



Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Children's Services Directorate

A

Draft Minutes BARNLSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY 13th DECEMBER 2022

PRESENT

Headteacher Representatives

Victoria Harrison

Governor Representative(s)

Margaret Gostelow, Sandra James and Michael Sanderson

Special Education Provision Representative

Josh Greaves

Officers

Nina Sleight	Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention) Barnsley MBC
Josh Amahwe	Strategic Finance Manager (Core Services Directorate) Barnsley MBC
Anna Turner	Head of Education and Partnerships (Barnsley MBC)
Hannah Thompson	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Chris Arnold	Head of Strategic Contracts and Procurement (Barnsley MBC)
Catherine Pantry	Head of Operations: Finance and Schools' Catering (Barnsley MBC)
Kevin Precious	Contracts Manager: Schools (Barnsley MBC)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Formal apologies had been submitted by Mrs Beever, Mr Bell, Mr Crook, Mr England, Mr Haynes, Mr Morgan, Councillor Moyes, Councillor Newing and Mr Wilkinson

2. DECLARATIONS OF 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 SCHOOLS FORUM

The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 20th October 2022 were approved as a correct record

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

5. REPORTS

Impact of Inflationary Pressures and the Costs of Funding Pay Awards for Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff Upon Schools' Financial Viability

Mr Amahwe and Mrs Turner presented their joint report on the outcomes of a recent survey of local schools on this matter. The Forum noted the impact which rising costs, together with the timing of recently announced pay awards had made on the budget of many schools'. This impact would be felt particularly in terms of staffing; the risk of having to reduce staff and the repercussions for classes, including partial school closures for part of the week and the re-institution of online learning. It was considered that the impact would be widely felt next year.

Mr Amahwe also commented on the support available to schools in mitigating rising costs. These included the following:

- Increased core funding from the DfE
- Support to PFI schools with energy costs
- Additional capital funding to schools, including via devolved formula capital funding
- Publication of DfE guidance for schools on energy efficiency

Information on cost pressures will continue to be collated and disseminated through quarterly financial returns from schools. The Chair of the Forum thanked Mr Amahwe and Mrs Turner for this timely and informative report.

RESOLVED:

- **That the Schools' Forum notes the current position concerning the impact of inflationary and other cost pressures upon schools.**

Energy Costs Projections for *Building Schools for the Future*/PFI Schools

The Chair of the Forum welcomed Mr Arnold, Ms Pantry and Mr Precious to the meeting, who presented two related reports on the impact of the state of the

energy market and escalating energy costs on the Whole-Life funding model for PFI primary and secondary schools in the Borough.

It was forecast that this impact would result in an affordability gap in the cost model, amounting to £2.5 million for the primary phase and £3.8 million in the secondary phase. Mr Arnold, Ms Pantry and Mr Precious, then outlined how these pressures would be addressed within the Whole-Life cost model.

Discussion emerged, particularly on the extent to which PFI credits were index-linked and over how best a critical mass could be developed in ensuring such schools effectively engaged with this matter. On this, it would be useful to determine the practice of other local authorities and PFI schools.

The Chair of the Forum thanked Mr Amahwe, Mr Arnold, Ms Pantry and Mr Precious for presenting these reports.

RESOLVED:

- **That the Schools Forum notes the impact of the state of the energy market upon the While-Life Cost Model for BSF/PFI schools in the Borough and the action considered to tackle the affordability gap.**
- **That a communications plan be devised by the Local Authority and partners to ensure this group of schools effectively engage in helping address this issue in the Borough.**

Outcomes of the Local Authority's Consultation with Schools on Proposed Changes to the Local Schools Funding Formula (2023/24)

Mr Amahwe presented, for the Forum's consideration, his report on the outcomes of the recent consultation by the Local Authority with schools' on proposed changes to the local school's funding formula. These outcomes are detailed below:

Q1: Do you support the phased approach to aligning the Free School Meals (FSM) unit value to the NFF?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	16	3	19	79%
Disagree	3	0	3	13%
Not sure	2	0	2	8%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	21	3	24	100%

A significant majority of respondents (79%) agreed with the proposal for a phased approach to aligning the FSM unit value to the National Funding Formula (NFF). Those that disagreed believed the FSM rate should be in line with the NFF value in 2023/24.

Q2: Do you support the proposal to introduce a split site factor in the Formula from 2023/24?

	Primary	Secondary		Percentage
Agree	15	3	18	75%
Disagree	0	0	0	0%
Not sure	2	0	2	8%
Not answered	4	0	4	17%
	21	3	24	100%

A significant proportion of schools (75%) were supportive of the proposal to introduce a split site factor in the Formula from 2023/24. Some respondents questioned the distance eligibility and thought this should be reviewed and the distance criteria, tapered. The split site factor criteria used in the consultation was the same as the proposed criteria that the DfE was planning to use when the factor is added to the NFF in 2024/25. The question was raised whether this factor was being introduced with a clear understanding of the additional costs associated with a split site.

Mr Amahwe commented that the aim of the proposed changes was to deliver on the Government's expectation that local schools' formulae are fully aligned to the NFF; that such formulae promote pupil-led funding and direct funding to schools as expected under the NFF. Stability would be maintained, through the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) so that schools are not disadvantaged in the process.

Mr Amahwe added that there would be a proposed increase to the FSM proxy indicator, introduced in 2022-23, to ensure further alignment to the NFF and meet the requirement to move factor values at least 10% closer to the National Formula. As a result, the FSM proxy indicator unit value would be increased to £191 per FSM pupil compared to the NFF value of £480. Increases would continue to be implemented in future years to ensure a phased approach to full NFF alignment.

The split site factor would allocate a fixed/lump sum amount to qualifying schools based on the following:

- Basic eligibility - That school sites should be counted as 'split' where they are separated by a public road or railway as a clear marker of separation.
- Distance eligibility - The site would have to meet the basic criterion and meet a distance threshold of 500m (0.3 miles) by road

The lump sum would be linked to the NFF lump sum with a maximum amount set at 60% for both primary and secondary phases. This would be split as follows: 20% of the NFF lump sum allocated for basic eligibility, and 40% of the NFF lump sum allocated for distance eligibility.

It was proposed to introduce this factor in the local formula during 2023/24, using the basic and distance eligibility criteria detailed above to determine which schools qualify for funding.

RESOLVED:

- **That the Schools' Forum notes the responses from schools to the consultation on changes to the local schools' funding formula and the Authority's indicative response to the key consultation issues**

Proposed Percentage Transfer of Funding from the Schools' Block to the High Needs Block (2023/24)

Mrt Amahwe proceeded to report on the final element of the consultation on proposed changes to the local schools' funding formula, concerning the percentage transfer of 1% (or £1.8 million) of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block as part of tackling the cumulative deficit and cost pressures in the latter. The value of the proposed transfer would be used to continue the creation of SEND school places in local mainstream provision and prevent the use of placements in costlier, independent settings outside of the Borough.

Members of the Forum were already aware of the context for the cumulative deficit in the High Needs Block which Ms Sleight, again, outlined. Mr Amahwe added that whilst such deficits were ring-fenced and therefore did not form part of the Local Authority's statutory accounts, this arrangement would cease following submission of the statutory accounts for 2022/23. Mr Amahwe reiterated the importance of the Local Area's DSG Management Plan in helping develop a more sustainable financial system for meeting the education needs of vulnerable groups of children, together with the benefits of the Borough's proposed participation in the DfE's 'Safety Valve' Intervention Programme.

Within this context, the following question was put to schools'

Q8: Do you support the proposal to transfer 1% from the schools' block to the high needs block for 2023/24 and for this to be applied to meet the cost of placing SEND pupils in new commissioned local SEND places?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	11	1	12	50%
Disagree	10	2	12	50%
Not sure	0	0	0	0%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	21	3	24	100%

Fifty per cent of respondents were supportive of the proposed transfer of 1% of schools funding to the High Needs Block. The remainder did not support the proposal, with a number of schools expressing the view that the Local Authority should continue to lobby central government for further increases in its high needs funding.

Of the three secondary schools that responded to the consultation, two schools did not support this proposal, whereas in contrast, 52% of primary school respondents supported the proposal. Mr Amahwe's report contained reference to the specific comments made by schools on this proposal.

Whilst the Forum acknowledged the nature of the responses which had emerged from the 50% of respondents who did not support the proposal, all members of the Forum present, supported the percentage transfer.

Discussion arose over pertinent issues and Ms Sleight responded to queries relating to the need for a graduated approach to placements; quality assurance and accreditation of placements, particularly outside of the Borough, together with the effectiveness and value for money of current mainstream SEND provision. Ms Sleight felt that some schools had, for too long, established a trenchant approach to supporting the needs of children with complex needs, based on the belief that budgets and funding could be used in alternative ways. However, the overriding need to reduce disparities in attainment and improve life chances through promoting inclusion in education was not only a moral obligation but accorded with our overall 'vision' for Barnsley's long-term economic and social prosperity with no one being left behind.

In view of the responses made to the recent consultation and the subsequent discussion at today's meeting, the Chair of the Forum moved that a vote be undertaken on whether the proposed transfer should be agreed.

MOTION:

"That the proposal to transfer 1% of funding from the Schools Block (or £1.8 million) to the High Needs Block be agreed by the Schools' Forum"

When put to a vote of members of the Schools Group who were present at today's meeting, all eligible members voted in favour of the motion.

RESOLVED:

- **That the Schools Forum agrees to the proposed transfer of 1% of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to help tackle cost pressures during 2022/23 as part of the DSG Management Plan.**
- **The Local Authority proceeds with its disapplication request to the Department for Education in accordance with funding transfers from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of over 0.5% with the outcome to be reported to a future meeting of the Forum.**

6. CONFIDENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS

Schools' Forum Forward Plan

Mrs Turner presented, for consideration, the latest version of the Forum's Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:

- **That the Forward Plan be noted and that it be ensured all reports are submitted in written format**

7. **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

No issues were raised at today's meeting.

The Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum expressed his gratitude to members of the Forum for their attendance and contributions to today's meeting.

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(Signed by the Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum)