

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2018

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

HEAD TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES: RICHARD PILGRIM (CHAIRMAN), MARTIN TINSLEY (VICE CHAIRMAN), ISABEL COOKE, AMANDA HOUGH, ALISON PENNY, JOOLZ SCARLETT AND CHRIS TOMES

GOVERNOR REPRESENTATIVES: HUGH BOULTER AND JO HASWELL.

NON- SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES: AMANDA DEAN.

Officers: Alison Crossick, Shilpa Manek, Kevin McDaniel, Tracey Anne Nevitt, James Norris and Ben Wright

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mike Wallace and Helen McHale.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Chris Tomes declared an interest as Head of Churchmead Church of England (VA) Secondary School.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2017 were approved as a true and correct record.

The Forum discussed the position of Achieving for Children and asked what Kingston and Richmond were doing for their financial accounting. The Forum was informed that their financial accounting detail was the same as ours and they were in the same position. There was a sense of reduction and benefits. This was the same as many other boroughs but it was good to check we were not at a disadvantage.

ACTION: The Clerk to keep this item on the standard Agenda.

SCHOOL FUNDING AND SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING

Ben Wright reported that the school capacity survey (SCAP) was an annual exercise where local authorities report their existing school capacity and pupil projections to the government. The survey was submitted in July each year, and the borough also published it on the website at:

https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200168/schools_and_schooling/1117/school_organisation_places_and_planning/5

The pupil projections reported in the SCAP for primary sector schools were based on the data from the January School Census, and the GP registration data from the local NHS (this gives information about the numbers of children resident in the borough by postcode). A mathematical relationship between the numbers of children resident in an area and attending a school in the area can be calculated, based on data collected over several years.

For secondary, middle and upper schools, the 'base' data was the number of children on roll in borough primary sector schools, rather than the GP registration data. Information on new housing from the planning policy team was also used, and was currently based on the housing trajectory to 2032, as being used in the Borough Local Plan. Finally, the projections also take into account the change in the size of cohorts in school as they move up from one year to the next.

More information about the forecasting model is set out at the link above.

Pupil projections were not carried out at an individual school level (except where that can't be avoided because an area only has one school, e.g. Ascot and Datchet/Wraysbury).

There were some issues with calculating the projections where a large proportion of the children attending are from a neighbouring borough area.

The forum discussed the impact of new free schools opening in Slough, particularly on Churchmead Secondary School. Officers reported that the borough kept in contact with neighbouring authorities so that they were aware of relevant changes. The forum asked whether they could be informed before a new school opened and also work with neighbouring authorities to take greater account of new housing in their area. Officers reported that the DfE website on free schools had recently been checked, and there did not appear to be any further free schools in the pipeline. However, a new wave of bidding was likely to open soon. The Chairman noted the connection of this topic to the later item on the falling rolls fund, and the criteria in that requiring a recovery from low numbers to 70% capacity within three years. Was three years a suitable timeframe? Officers informed the Forum that projections, particularly at school level, could only ever be an estimate.

WELLBEING TEAM EVALUATION AND FUTURE

Alison Crossick, Senior Educational Psychologist, presented the report to the Forum. The Forum were informed of all the amazing work carried out by the wellbeing team and the initial period for the project was three years. The recommendation was a request for continual funding for the project. The project offered CBT and counselling and play therapy.

The Forum only had praise for the project and many benefits and advantages were discussed. The support for the children and their parents was very positive. This project had had the largest impact in the last four years. The staff training and increase in staff confidence and early intervention reduced the escalation of many issues.

It was asked if the project would be measured long term and what the impact of it would be on other healthcare providers. The Forum were informed that all healthcare providers worked together and complimented each other. It had been agreed after a meeting with large health providers that a joint group at senior level would be created to get rid of any artificial barriers and work together using local authority, health and school expertise and funds.

The Head of Finance (RBWM) Achieving for Children informed the Forum that this would put pressure on the schools grant and new funding would need to be identified.

The Forum unanimously agreed that the project should continue after January 2019. The Forum were very happy to support the project. It was a service that would be used increasingly in the future.

The Chairman requested that the Head of Finance (RBWM) Achieving for Children presented funding models to fund the project for the next 3-5 years at the next meeting and Forum Members discussed this with their individual groups and came prepared for discussions to the next meeting. A decision would be made at the next meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to place this item on Agenda for next meeting.

ACTION: The Head of Finance (RBWM) Achieving for Children to prepare and present some funding models to fund the project for the next 3-5 years.

ACTION: Forum Members to discuss with their individual groups and come prepared for a discussion at the next meeting.

Resolved Unanimously that the Schools Forum noted the report and the associated full evaluation reports and were in agreement with the continuation of the funding for the Wellbeing Team to be approved from January 2019 for a further 3-5 years subject to discussion at the next meeting.

FALLING ROLLS FUND 2018 / 19

The Head of Finance (RBWM) Achieving for Children presented the Falling Rolls Fund 2018/19 to the Forum. The recommendations to the Forum were to note the report, approve the continuation of the Falling Rolls Fund to support good and outstanding schools to deliver an appropriate curriculum while remaining significantly under capacity but with projected growth and to approve a Falling Rolls Fund not exceeding £100,000.

The Head of Finance (RBWM) Achieving for Children informed the Forum that they had revisited the application from Altwood School and it did not meet the criteria as the future total pre 16 pupil numbers were unlikely to exceed the 70% of the school PAN in the next three years.

The Chairman informed the Forum that at the previous meeting, no decision could be made as the Altwood School application was still being considered. The Schools block budget now had £100K 'headroom' and therefore more funding than the Forum were aware of at the meeting in December.

The Head of Churchmead Church of England (VA) Secondary School commented that it would be very useful to receive any funds and that they would make a big difference. The funds would be used for revenue costs as the numbers were on the rise and this would continue.

It was suggested that other creative funding methods be explored such as secondments to other schools. It was very important to be open and transparent.

Other points discussed by the Forum included:

- The fund was available for a school for three years, however an annual check was carried out.
- If a school required the fund year after year for three years or more, the borough would be asking why and approval for funding would be unlikely to be awarded to the school.
- It was too early to say if headroom of £100K was going to be available in 2019-20 financial year. DSG Schools Block funding was allocated to LAs annually, based on each year's October headcount.
- A school may become eligible for falling rolls funding if the pupil numbers were due to increase, by another school closure or a new development being built near the school.

The Forum Unanimously noted the report, approved the continuation of the Falling Rolls Fund to support good and outstanding schools to deliver an appropriate curriculum while remaining significantly under capacity but with projected growth and approved a Falling Rolls Fund not exceeding £100,000.

BUDGET MONITORING AND FORECAST 2017/18

The Head of Finance (RBWM) Achieving for Children presented the Budget Monitoring and Forecast 2017/18 report to the Forum. The Forum were asked to note the contents of the report including the reported variance, schedule of Risks & Opportunities and the projected deficit balance carried forward as at 31 March 2018.

A question was asked about when decisions would be clear on SEN. The intentions were to make all clear by the end of March 2018 and would be put into place by the next academic year, September 2018. There were two plans in place, more resources for the Better Care Plan and alternate provisions. The challenge was on how we supported them.

There had been a deficit situation with a broad academy trust, this was made into a loan but none of it has been paid. The school has now been released from the trust and the borough has contacted the creditor that we should be paid.

This was noted by the Forum.

Resolved Unanimously that the Forum noted the report including the reported variance, schedule of Risks & Opportunities and the projected deficit balance carried forward as at 31 March 2018.

CENTRALLY RETAINED BUDGETS 2018/19

The Head of Finance (RBWM) Achieving for Children presented the Centrally Retained Budgets 2018/19 report to the Forum. The Forum were asked to approve the central commitments and de-delegated allocations detailed in this report.

The borough had consulted all schools and no comments had been received.

The Forum carried out a separate vote for primary schools and secondary schools. Both voted in favour for approving the central commitments as in the report.

The Forum then voted unanimously to de-delegate allocations detailed in the report.

Resolved Unanimously that the Forum approved the central commitments and de-delegated allocations in the report.

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT INDICATIVE SETTLEMENT 2018/19

The Head of Finance (RBWM) Achieving for Children presented the Dedicated Schools Grant Indicative Settlement 2018/19 report to the Forum. The Forum were asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.

Resolved Unanimously: The Forum noted the report.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Forum discussed the date of the next meeting and when the papers should be sent to them.

It was agreed Unanimously that the next Schools Forum meeting should be moved to the week after the Easter holidays, week commencing 16 April 2018. It would be ideal if papers were sent to the School Forum Members before the Easter break, week commencing 26 March 2018, before 29 March 2018, when the schools break up for the Easter break.

The meeting, which began at 2.30 pm, finished at 4.00 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....