

SCHOOLS FORUM

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on Wednesday, 26 February 2014 at 5pm in the Civic Offices.

Present

Mike Smith (in the Chair)
Clive Good, Governor - Primary
Steve Sheehan, Governor - Primary

Alison Beane, Head Teacher - Academies.
Margaret Beel, Head Teacher - Academies
Fiona Calderbank, Head Teacher - Secondary
Jackie Collins, Head Teacher - Primary
Margaret Dunford, Head Teacher - Special
David Jeapes, Head Teacher - Secondary
Karen Stocks, Head Teacher - Nursery

Steve Frampton, 16-19 Representative.

Officers.

Catherine Kickham, Early Support Commissioning Manager
Jane Di Dino, Local Democracy Officer
Alison Egerton, Group Accountant
Julia Katherine, Child Support Commissioning Manager
Richard Webb, Finance Manager
Julian Wooster, Strategic Director

6. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Carole Damper, Councillor David Fuller, Councillor Neill Young, Councillor Ken Ferrett, Mark Mitchell, Jayne Pratt, Sue Wilson and Suzy Horton.

7. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

8. Membership

Richard Webb informed the forum that Tom Blair and Bruce Marris' tenures had ended.

The forum welcomed:

- Sarah Sadler as the primary phase representative
- Alison Beane and Margaret Beel as the academy representatives.
- Richard Wharton as the representative for the Anglican Diocese.
- Steve Frampton as the 16-19 representative.

9. Minutes and Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting Held on 15 January.

The minutes were agreed subject to the addition of the following:

Item 5.

Recommendation (d) - include clarification that the criteria for the Fallings Rolls fund will include a deadline (in April 14) for requests to be submitted.

10. Two-Year Old Funding - update

Catherine Kickham introduced the report and in response to questions, clarified the following points:

- The service is aiming to meet the target number of places for 2013-14. This has been aided by the early implementation of the 2014-15 criteria.
- Areas where demand exceeds provision are targeted and action is being taken to secure extra provision. E.g. Eastney & Craneswater, Stamshaw and Paulsgrove.
- Child minders are not included in the figures.
- The trajectory funding is unlikely to be fully spent by the end of the year and therefore, there is a request to allocate any related underspend to the 2014-15 budget.

Mike Smith noted the good work that had been carried out.

The Schools Forum:

- a. Noted the successful progress within the report in respect of the increase in two year old place provision.**
- b. Agreed the budget allocation 2014-15 of £2,910,800 for two year old places and £359,600 for related trajectory funding.**
- c. Agreed that £79,000 is continued to be held centrally to provide resources to target settings with regard to capacity and quality improvement.**
- d. Agreed that any underspend in the trajectory funding in 2013-14 is carried forward and allocated to the trajectory budget in 2014-15 to support the continued investment in the market growth and infrastructure.**

(Approved unanimously)

11. Budget 2014 - 2015

Richard Webb introduced the report and in response to questions, clarified the following points:

- A report will be brought to a future meeting of the Schools Forum with details of the DfE's revised funding allocation in respect of the Early Years and High Needs blocks. The current uncertainty in respect of these allocations means that the overall funding for 2014-15 could increase or decrease.
- The DfE has stated that funding for 2014-15 is cash flat.

Mike Smith commented that with costs increasing and pay rises to fund, schools are worse off in real terms.

Alison Beane and Margaret Beel expressed concern that special school teachers were not given sufficient notice of the high needs budgets before this meeting and therefore the implications have not been discussed.

Richard Webb apologised for the late communication with special schools in respect of their estimated funding allocations. Due to the delays in finalising the pupil moderation data, it had not been possible to provide the information any sooner. He gave assurances Finance would work with the Child Support Commissioning Manager to improve the future arrangements so that this information could be provided earlier to schools.

Alison Beane explained that more pupils with higher needs and therefore bandings were entering the system.

Julia Katherine explained that there are plans in place to develop provision in the city for new pupils entering the system which should mean that fewer pupils will have to travel to placements out of the city.

Julian Wooster, Strategic Director explained that this is a national issue. The council is trying to develop local resource centres to ensure that where possible pupils with marginal needs can attend main stream schools.

A discussion took place in respect of Academy conversions, the implications on the funding arrangements and school balances.

The Schools Forum:

- a. **Approved the determination of the schools budget at Appendix 1, together with the supporting explanations contained within this report. (7 for and 1 against)**
- b. **Approved the indicative Element 3 Top-up rates for the Special Schools as set out in Appendix 2 and agreed that officers continue to finalise these with the Special Schools. (6 for; 1 abstention and 2 against).**
- c. **Agreed the Element 3 Top-up rates for Resourced Units and Alternative Provisions settings set out at Appendix 2. (8 for and 1 against)**
- d. **Agreed to the allocation in 2014-15 of the 'exceptional circumstances' funding as set out in paragraphs 7.7 to 7.9. (9 for and 0 against)**
- e. **Agreed that any under-spends on the de-delegated budgets at the end of 2013-14, will be carried forward to be used for the same purposes in 2014-15. (9 for and 0 against)**
- f. **Agreed that any carry-forward balances from 2013-14 (other than in those referred to in 'e' above, and the 2 Year Old Trajectory in the separate agenda item) be used to assist with the continued introduction of the funding reform changes and fund any potential financial pressures arising during 2014-15. (9 for and 0 against).**
- g. **Noted the change in Growth Fund criteria to meet the requirements of the Education Funding Agency in section 10. (agreed unanimously).**

12. School Balance Control Mechanism and Raising Educational Standards in Portsmouth

Richard Webb introduced the report and in response to questions, clarified the following points:

- The DfE data showed that Slough had the highest level of balances in the South East for the last 3 years with 12.2% in 2011/12. Kent and Windsor had the lowest at 5.3% in 2011/12
- The school improvement team are looking at what can be done to support schools to improve standards and attainments and to ensure that balances are used to support these initiatives.
- If the balance control mechanism was reinstated, there is a perverse incentive for schools to transfer funds from 'uncommitted' to 'committed' to avoid the claw back mechanism. This would also create excessive time for both schools and the Local Authority to review and monitor the year-end balances. The preference would be

to invest resources to strengthen the work with the education team support school improvement initiatives.

Steve Frampton expressed concern that resources would be taken up challenging budgets and be taken away from pressing needs.

Steve Sheehan and Clive Good noted that having a claw back mechanism could encourage schools to better manage their finances. If it was decided not to introduce this, schools should be aware that it was considered very carefully and the decision will be reviewed next year.

David Jeapes observed that healthy school balances were not necessarily bad.

The Schools Forum:

a. Considered and approved one of the following options, subject to consultation with maintained schools:

i. To implement a new "balance control mechanism" to clawback excessive balances as set out in Appendices 2 and 3; (1 for; 1 abstain and 9 against).

ii. To continue to operate without a "balance control mechanism", and implement the proposals set out in paragraphs 6.14 to 6.16 and Appendix 3. (approved unanimously)

b. Endorsed a further report to be presented to Schools Forum considering the options available for utilising school balances to support initiatives to raise educational standards in Portsmouth. (approved unanimously)

13. Any Other Business

The Schools Forum agreed the following amendments to the April and July meeting dates:

30 April (moved from 23rd)

16 July (moved from 9th)

The next meetings of the Forum are:

30 April 2014 - 5pm

16 July 2014 - 4.30pm

15 October 2014 - 5pm

10 December 2014 - 4.30pm

The meeting concluded at 6.30 pm.

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Chair