

**SCHOOLS FORUM
 NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
 WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE 2016
 The Testhub, Compass School,
 Green Lane, Southampton SO16 9FQ**

Present:

<u>Primary School Representatives</u>	
Richard Harris (Chair)	Moorlands Primary Governor
Amanda Talbot-Jones	St Denys Primary School
<u>Secondary School Representatives</u>	
Jonty Archibald	Regents Park Community College
Toni Sambrook	Woodlands Community College
Martin Brown	The Sholing Technology College
Susanne Ottens	Fairisle Infant School
<u>Special Schools Representatives</u>	
Colin Grant	Cedar School
Andy Evans	Great Oaks School
Anne Hendon-John	Polygon School
<u>Academy Representatives</u>	
David Turner (Vice Chair)	Townhill Infant School
Sean Preston	Hamwic Trust
<u>Pupil Referral Unit Representative</u>	
Alison Parsons	PRU/Compass
<u>Non Schools Representative</u>	
Chris Ode	NASUWT
Anna Wright	PVI Provider
Councillor Paffey	Councillor SCC
<u>Observers</u>	
Sue Thompson	Early Years/Sure Start
Andy Peterson	Bitterne CE Primary School
Harry Kutty	Cantell School
<u>Also in attendance:</u>	
Pat Wood	Clerk
Jo Cassey	Principal Officer for Early Years and Education
Irfan Khan	SCC Principal Accountant
Sevil Rush	SCC Finance Manager
Kevin Verdon	School-Based Planning Officer

1. APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)

The forum noted the apologies of John Draper, Peter Howard, Susan Brakewell and Anne Murphy.

- The Chair welcomed Colin Grant (Governor Special School).
- The Chair explained that his own status had changed to Primary Representative as he was no longer a Governor at Cantell School.
- Susan Brakewell was unable to attend the meeting but had volunteered as a Primary School representative in her capacity as a Governor at Bitterne Manor Primary School.

These changes to the Membership were endorsed by the meeting.

2. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 27 April 2016 were approved as a correct record with the following amendment under Attendees:

Andy Evans representing Great Oaks **Secondary** School.

3. SCHOOLS BALANCES

The Forum received and noted the report of the Principal Accountant detailing revenue, capital and community balances held by schools at the end of the financial year 2015/16.

Irfan Khan explained that revenue balances had been significantly reduced since the previous year which was causing anxiety for schools and that 10 schools had deficits, 5 of which had been approved. He stated that 20 schools now wished to set a forecast deficit budget for 2016/17.

The number of excess balances within schools had reduced to 22 schools compared with 30 in the previous year. Schools Forum agreed that there would be continued support and investigations by School Finance at any school where balances appeared to be very high, based on an assessment of current figures, changes, local knowledge and resource availability, rather than setting rigid thresholds.

4. DEFICITS AND FUTURE POLICY

The Finance Manager sought the opinion of the Forum regarding whether deficit budgets should be allowed to be set. She pointed out that in light of the Academisation agenda and as a result of continued reduction in school balances, there were significant risks for schools and SCC to continue with current deficit/surplus policies.

Irfan Khan added that a number of other Local Authorities had already reviewed their policies and some were offering a loan in exceptional circumstances. However, this was not a certainty and any schools forecasting deficits were required to produce robust Financial Recovery

Plans (FRP) in consultation with the school improvement and finance teams. There was consensus in the meeting that schools were in difficult times nationally.

In principle the Forum were sympathetic and understanding of this matter and agreed that setting deficit budgets should not be allowed. The Finance Manager stated that at this stage of the financial year 2016/17, any schools forecasting deficit budgets would now be asked to set budgets within their available cash limits.

The Schools Forum agreed that the current deficit policy (which had allowed schools to set deficit budgets and address surplus balances held in schools accounts over and above allocated limits) needed to change and a paper should be brought to the next Schools Forum meeting with proposed changes to these policies.

It was also agreed that the Principal Accountant would send further guidance to all schools about deficits and Financial Recovery Plans.

5. UPDATE ON SECONDARY SCHOOL EXPANSION

The Forum heard an update from the School Based Planning Officer regarding future capacity within Secondary Schools. He stated that there was a peak in Reception Class numbers in September 2015 and that this, in turn, would mean that extra capacity was required in Secondary Schools by 2022. Currently not all Secondary Schools were operating to full capacity and £10m would be invested to improve their infrastructure and facilities to take them up to capacity. Published Admission Numbers would be renegotiated in 2018. When the Local Authority could prove to the DfE that it was nearly full then it would be possible to apply for further funding. The Forum also acknowledged the need to spend money on SEN needs in future.

6. UPDATE ON SCHOOLS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY FUND

The Forum received a tabled paper from the Principal Accountant regarding an analysis of support for schools in the financial difficulties fund. He stated that there would be £248,762 available for 2016/17 although there was a limit of up to a maximum £20,000 for any one school in line with the criteria agreed with the Schools Forum previously. He reported that as part of the new Schools National Funding Formula (NFF) consultation, the DfE were currently reviewing the whole situation with any de-delegated funds and further clarity was expected in stage 2 of the NFF consultation.

The Forum agreed that Growth Funds should be released immediately for primary schools, rather than wait until September. The Schools Forum also agreed that schools finance and schools planning team would be reviewing the position in September and any schools that have not grown as planned, may be asked for a clawback of part or full 2016/17 growth fund allocation.

7. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Dates of future meetings were agreed as follows:

- 14/09/2016
- 19/10/2016
- 11/01/2017 / 18/01/2017
- 8/03/2017
- 28/06/2017
- 13/09/2017