



Minutes

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY, 19th
OCTOBER 2017, AT KIRK BALK ACADEMY**

PRESENT

Headteacher Representatives

Nick Bowen (Chair of the Forum) Dean Buckley (substitute for Jo Nolan) Antoinette Drinkhill, Josh Greaves (substitute for Dave Whitaker)

Governor Representatives

Adrian England, Mark Pawson

Special Schools Representative(s)

Molly Beever

Early Years Provision Representative

Claire Gilmour

14-19 Years Provision Representative

Dave Benbow

Local Authority Representative(s)

Councillor Andrew Millner
Councillor Kath Mitchell

Other Representative(s)

Nicola Fitzpatrick

Officers

Margaret Libreri

Service Director (Education, Early Start and
Prevention) People Directorate, Barnsley MBC

Josh Amahwe

Strategic Finance Manager (Core Services
Directorate) Barnsley MBC

Richard Lynch

Head of Children's Services Commissioning,
Governance and Partnerships, People
Directorate, Barnsley MBC

Shafeek Khan

People Directorate, Barnsley MBC

Also In Attendance

Fiona James

Observer

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr Bowen welcomed Ms Drinkhill to her first meeting of the Forum as a primary school headteacher representative and Mr Buckley who would be Ms Nolan's successor as a secondary academy headteacher representative on the Forum. Mr Bowen also welcomed Ms James of the NASUWT trade union who was attending as an observer.

Apologies for absence were submitted by Mr Sanderson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PECUNIARY INTEREST

Representatives of the Forum, declared an interest in the set of items under Agenda Item 5 concerning School Budgets provision, together with Agenda Item 6, relating to Higher Needs Funding.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

The Forum considered the minutes of the previous meeting:

RESOLVED

- 1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Barnsley Schools Forum, held on 22nd June 2017, be approved as a correct record.**

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

No matters arose for discussion, during consideration of the minutes.

5. SCHOOLS BUDGET

5 (a) Schools Budget (2017/18): Latest Outturn Position

Mr Amahwe presented, for the Forum's consideration, the latest outturn position in relation to Overall Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budgets; Schools Delegated DSG Budget and Centrally Retained Schools Budgets. The Forum noted the following:

- Overall resources available in the Schools Block; for High Needs Pupils and Early Years Provision (including the extension of free child care entitlement)
- The reduction in overall surplus balances within primary and secondary schools, together with those schools currently forecasted to have year- end deficit balances and surpluses.
- The allocation of Centrally Retained DSG Budgets between the Schools Block; High Needs Block and Early Years Block, together with the net

financial position and the current overspend, amounting to £5.0 million relating to the High Needs Block. The Forum will recall that this was attributable to the cost pressures emerging through meeting the education requirements of a rising number of pupils with special educational needs, particularly through independent, specialist provision, outside of the Borough.

RESOLVED

- 2 That the Forum notes the latest projected outturn position for the Schools' Delegated Budget, together with Centrally Retained DSG Budgets and, in particular, the action envisaged for managing identified financial risks, notably the overspend in the High Needs Block.**

5 (b) New Schools National Funding Formula (NFF)

Mr Amahwe reported on the outcome of the Stage 2 consultation concerning the proposed NFF; Barnsley's response to the consultation and the implications of the DfE's response for the future funding of schools in the Borough. The outcome would result in a potential overall increase in Barnsley's DSG funding of £15.3 million (or 9.6%). However, this increase would be mitigated by the transitional arrangements proposed for the introduction of the new NFF which would limit the increase in Barnsley, during the first year, to £5.7 million (or 3.6%) in 2018/19.

In addition, members of the Forum noted details of further investment concerning basic per pupil funding, together with arrangements for its allocation; details of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) as well as the creation of a fourth funding block within the DSG, known as the Central School Services Block which would allocate funding to local authorities in favour of their continuing responsibilities towards both maintained schools and academies, as well as details concerning the Minimum Funding Guarantee.

The cumulative effect of these funding proposals would result in all schools in the Borough experiencing a minimum cash increase per pupil and, as a result, no schools suffering a reduction in their funding allocation in 2018/19. Coupled with the minimum level of funding, introduced as part of the NFF, this would lead to primary schools in the Penistone Wards witnessing a slight increase in their funding.

Commenting on the NFF proposals and their impact upon local schools, Ms Drinkhill felt as if they were acting as a sticking plaster by ensuring no additional loss but no further gain in the longer term. This point was supported by Ms Fitzpatrick who maintained that the proposals, whilst welcome in Barnsley, were not the result of any new funding. Mr Bowen added that additional investment needed to be made on a longer term basis in order to avoid local schools facing a further, significant budgetary challenge by the end of this decade.

Mr Amahwe also reported that the actual schools budget for 2018/19 would need to be determined by the Local Authority's own local schools funding formula and any potential changes agreed and implemented locally. This would be the subject of an impending consultation between the Local Authority and schools.

RESOLVED

- 3 (a) That the Forum notes the outcome of the recent Stage 2 consultation on the NFF and the resulting provisional funding allocations for Barnsley's schools, together with the High Needs Block, during 2018/19 and 2019/20.**

3 (b) The Forum, also, notes the proposed consultation between Barnsley MBC and local schools on proposed changes to funding baselines and the local formula to reflect the new NFF (Please also see Resolution 4 (c))

5 (c): Formula Funding Changes: Transition To The New NFF

Mr Amahwe briefed the Forum on the considerations which would need to be borne in mind as part of the forthcoming local consultation on the transition to the new NFF for schools in Barnsley, commencing in 2018/19. These considerations were as follows:

- Determining the funding baseline (including adjustments to the 2017/18 baseline concerning high needs pupils in resourced provision and the Local Authority's contribution to the Schools Budget or other one-off funding)
- Proposed changes to the local funding formula (notably, a review of funding factors; the ratio of primary to secondary schools funding; basic per pupil funding; sufficiency of funding for pupils with additional needs; school led funding factors, including PFI liabilities and the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG))
- Proposed transfer of funds or redistribution of resources from the Schools Block to the High Needs Funding Block up to a maximum of 0.5% of the Local Authority's Schools Block Funding (or £0.7 million).

Mr Pawson enquired on the scope through which transitional arrangements and the NFF could help balance out school funding, including budget surpluses and the carry forward of overspending. At the same time, Ms Drinkhill and Mr Greaves enquired over the PFI school led funding factor; whether there was a risk of some schools subsidising others and tackling increased costs. In response, Mr Amahwe advised that the guidance underpinning the introduction of the new NFF should not lead to any cross subsidisation of PFI liabilities and that school led funding should be sufficient to meet PFI costs.

RESOLVED

- 4 (a) That the Forum notes the issues to be considered in relation to Barnsley's local funding formula as part of the transition to the new NFF, from 2018/19.**
- 4 (b) The Forum notes the timeline, indicated in Page 6 of Mr Amahwe's report, leading to the agreement and approval of changes to the local funding formula.**
- 4 (c) That the outcomes of the impending Barnsley MBC consultation with local schools on the proposed changes be the subject of an extraordinary meeting of the Forum, to be scheduled in December 2017 and that Members of the Forum be alerted to the date for this meeting as soon as possible.**

6. HIGHER NEEDS FUNDING

6 (a): Barnsley Draft SEN School Placements Sufficiency Strategy (2017-20)

Ms Libreri referred to the previous meeting of the Forum at which a position statement on the Higher Needs Funding Block was presented. In particular, the

position statement made extensive reference to the pressures leading to the overspend on SEN placements, particularly in meeting identified needs through out of Borough, often independent, specialist provision.

Ms Libreri stated that the present nature of SEN education provision was unsustainable and, as a result, a draft Strategy had been formulated, aimed at resetting the current balance between Borough based provision and the types of placement used outside Barnsley.

The Forum, then, welcomed Mr Lynch who presented the proposals in the draft Strategy. The overriding objective was to create a coherent and sustainable model for SEN education placement provision through which capacity would be developed within local mainstream and specialist schools and academies, in order for them to be in a better position to meet the needs of Barnsley SEN pupils, at a point closer to home and in quality placements which would acquire the preference and support of parents and carers.

At the same time, the new model would enable greater value for money and a more effective use of resources. As part of this, Mr Lynch outlined a number of commissioning proposals which would require the Local Authority to make a significant investment in the medium term in order for the draft Strategy to yield benefits in the longer term.

In welcoming the proposals of the draft Strategy, Ms Fitzpatrick and Mrs Beever enquired whether issues such as requisite staffing ratios and accommodation had been considered. Mr Greaves commented that whilst the commissioning proposals were laudable, they represented a challenge which the DSG alone could not solve.

Based on the needs assessment within the draft Strategy, Mr England enquired whether there was any risk that another significant funding gap could emerge due to an underestimation of demand. Mr Lynch replied that whilst the assessment was based on the current level of needs in the system, it was conceivable that the Borough had already reached peak demand, following which trends would become more predictable.

Commenting upon the financial sustainability of the proposals and the need to urgently address the forecasted cumulative budget deficit of £9.66 million, by 2019/20, Mr Amahwe clarified the position as follows:

- The requirement for the Local Authority to seek DfE/EFA clarification over the scope for additional funding through the high needs places notification process/NFF to help fund local requirements for additional specialist places.
- To consider increasing the level of funding transferred from the Schools Block above the 0.5% limit, in 2018/19, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State and the agreement of the Forum.
- To consider transferring additional funding from schools, during 2019/20, subject to the agreement of the Forum, whilst mindful of the expectation that current flexibility will cease through transition to the 'hard formula' from 2020/22.
- To consider reviewing thresholds with a view to reducing top up funding provided to schools, as a result of increased NFF funding and as part of a review of other centrally retained DSG budgets.

RESOLVED

- 5 (a) The Forum endorses the proposals in the draft SEN School Placements Sufficiency Strategy (2017-20) for approval and adoption by the Local Authority and its partners.**
- 5 (b) This endorsement be subject to the submission of follow up reports to the Forum on ensuring the financial sustainability of the commissioning proposals within the draft Strategy.**

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Bowen paid tribute to former members of the Forum who had recently stepped down as representatives within the Schools Group.

RESOLVED

- 6 That the Forum’s appreciation be conveyed to Mr Goddard, Ms Gilmour and Ms Nolan for their services to the Forum.**

Members of the Forum, again, noted the need for an extraordinary meeting of the Forum, in December, for the purpose of noting the outcome of the local consultation on proposed changes to the local funding formula and to agree any such changes.

Mr Bowen, then, thanked members of the Forum for their attendance and contribution and expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the staff 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