



Minutes

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM, HELD ON MONDAY, 6th MARCH 2017, AT
KIRK BALK ACADEMY**

PRESENT

Headteacher Representatives

Nick Bowen (Chair of the Forum) Ian Goddard, Jo Nolan, Dave Whitaker and Alison Wilks

Governor Representatives

Adrian England, Mark Pawson and Michael Sanderson

Special Schools Representative

Molly Beaver

Early Years Provision

Linda Mathison

Officers

Margaret Libreri	Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention) People Directorate, Barnsley MBC
Josh Amahwe	Strategic Finance Manager (People Directorate) Barnsley MBC

Shafeek Khan	People Directorate, Barnsley MBC
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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Benbow, Ms Fitzpatrick, Ms Gilmour and Councillor Millner.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PECUNIARY INTEREST

School governor representatives of the Forum, declared an interest in the set of items under Agenda Item 5, concerning school budget provision.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

The Forum considered the minutes of its meeting, held on 12th January 2017.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Barnsley Schools Forum, held on 12th January 2017, be approved as a correct record, subject to noting that some schools in the Borough could potentially experience a reduction in funding through the introduction of the proposed National Schools Block Funding Formula.**

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Pages 6-7: Apprenticeship Levy – Impact Upon Schools

The Forum was requested to note that Mr Benbow would be attending a forthcoming meeting of Secondary Headteachers to consider the impact of the Apprenticeship Levy.

5. SCHOOL BUDGETS

5 (a): Impact Upon Barnsley MBC Of The Removal Of The Education Services Grant (ESG) (2017-19)

Mr Amahwe outlined the purpose of the ESG for local authorities and academies. Following the central government Spending Review (2015) the DfE announced that it would be removing the ESG general funding with effect from 2017/18. In Barnsley, this amounts to a reduction of £1.494 million from September 2017.

A list of the statutory and regulatory responsibilities that were carried out by Barnsley MBC on behalf of (a) maintained schools and (b) all schools under the ESG, was set out in the Annex to Mr Amahwe's report.

Mr Amahwe went on to indicate the DfE's proposals for managing and mitigating the effects of the withdrawal. This included the following:

- Availability of transitional funding for local authorities. Barnsley's allocation will be £540,000, based on a reduction of the ESG funding rate from £77 to £67 per pupil.
- With the Forum's approval, for maintained schools to de-delegate additional elements of their delegated budgets to local authorities, in order to provide additional school improvement activity and services for maintained schools. This type of proposal had been pursued by other authorities.
- Amending regulations, thereby permitting local authorities to retain some of their schools block funding to cover for statutory duties, previously funded through the ESG. The amount to be retained will be subject to approval by the Schools Forum.
- Introduction of a separate grant to local authorities, from September 2017, to cover their statutory intervention duty and foster school improvement. This grant is worth £50 million per full year and it is anticipated that Barnsley's allocation is likely to be £90,000.
- The opportunity for local authorities to bid for additional money via the new Strategic School Improvement Fund in order to build school led capacity in areas of the country where it is most needed.

The withdrawal of ESG would add to the gap between funding and expenditure currently faced by the Council during the period 2017/18 – 2019/20. In order to address this, Mr Amahwe set out the Council's approach which included the following proposals:

- Withdrawal of the Council's schools' budget contribution. This, currently, amounts to £1 million annually or 0.7% of total schools block funding.
- Generation of efficiency savings within (a) school improvement and evaluation activity and (b) procurement and brokerage support to schools.
- An investing to save opportunity to support future school improvement.

RESOLVED

- 2 (a) The Forum notes the impact of the removal of the ESG upon local authority school support functions.**
- 2 (b) The implications for schools budgets and funding, arising through the withdrawal, will be the subject of detailed consultations with maintained schools and academies, during the Summer.**
- 2 (c) Final proposals for managing and mitigating the impact of the withdrawal will be submitted for the consideration at a future meeting of the Forum.**

High Needs Funding Arrangements In Barnsley (2017/18)

Mr Amahwe set out for the Forum's agreement and approval, the proposed funding allocation for the High Needs Funding Block in 2017/18. He elaborated on the requirements of the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations, together with the subsequent funding factors inherent in the arrangements for 2017/18. Mr Amahwe added that the overall effect would result in no reduction compared to 2016/17. Annex 1 to the report indicated the proposed funding allocations for both delegated and centrally retained high needs block budgets.

Detailed discussion emerged on the following issues:

Out Of Authority Specialist Provision

Ms Libreri advised the Forum of the significant financial pressure exerted upon the High Needs Budget as a result of the number of out of authority placements having to be sought for children and young people with challenging and complex needs as it appeared these needs could not be met locally. In accordance with the objectives of the recently published Borough SEN(D) Strategy (2016-18) Ms Libreri felt that it was now time to review and instil greater rigour within the placement process as part of ensuring local mainstream and specialist schools had the capacity to meet the needs of such children and young people and to avoid what had too often, become the default position of placing them out of the Borough.

Ms Libreri circulated, for information, an action plan for achieving this objective in which Springwell Special Academy would have a crucial role. In responding to Mr Goddard's query on whether the objective would impact upon schools' capacity to accommodate other pupils, Ms Libreri said that there were no easy solutions and that the overall effect would only be identified once the action plan had been implemented. However, there was a possibility that capital funding may be available from the DfE to support the costs of additional accommodation.

Mr Whitaker expressed his concern that the funding allocation in Mr Amahwe's report had not been the result of any prior negotiation. Whilst Mr Whitaker understood the context of the challenge faced by the Authority on resourcing out of borough specialist provision, it was imperative for Barnsley MBC to consider, in detail, how Springwell and, indeed, the Wellspring Academy Trust, could nurture the capacity to meet the needs of such children and young people via a negotiated SLA.

Proposed Carry Forward Of Projected Overspend

Mr Sanderson, together with other members of the Forum, expressed serious concern over the proposal to carry forward a projected overspend, amounting to £1.7 million in the High Needs Budget, during 2016/17 into the following year. Mr Sanderson argued that the longer the overspend remained dormant or unchecked it would cause a larger financial challenge in later years. Both he and Ms Beever enquired if any alternative had been considered to the carry forward whilst Ms Nolan enquired whether, under the circumstances, it was justifiable for the local authority to have such a mandate.

Mr Amahwe advised that current regulations stated overspends of this nature could be carried over into the following financial year with the intention that they be mitigated and managed down over a 3 year period.

In noting the concerns expressed by members of the Forum, Mr Bowen re-iterated that such pressures were, by no means, exclusively confined to Barnsley. By introducing a more rigorous policy and procedure for ensuring a greater proportion of challenging or complex needs were met within mainstream or specialist provision in the Borough, the overspend could be managed down. Mr Bowen requested that this issue be put to a vote among members belonging to the Schools Group in the Forum.

RESOLVED

- 3 (a) That discussions take place between Mr Whitaker, Ms Libreri and Mr Amahwe with a view to agreeing a workable SLA for the commissioning of additional places within the Wellspring Academy Trust in order to meet the needs of pupils with complex or challenging needs and who, otherwise, would be placed out of the Borough.**
- 3 (b) Following the outcome of a vote among the Schools Group, the Forum agrees to the projected overspend within the High Needs Block, currently estimated to be £1.7 million, to be carried over into 2017/18.**
- 3 (c) That High Needs Block Funding become a standard item to be considered at every meeting of the Forum with the objective of mitigating and managing the overspend, via a risk log.**
- 3 (d) That the latest position statement concerning High Needs and SEN provision, be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.**

Use Of Top Sliced Funding From Centrally Retained DSG Budgets (2017/18): Improving Outcomes For Children In Care

With Mr Bowen's agreement, this agenda item was withdrawn.

RESOLVED

- 4. A report on this matter be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.**
- 6. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

Mrs Beever expressed concern over the continued delay in the circulation of papers for meetings of the Forum and urged that this issue be resolved.

Next Meeting Of The Schools Forum

RESOLVED

- 5 That Members of the Forum be notified of the date for the next meeting as soon as possible.**

Mr Bowen 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 this meeting.

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Signed by the Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum