

SCHOOLS FORUM

20 October 2015

Present: Head Teacher Representatives: Alison Penny, Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim (Chairman), Martin Tinsley, Stuart Muir, Heidi Swidenbank, Heather Clapp and Mike Wallace.

Governor Representatives: Hugh Boulter.

Non- School Representatives: Gina Kendall.

Officers: Edmund Bradley, David Scott, Anne Pfeiffer, Ben Smith and David Cook.

PART I

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Ania Hildrey and Alison Alexander.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2015 were approved as a true and correct record.

CODE OF CONDUCT

David Scott informed the Forum that at their last meeting they agreed to sign up to a code of conduct and the approved code was included in the agenda for this meeting. The Forum were asked to agree that by agreeing to be a Forum member they also agreed to abide by the code.

Resolved: That the Forum adopt the Code of Conduct and Forum membership required the member to abide by the code.

SCHOOL FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that there were currently 2 vacancies from the academies sector and asked if colleagues could see if representatives could be found.

Edmund Bradley informed that the Alison Alexander had asked if the Forum's membership should be reduced to 16 or 15 members. The Panel felt that it was best to keep membership numbers as they are and try to recruit to the vacancies.

The Panel also agreed that their email addresses could be published on the website.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum membership numbers are not reduced, that they try and recruit to the vacancies and that Forum members email addresses can be in the public domain.

CAPITAL FUNDING IN SCHOOLS

David Scott gave a briefing to the Forum on capital funding for schools. The Forum were shown the different funding streams and which sectors they applied to these included:

- Basic Need Grant from DfE. For new school places at all types of state schools .
- Condition Grant from DfE, for maintenance work in community and voluntary controlled schools.
- LCVAP (Local Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme) grant. From DfE. Used to fund accommodation needs at voluntary aided schools. LA role is minimal.
- Education S106 contributions from housing developers. This money is linked to specific schools, or groups of schools, but is controlled by the borough to provide new capacity. Recently largely replaced by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- Targeted grants from the government, e.g. kitchens grant. Relatively small sums of money for specific projects to achieve a government aim.
- Capital Improvement Fund. DfE grant for condition needs at academies and free schools. Academies bid for funding part of an annual round. The criteria will be published in October, with bid deadlines early December and announcements March 2016. Prioritising will be based on condition severity mainly.
- DFC All schools still receive the formulaic Devolved Formula Capital allocations.

Anne Pfeiffer provided an update on conditional projects. The Forum were informed that Building Services identified work that needed doing – either from condition survey data, helpdesk, or local knowledge / inspections.

Schools were contacted in the summer term to ask for AMP and for any particular condition work that a school wishes to bring to the LA's attention. Building services are asked to comment on likely costs or alternative solutions of possible schemes, and to prioritise needs where they have specialist knowledge

The list is then divided up into a three year programme, based on roughly how much capital money is likely to be in the pot. The list is generally longer than the money available.

Schemes are ranked using the following factors (4 for the highest, 0 for the lowest).

- Condition grading.
- Whether or not there is a link to school expansion.

- A particular impact on curriculum or school operation.
- Additional Health and Safety or Access factors.
- Whether a more serious repair is prevented.
- Length of time on the list awaiting funding.

The Capital Programme is then discussed with the DMT, Lead Member, Overview and Scrutiny before being approved by Cabinet.

Academies and sixth form colleges could apply to the Conditional Improvement Fund to address poor building condition, building compliance, energy efficiency and health and safety issues. There could also be funding for schools rated as good or outstanding to increase the admission numbers or address overcrowding.

With regards to S106 funding the Forum were informed that spend must be in line with the legal agreement with the developer, the use of funds must be to increase capacity to increase intake and unallocated S106 could be pooled until sufficient funding for identified projects is available.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that older s106 agreements were allocated to specific schools however the policy was changed so funding for primary schools could go into a pooled pot, that new regulations were much tighter on how S106 could be spent and that Cabinet decided how to allocate pooled funding.

From 6 April 2015 the Community Infrastructure Levy regulations restrict the use of S106 contributions. Contributions could only be sought for a particular project or type of infrastructure. This change severely reduces the council's ability to use S106 to collect contributions as approximately 75% of development within the Borough was for small developments.

A S106 report putting in interim measures was due to be considered by Cabinet in November 2015 and would be considered by the Children's Services O&S Panel; the Fair Funding Group had been asked to attend to give their views.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that we were in this interim position because CIL required that a local authority was required to have a Local Plan; which was currently being developed. It was anticipated that CIL would bring in less funding than S106.

The Forum were also shown a list of recent capital projects and future projects.

RESOLVED: that the S106 update be noted.

EXTENSION TO THE FREE ENTITLEMENT TO 30 HOURS

David Scott circulated some slides as an initial briefing regarding the extension of the 3 and 4 year old offer. The Forum was informed that the Childcare Bill, and the National Policy Change was currently in the House of Lords. The Bill proposed an increase in free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds to 30 hours per week for working parents, due to be introduced with effect from September 2017. National pilots were being trialled from September 2016; RBWM was submitting a request to be a pilot site.

Funding arrangements would be key to the success of the extended offer, but at this time details were not known. Expectation was that more details may follow the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review being published in November 2015.

Children from non working households may be disadvantaged if places were taken up with 3 and 4 year olds accessing the 30 hours, this may reduce number of places available for 2 year olds. Working parent meant a parent must be in work for at least eight hours per week, or registered self employed with HMRC as with eligibility for tax free childcare.

Some of the key implications if the Bill was passed were:

- Financial implications. Current rate paid to providers in RBWM was on average £4.14 per hour, providers were indicating this was not adequate to sustain the additional hours, and cover all the staffing and premises and related costs. In 2014/15 RBWM paid PVI and childminders in total £4.383M in support of 6,200 Children places.
- ICT links. Required efficient system to be in place to enable eligibility checks and processing requests / applications for places.
- Staffing implications. Increased staffing to cover the extended time, at present recruitment was a major concern for settings to secure qualified high quality personnel.

The Forum were told they would be kept updated when further information was available and that providers may wish to see if they can accommodate increased numbers.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note the update.

(Heidi Swidenbank left the meeting)

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS

Heather Clapp provided an update on alternative provision within the borough.

The Forum were provided background information:

- July 2014 Bocket PRU closed.
- September 2014: RISE Alternative Learning based in Manor Green School.
- December 2014: Update to Cabinet.
- January 2015: RISE Management Committee relaunched.
- April 2015: Audit of AP projected needs.
- July 2015: Market Engagement Event.
- September 2015: Launch of AP Commissioning Strategy.
- October/ November 2015: Procurement process.

The Forum were also shown the overarching principles and where shown 2014/15 RISE alternative learning data that showed that there were in total 105 involvements.

As part of the alternative provision programme it was recognised that there was a need to build a sustainable strategy for the delivery of alternative provision and

develop a strong operational and strategic partnership with and between providers to improve outcomes for children and young people.

A commissioning framework had been published with 15 providers registered on the system. The closing date was in 2 weeks time.

The Chairman asked if the interested providers were evenly distributed and was informed that this was not known yet but expect the majority for Lot 1.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note the update.

UPDATE ON USE OF DSG RESERVES AND EARLY HELP ADVISORS SERVICE

David Scott gave a presentation on the use of DSG reserves.

With regards to school to school support the Forum were informed that the key benefits were:

- Coherent and planned package of support delivered by other schools and not dependent on school's ability to pay.
- Central funding of backfilling to release leadership team.
- Development opportunity for middle and senior Leaders to grow and experience improvement in schools.
- £227k spent on schools requiring support; primarily those in special measures.

The schools Forum had asked for this item to be brought back to this meeting and were asked to approve the transfer of £100k from general reserves; which they approved.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum transfer £100k from general reserves to School to School support.

(Mr Tinsley left the meeting)

The Forum were also provided with an update on additional support for 2 year olds that was aimed at expanding 2 year old free entitlement programme to ensure every eligible two year old child is given the best opportunity to develop and learn. The key benefits were:

- Additional placement capacity.
- Support to parents and families.
- Raise quality of childcare.

It was noted that £45k had been spent to date to promote free entitlement and that future spending plans were:

- Impact of change in 2 year old funding arrangements.
- £33k in each of 2015-16 & 2016-17 for post identifying eligible children.
- Support for providers £50k.
- Access and quality improvement £25k.

- Discretionary places for children on edge of eligibility criteria.

The Forum noted the update.

The next update related to support for children in care that was aimed at enhancing the educational outcomes for children in care and narrow the achievement gap between these children and their peers. The funding for this area would be reviewed in one year.

The Forum was also provided with an update on early help advisers that was funded from “Combined Services Base Budget”, not DSG reserves. £104k recurring funding that subject to annual Schools Forum approval.

There were 3 full time social workers in post and a recent survey showed a good satisfaction rating. The key benefits were:

- Direct support to Head Teachers & designated teachers for CP issues.
- Identifying and signposting to relevant support services, undertaking pre-CP actions plans.
- Changing the engagement with families and perceptions of social care.
- Rapid response to parents.
- Earlier interventions avoiding escalations to intensive specialist services.
- Provided a clear evidence base that cases reaching Referral and Assessment are appropriate.

The Forum noted the update.

SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2016-17

The Chairman of the Schools Forum informed that they had requested an assessment of the impact of increasing the value of the lump sum in RBWM's pre 16 funding formula and the report before them recommended no change to the formula.

RESOLVED: That the Forum agreed to endorse the proposal not to increase the lump sum values for 2016-17 by reducing AWPU rates and note that RBWM's DSG Schools Block Unit of Funding will increase by £12 per pupil in 2016-17 to £4,468 per pupil to reflect the funding added for free schools.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the future meeting dates of:

- 8 December 2015
- 19 January 2016
- 8 March 2016

MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 2.30pm, ended at 4.50pm.