



# Minutes

# BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY,  
14<sup>th</sup> JULY 2020**

**PRESENT**

**Headteacher Representatives**

Antoinette Drinkhill, Alison Wilks and Kirsty Wordsworth

**Governor Representative(s)**

Molly Beever, Adrian England, Margaret Gostelow, Jackie Milliner, Mark Pawson and Michael Sanderson (Chair of the Schools Forum)

**Alternative and Special Provision Representatives**

Josh Greaves

**Barnsley MBC Representative**

Councillor Lodge

**Early Years Representative**

Laura Hammerton

**Officers**

Nina Sleight	Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention) Barnsley MBC
Josh Amahwe	Strategic Finance Manager (Core Services Directorate) 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, Mr Bowen, Mr Buckley Mr Crook, Mrs James, Mrs John-Ross, Councillor Saunders and Mrs Smith.

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

Representatives from the Forum declared their interest in relation to matters being considered as part of 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 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 were agreed as a correct record.**

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

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

## **5. SCHOOLS BUDGETS**

### **Schools Budget Outturn Position (2019/20) And The Carry Forward Of Balances**

Mr Amahwe presented his report on the latest outturn position and commented on the following:

- The final approved DSG Budget, including the over-committed expenditure related to the High Needs Budget amounting to £3.8 million.
- The total net surplus of school balances amounting to £2.4 million. This included the percentage of schools carrying forward balances above the recommended 5% limit.
- Details of additional, targeted grant funding made available to schools during this period.
- Schools Delegated DSG Budget allocations to both primary and secondary phases.
- The Centrally Retained Schools Budget and the factors which had particularly contributed to the overspend.
- Details of top-up funding made to maintained schools, together with additional funding for schools and the post 16 sector to cover for the commissioning of specialist and resourced provision.

Commenting on special education provision, Mr Greaves felt it would be useful if future spending decisions could be informed through comparative data with other, similar areas to the Borough. In response, Mr Amahwe and Mr Lynch advised that performance and finance reporting on this matter was informed through such evidence and re-iterated that the high percentage of pupils with an EHCP and the level of demand was being addressed via the graduated approach within the refreshed Placement and Sufficiency Strategy for SEND School Placements in which local, mainstream and special schools and academies had an integral role.

Mr Pawson referred to the carry over of individual school balances year on year and lamented that such money was apparently never made use of for improving outcomes in teaching and learning.

## **RESOLVED**

### **(2) The Schools Forum notes the final outturn position for the Schools Delegated Budget, including the carry forward of balances and centrally retained DSG Budgets.**

#### Schools Budget 2020/21: Latest Position

Mr Amahwe then presented the latest position on this year's Schools Budget and made reference to the following:

- The reasons for the variation in the DSG funding allocation for the Borough compared to what was reported to the Schools Forum at its meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December last year.
- The funding allocations for the Schools Block, together with the Central Schools Services, High Needs and Early Years Blocks. Mr Amahwe confirmed that these were consistent with the position previously reported to the Schools Forum in January this year.
- Identification of emerging financial risks and proposed mitigating action. Here, Mr Amahwe particularly referred to Covid-19 cost pressures upon schools and the support and guidance made available and signposted by the Local Authority in order to manage such costs.
- The latest, forecasted deficit in the High Needs Block whose origins lay in historic under funding by central government, together with the progress being made via the SEND School Placement and Sufficiency Strategy, particularly through the increased commissioning of places within local mainstream schools via Local Authority investments.
- The impact of changes, together with Covid-19 related schemes on participation hours in the Early Years Block.

## **RESOLVED**

### **(3) The Schools Forum notes the latest position concerning DSG funding for schools in the Borough during 2020/21 as confirmed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.**

### **(4) The Forum also notes the financial position for the Borough's maintained schools, together with the identified financial risks and proposed mitigating actions during this period.**

## **6. IMPACT OF COVID-19 UPON SCHOOLS IN THE BOROUGH**

Ms Sleight and Mr Lynch presented a report on the Barnsley Alliance's response to the impact of Covid-19 upon schools in Barnsley. Mr Lynch gave a detailed account on the following matters:

- Barnsley’s compliance with national guidance concerning the opening of schools during the lockdown for vulnerable children and those of key workers.
- The monitoring and tracking of vulnerable children in order to ensure they attended school, thereby maintaining their progress and ensure their safeguarding from all forms of harm.
- Helping socially excluded children to learn online at home through the donation of laptop and tablet devices.
- The percentage of pupils re-admitted to schools and early years settings following the phased re-opening of schools for pupils at the Reception Stage, Year 1, Year 6 and Year 10 from 1<sup>st</sup> June onwards.
- The operation of the school meals voucher scheme in the Borough and eligibility criteria for the Covid-19 Summer Food Fund.
- School resilience plans for preventing and managing infections.
- The recent publication of central government proposals for enabling pupils to *catch-up* on their learning. Schools would be closed for the Summer holiday in accordance with the school term and holiday dates (2020/21) agreed by the Council’s Cabinet.
- The recent publication of the Government’s *Back to School Plan* and associated guidance, together with local preparedness for the full re-opening of schools, including special and alternative provision, in September this year.
- Cost pressures on home to school transport emerging through the need to maintain social distancing and the resulting need to promote personal budgets, independence and choice.

Mr Greaves expressed his gratitude to the Barnsley Alliance for its leadership and support to schools during the Pandemic and these sentiments were echoed by other members of the Forum. Ms Sleight paid tribute to the schools’ sector for its commitment, compassion and devotion in supporting children, young people and families across the Borough.

## **RESOLVED**

- (5) The Schools Forum notes the response of the Barnsley Alliance to the impact of Covid-19 together with the re-admission of groups of pupils following the partial re-opening of schools from June 1<sup>st</sup> onwards and the preparations leading to the full re-opening of schools this September.**

## **7. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROVISION**

With the Chair’s approval, the Forum agreed to consider this report in private to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of information and data considered exempt under Section 12 (a) of the Local Government Act (1972).

Ms Sleight and Mr Lynch advised the Forum of the action which had been taken to manage demand for school places from children and young people with SEND during Quarter 4 (2019/20). Mr Lynch referred particularly to the following:

- Demand for EHCPs had accelerated at a slower level than in previous quarters.
- Increases in unit costs for out of authority placements.
- Steps being taken to commission places in mainstream and specialist satellite settings within the Borough, through use of exception funding and other sources of funding.
- The support provided to children with SEND who were unable to attend school for clinical reasons during the Pandemic.
- Ensuring the local NHS was positioned to maintain the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people with SEND as it moves towards its post Covid-19 recovery phase.
- Cost pressures upon the Home to School Transport budget, the need to maintain social distancing as part of future provision and the subsequent need to promote personal transport budgets and independent travel training.

Mr Sanderson who, as the Chair of the Forum, had been co-opted onto the Barnsley SEND Oversight Board's Sufficiency Sub-Group endorsed its work in addressing the challenges of ensuring sufficient places were available to meet these children's education needs through settings that were closer to home.

## **RESOLVED**

**(6) The Schools Forum notes the progress being made to address demand for SEND school places and to manage down the forecasted deficit in High Needs Block funding.**

**(7) That a further progress report be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.**

## **8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

No matters were raised.

## **9. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The Forum noted that temporary regulations permitted virtual meetings of schools' forums to be held in England until 31<sup>st</sup> March next year and a set of dates for virtual meetings of the Barnsley Schools Forum were presented for consideration, mindful that Barnsley MBC was considering re-introducing physical meetings of its various bodies in part later this year, subject to central government guidance.

**RESOLVED**

**(8) The Schools Forum agrees the following schedule of virtual meetings during the period 2020/21:**

- **Tuesday, 20th October 2020, commencing at 2.00pm**
- **Thursday, 17th December 2020, commencing at 10.15am**
- **Thursday, 21st January 2021, commencing at 9.00am**
- **Tuesday, 9th March 2021, commencing at 2.00pm**

In concluding today's virtual 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