, together with a high proportion of placements in independent schools, outside of the Borough.

In particular, members of the Forum expressed some concern that the proposed transfer of during 2020/21 could set the tone for similar increases in future. This would have a cumulative impact on the long term spending power of schools whilst diverting resources to an area of expenditure upon which stakeholders, including head teachers, school governing bodies and the Schools Forum had no influence over commissioning decisions.

Responding to these concerns, Ms Dickinson and Mr Lynch empathised with the challenges endemic in the funding of schools. Both commented that recent developments, including the national review of SEN(D) and the DfE's impending decision to change the conditions concerning the ring-fencing of DSG, meant that the most sustainable means of mitigating the prevailing cost pressures in the High Needs Block was the transfer of funding from the Schools Block within a set of circumstances that would cushion the impact on schools. Equally, Ms Dickinson recognised that in order to address the governance deficit, the Forum should have a greater role in helping evaluate the impact and value added through such proposed transfers.

Both Ms Dickinson and Mr Lynch stressed the urgency of a systems-based, collective response by schools to the challenges facing high needs block funding in the Borough

The proposed transfer was put to a vote of eligible members of the Forum which resulted in 6 voting in favour of the proposal, none voting against and two abstentions being recorded.

RESOLVED

- (3) The Forum notes the rationale leading to this proposal, together with the responses made by schools during the consultation and by members of the Forum at today's meeting.**
- (4) That following a vote, the Forum approves the proposed transfer of 2% of Schools Block Funding amounting to £3.1 million to the High Needs Block, during 2020/21.**

6. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent matters were raised during today's meeting.

7. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS OF THE FORUM (2019/20)

Members of the Forum noted that the next meeting would be taking place on Thursday, 16th January 2020, commencing at 1.00pm and that the venue for the meeting would be the Conference Room, at Kirk Balk Academy.

In concluding today's meeting, Mr Sanderson thanked members of the Forum for their attendance and contribution.

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Signed by the Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum