

SCHOOLS FORUM  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 January 2020

Present:

<b>Chair and Vice Chair</b>	
John Draper	Head Teacher, Swaythling Primary School
Harry Kutty	Head Teacher, Cantell School
<b>Primary School Representatives</b>	
Mark Sheehan	Head Teacher, Mansbridge Primary School
Amanda Talbot-Jones	Head Teacher, St Denys Primary School
Peter Howard	Head Teacher Fairisle Junior School
<b>Primary Governor</b>	
Richard Harris	Governor, Moorlands Primary School
Ross Williams	Governor, Mason Moor Primary School
<b>Secondary School Representatives</b>	
Jim Henderson	Head Teacher, Woodlands Community College
<b>Special Schools Representatives</b>	
Maria Smyth	Head Teacher, Vermont School
Colin Grant	Governor, The Cedar School
<b>Academy Representatives</b>	
Sean Preston	Chief Financial Officer, Hamwic Trust
James Rouse	Head Teacher, St Anne's Catholic School
<b>Academy Governors</b>	
Martin Brown	Principal of Oasis Academy Sholing
<b>PVI Early Years Provider</b>	
Anne Wright	Owner, Paint Pots Nursery
<b>SCC Officers</b>	
Derek Wiles	Service Lead, Education
Cllr Lisa Mitchel	Portswood Ward
Nick Persson	Finance Business Partner for Education
Áine Rand	Meeting Support (minutes)
Martin Ball	Meeting Support (minutes)

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**2. APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

Apologies were noted as follows:

Rob Sanders	Diocesan Rep., Diocese of Winchester &
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	Portsmouth
Cllr Paffey	Councillor, Cabinet Minister Aspiration, School and Lifelong learning
Phil Humphries	Governor, Oasis Academy
Anne Downie	Team Manager Early Years and Childcare
Lyn Bourne	St Anne's School

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes were reviewed for accuracy.

#### **Update:**

- Changes on pages 7; alternative wording for 'noncompliant schools' to 'the schools concerned'. Page 6; MS stated that the LA suggested that there was a small number of schools not inclusive in Southampton.

#### **Action review from the previous meeting**

**Action TM/AR:** SEND Strategic Review Report Link to be circulated with the minutes. *Emailed with the last minutes, agenda and paper for this meeting.*

**Action Schools:** To gain the views from the schools through consultation. *NP emailed out to the schools and received feedback from many of the schools.*

**Action NP:** Urgently seek clarity from DFE on the funding formula. NP to investigate if figures and see if they have been double counted. *NP has met with the DFE and there is a follow up on Item 6 DSG 2020/2021 Allocations.*

**Action JD/HK:** To work on a letter to lobby the government. *Superseded by the DFE allocating sufficient funds.*

**Action NP:** To urgently seek clarification from DFE regarding the £1,000,000 overspend. *NP has met with the DFE and this will be followed up in Item 6 DSG 2020/2021 Allocations.*

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, and the Council's Code of Conduct, Members to disclose any personal or pecuniary interests in any matter included on the agenda for this meeting.

**(Action, carried forward from the previous meeting) Members to complete both the Register of Members Interest and Declaration**

NOTE: Members are reminded that, where applicable, they must complete the appropriate form recording details of any such interests and hand it to the Meeting Support Officer.

## **5. STANDING ITEM: LA UPDATE ON DFE/EFA FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- [For information](#)

### **Pension increases update for teaching staff (NP)**

NP gave verbal information on the additional teacher pension, this is funded on top of the schools funding. NP confirmed that the additional funding is coming. NP circulated a pension's email last week, showing a supplementary grant on top of the allocation. The forum were advised to please look at it. MS stated that all the schools who addressed this email secured extra money. JH mentioned that there are 10 days to sign in. The deadline is on Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020. HK believed his school would have missed out if he had not attended a trust meeting yesterday. ATJ reminded the primary schools to check their emails as she sent out email with a working link.

NP stated that the employer's superannuation for support staff is increasing. Regarding the employee contribution charge, NP stated that there is a slight increase in the rate although no charge for the historic deficit, therefore the net charge is a reduction. It will go down for schools next year. SP confirmed the grant is fixed for 3 years. NP mentioned that the SFVS statement will change this year and the benchmark table needs to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

## **6. DSG 2020/2021 ALLOCATIONS**

- [For discussion and agreement - vote](#)

NP: With reference to the 2020-21 Schools revenue funding arrangements and dedicated schools grant paper and the issue raised with NFF causing a shortfall at the last Schools Forum meeting. The final allocation came through in the middle of December and confirmed there was an estimated surplus of £283K. All schools are funded at full NFF. NP proposed that the surplus is put in a secondary growth provision funding. JD reminded the forum that the last time the forum agreed that if the full NFF was affordable then it would be distributed to all schools. DW agreed with the funding formula for secondary growth, this would otherwise be top sliced. SP stated the growth funding would be needed from 2022 onwards. DW was not overly concerned about pupil growth forecasted for September 2021. SP suggested two alternative options and that the forum discussed the most appropriate option.

1. Funding through the schools block. This would still divvy out to the secondary growth to schools, starting from 2021/2022.
2. Allocate to the mainstream schools via the funding formula. This would not provide a provision for potential growth in future.
3. Any surplus goes towards high needs.

When CG suggested targeting the money, SP responded by saying it was not as simple as the money is going to one area in special needs. There is still an overall deficit in the high needs area with a forecast deficit for 2021 of approximately £3.5M to £4M. NP stated that the level of deficit will be affected if there are increases in the number of pupils requiring High Needs and what additional costs are incurred for an increase in more complex needs.

JD stated that if the surplus was distributed to the schools block this year there would be a potential increase in MFG for future years. SP thought this would be marginal. RH enquired if it could be earmarked for schools in financial difficulties. SP responded saying that this was for maintained schools only, whilst this money has to be divided out between all schools. DW responded to RH by saying the Local Authority will always consider such issues.

There was a discussion around the schools obtaining the funding in 2021/2022 or putting aside for a provision in 2022/2023, weighing up which was the better option and trying to identify the consequences of having the additional funds in each academic year.

JD suggested that by distributing the money to schools that the MFG would rise slightly, and schools would be better off. SP agreed and stated that any future funding would be based on the money in the pot, the money would increase and that would benefit all schools. DW stated that if there is not a surplus, the Local Authority could have to top slice next year's Schools Block Funding. MS requested the Local Authorities view. DW stated he would prefer to put it aside now and then the money is there to fund the growth. Anything left over after the bulge in student numbers would then be given back to the schools. SP thought it should be divided it out this year and to deal with growth as it is needed. JD clarified that there would be no interest on it. RH was concerned that the schools are underfunded in terms of need and asked if it was sufficient as it is known where the growth is going to be. MS thought that all schools are relatively worse off and some schools would be worse off in cash terms. SP stated that Portsmouth have a surplus and they are dividing it out via the lump sum. That way all schools get some money. The sum of money calculated as a surplus is an approximate total of £283K.

#### **Vote**

To put the surplus aside for all schools under the agreed growth funding formula	3
To distributed to the secondary schools using the funding formula via lump sum	6
To use the surplus to take pressure off the high needs	0
Abstention	0

SP considered the only way to ensure that every school gains something is via the lump sum. JD stated the biggest winners (relatively) are the smaller schools if distributed through the lump sum.

#### **Vote**

Lump sum increase	9
Alter the funding factor	0
Minimum per pupil funding	0
Abstentions	0

The vote was carried with the national formula, to increase the lump sum funding to schools.

## **7. REQUEST FROM BITTERNE PARK SCHOOL FOR A LOAN**

- [For discussion and agreement - vote](#)

DW outlined that Bitterne Park School have applied to SCC for a loan of £450K to pay for their all-weather pitch. DW stated that legally this has to be run past the schools forum. The school has applied for £450K loan although the council will still need to agree to this. JD advised this is money the council would loan to the school but would not come from the schools block. This would be at no risk to School Block Funding. CG stated that the limit for loans to schools of up to £200K has been around a long time and is stated in scheme for funding schools. DW confirmed that anything above £200K would have to come to schools forum. This amount may be reviewed at a later stage.

DW confirmed that this loan was to come directly from the Local Authority. This would be a 5 year loan possibly at a commercial rate of interest. In response to MS and SP queries regarding Bitterne Park School's deficit, DW explained that the school is currently in deficit, but it is a manageable deficit and the council are working with the school to provide a Deficit Recovery plan.

DW clarified when questioned regarding the high needs deficit, that it is a different funding stream. RH raised a concern that if a school gets into trouble and then comes for a loan, it sets a poor precedent for the future. RW reflected that they were funded for growth funding for extra children, seems odd that they need this. DW stated due to a design flaw in the original planning, the school needed to put in an all-weather pitch as there was nowhere for the children to play. MS added the school knew they were going to lose space. HK considered that the all-weather pitch will generate some new revenue from lettings which could be used towards the repayment of the loan.

DW confirmed that the current leadership were not involved in the expansion of the school which did not provide for an all-weather pitch. The sugar tax would not cover the cost of the pitch. The school acted under the impression the council were going to provide a loan. The loan application was however rejected and the pitch was built without a formally agreed loan agreement in place. The new loan request is for a repayment period over 5 years. DW stated that SCC are trying to maintain transparency by highlighting the issue and requesting the forum's approval to go to the council regarding the loan. NP stated that this is a one off request from the school and not expected to be repeated for other schools. DW confirmed that the school has asked the council for a loan to cover what has already been spent.

CG supported the Local Authority and the need for the forum's approval to recoup costs from the school. MS stated that it sets a dangerous precedent. DW explained that these were a specific set of circumstance that led to this situation and lessons have been learnt. DW reassured that the learning has happened and we will not be in this situation again.

There were further discussions around paying back the loan through renting out the all-weather pitch and the consequences if the Local Authority did not grant the loan. DW responded by saying that the Local Authority will investigate other means of getting the money back.

JD welcomed the Local Authority's transparency and holding the school accountable and reiterated that it is a loan and not a gift. When asked what would happen to the loan if the school was to become an academy NP responded by saying the loan would be passed to the academy. HK confirmed that this is a loan, the Local Authority are not going to fund this.

JR raised the issue that the leadership of the school will shortly change again and this also needs to be considered as it is the biggest school in the city. HK stated that if the loan is rejected by the forum, the Local Authority would work with the school to identify alternative options for repayment. By doing this Schools Forum are setting a precedent. MS thought that as leaders we have to take responsibilities for decisions made.

RH sought assurance that the school have built into their financial plan the repayment of this money and DW confirmed that it has. DW confirmed that this is only the first step and the Schools Forum are not making the final decision.

**ACTION: DW stated that SCC will look at the size of loans schools can apply for and review the £200K threshold before it is taken to the Schools Forum for approval.**

## Vote

### Maintained/mainstream schools representatives only (primary vote)

Favour

6

Against

1

Abstain

2

### All other representatives (secondary vote)

Favour

2

Against

0

Abstains

2

The vote was carried.

## 8. EMPLOYERS PENSION COSTS UPFRONT PAYMENT PROPOSAL

- [For information](#)

### NP Non teaching pension (LGPS Scheme)

NP briefed that the Council has been in discussion with the Hampshire pension scheme with the result that, from next April, the LGPS Employer pension costs will increase from 16.1% to 18.2% but this increase will be more than offset by the removal of the requirement to fund historic pension costs.

The SFVS statement table guidance advises schools to use the current years forecast. ATJ stated she had looked on the website and could not find it. NP advised that school's updated SBS figures are now being loaded onto Business World.

### UPFRONT PENSION PAYMENT TO TH LGPS

The Local Authority is discussing with the administrators of the LGPS an option for it to make a single up-front payment into the LGPS at the beginning of the year which will provide a discount on the annual employers superannuation cost. There may be an option to extend this to schools (if it goes ahead) in the future by way of consultation but more details are needed before this can be offered.

## 9. AOB

- Declaration Sheets completed and returned to Áine
- Regarding Item 6 SW stated that maintained nursery schools are funded differently. It was said that there was going to be the same funding for all. SW confirmed that she had send an email and not heard back, it was suggested by JD that SW emailed her query again and copied him in.
- PH queried pupil numbers source in the funding calculation, NP confirmed that the figures in the paper were based on the numbers after the census date in October.
- Future Schools Forum meeting dates
  - 25<sup>th</sup> March, St Anne's Catholic School
  - 24<sup>th</sup> June, Cedar School

**10. CLOSING REMARKS AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020

3:30pm for 4:00pm start

Venue: St Anne's Catholic School