



Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Children's Services Directorate

A

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY 11th JULY 2023

PRESENT

Headteacher and Board Representatives

Paul Crook, Helena Lockwood, Anna Rooney, Simon Tabbner, Joe Woffinden

Governor Representative(s)

Peter Bell, Margaret Gostelow and Michael Sanderson

Nursery Provision Representative

Simon Sykes

Further Education and 14 – 19 Years Provision Representative

Neil Wilkinson

Special and Alternative Provision Representatives

Molly Beever and 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
Shafeek Khan	Secretary to the Barnsley Schools Forum

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed Helena Lockwood, Anna Rooney, Simon Sykes, Simon Tabbner and Joe Woffinden to their first meeting of the Schools' Forum.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Formal apologies were submitted by Mr England, Mrs Harrison, Mrs James Mr Mitchell, Mr Morgan, Councillor Moyes and Mrs Szoke

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Representatives from the Forum declared their interest in relation to matters being considered particularly as part of agenda item 5 of today's meeting.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 21st March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

No matters arose during consideration of these minutes.

6. REPORTS

Schools Budget (2022/23) Year-end Outturn

Mr Amahwe reported on the year-end outturn position and referred to the following:

- The Schools Delegated Budget and school balances
- An analysis of the level of school balances to be carried forward, including the impact of continuing inflationary pressures and the nature of discussions with those schools experiencing challenging deficit balances
- Management of DSG deficits, including via the DSG Management Plan and Barnsley's involvement in the Department for Education's 'Safety Valve' Intervention Programme

RESOLVED:

- **That the Schools Forum notes the final outturn position for the schools' delegated budget, including the carry forward of balances for maintained schools and the reported deficit on the centrally retained DSG budgets.**

Schools Budget (2023/24) Latest Position and Evaluation of Risks

Mr Amahwe presented the latest position concerning this year's schools budgets and commented particularly on the following:

- The latest, confirmed funding allocations for the Schools Block, Early Years Block, High Needs Block and Centrally Retained Schools Services.
- The factors leading to variations in these allocations, including the decision made at the beginning of this year, to transfer 1% of funding from the Schools Block to help tackle cost pressures in the High Needs Block .

- Emerging financial risks, together with the remedial action being considered or undertaken to manage surplus school balances and planned deficits as well as meeting rising demand for meeting special educational needs and the impact of changes to early years provision

Discussion emerged over school balances in which Ms Turner indicated that financial pressures were notable upon schools with children who were entitled to pupil premium funding and that due diligence was being conducted via the clusters of schools within the Barnsley Alliance in conjunction with the Local Authority's Internal Audit Service. Both Mr Crook and Mr Tabbner commented on the discussions currently taking place with the Barnsley Alliance and the urgency of securing support.

Mr Greaves commented on the High Needs Block and whether the Department for Education had alerted the Local Authority to any concern over any aims or conditions inherent in the Safety Valve Intervention Agreement. Ms Sleight and Mr Amahwe confirmed that no such concerns had been raised by the Department for Education and we remained in place to achieve the objectives of the Agreement.

RESOLVED:

- **The Schools' Forum notes the latest DSG funding for schools, during 2023-24 as confirmed by the DfE, together with the financial position, particularly among Barnsley's maintained schools and the financial risks identified against the schools DSG budgets during this period.**

Scheme for Financing Schools (2023/24): Summary of Department for Education Changes

Mr Amahwe presented a brief report concerning a key change to the local scheme for financing schools which would take effect later this month. This change related to the sale of land assets, whereupon any retention of funds from the sale of such assets must now be subject to the consent of the Secretary of State and any conditions which may be attached to this consent.

RESOLVED:

- **The Schools Forum notes the proposed key change to the local Scheme for Financing Schools, to be implemented during 2023/24.**

Special Education Needs (SEND) Performance and Finance Report: Quarter 4 (2022/2023)

Ms Sleight presented the latest, published quarterly SEND performance and finance report and highlighted the following:

- The level of demand for Education and Health Care Plans and SEN Support.
- Compliance with statutory timescales for the assessment and review of pupil needs.
- The progress made against the priorities and enablers of the Barnsley SEND Improvement Plan (including the Post Inspection Written Statement of Action)
- Application process for MATs hoping to lead on the South Yorkshire SEND Free School and AP setting in the Borough.
- Budgets and expenditure variations.
- Progress against the elements of the DSG Management Plan.

Brief discussion arose over the extent of fixed-term exclusions or 'off-rolling' which some pupils with SEND were subject to, as well as the discussions between the Barnsley Alliance and schools to minimise such practice.

RESOLVED:

- **That the Schools Forum notes the latest SEND Performance and Finance Quarterly Report.**

Annual Report of the Barnsley Schools Forum (2022/23)

Mr Sanderson presented the Forum's second annual report and commented particularly on the following:

- Recruitment of additional representatives to the Forum.
- The Schools Forum's contribution in supporting critical success factors within the priorities of the Council's Plan.
- The Forum's Forward Plan, indicating its work during 2023/24. Here, Mr Sanderson invited any individual member to suggest additional items for inclusion and to note that specific meetings of the Forum, notably those taking place in December 2023 and January 2024 should avoid any risk of being inquorate and to ensure the validity of local decisions made by the Forum, including via a vote.

RESOLVED:

- **That the Schools Forum's Annual Report be approved for publication and circulation, subject to the addition of a paragraph on schools budgets and finance.**

7. **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

No issues were raised at today's meeting. The Chair of the Forum concluded business and thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution.

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(Signed by the Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum)