



City of Westminster

Westminster Schools Forum Meeting - Minutes

Date and time of meeting: Monday 2nd December 2019 at 4.45pm

Location: Sir Simon Milton Westminster UTC, 1 Sutherland Street,
London SW1V 4LD

Representing	Name	Organisation	Attendance
Primary Schools	6 Members		
Primary Head	Sandra Tyrrell (ST)	Christchurch Bentinck Primary	Present
Primary Head	Darren Guttridge (DG)	Edward Wilson CE Primary	Present
Primary Head	Louise Ritchie (LR)	Soho Parish CE Primary	Apologies
Primary Governor	Vacancy		
Primary Governor	Andrew Garwood-Watkins (AGW) (Chair)	St James and St John CE Primary	Present
Primary Governor	Vacancy		
Secondary schools	2 Members		
Secondary Head	Eugene Moriarty (EM)	St Augustine's High School	Apologies
Secondary Principal	Saima Rana (SR) (represented EM)	Westminster Academy	Present
Secondary Head	Vacancy		
Academies	5 Members		
Secondary Non-Recoupment Academy Principal	Richard Ardron (RA)	Marylebone Boys School	Present
Secondary Recoupment Academy Head	Peter Broughton (PB)	Westminster City School	Present
Secondary Recoupment Academy	Michael Bithell (MB) (Vice Chair)	United Westminster Schools Foundation	Present
Alternative Provision Academy	Wasim Butt (WB)	TBAP	Apologies
Primary Recoupment Academy Head	Louisa Lochner (LL)	Gateway Academy	Present
Maintained Nursery Schools	1 member		
Nursery Head	Liz Hillyard (LH)	Tachbrook Nursery	Present
Special Schools	1 member		
Special Schools Head	Andy Balmer (AB)	Westminster Special Schools	Apologies
Early Years (PVI)	1 member		
	John Trow-Smith (JTS)	LEYF	Present
14-19 Representative	1 member		
Secondary Head	Kathryn Pugh (KPUG)	The St Marylebone CofE School	Present
Officers in Attendance			
Director of Education	Ian Heggs (IH)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Apologies
Director of Operations and Programmes	Andrew Tagg (AT)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present
Lead Strategic Finance Manager	Anita Stokes (AS)	Bi-Borough Strategic Finance Education	Present
Assistant City Treasurer	Steve Muldoon (SM)	Commercial and Financial Management	Present
Senior Finance Manager	Amanda Anerville (AA)	Bi-Borough Strategic Finance Education	Present
Head of School Governor Services/Clerk	Jackie Saddington (JS)	Bi-Borough Children's Services Education	Present

Observers			
Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Education and Skills	Cllr Jacqui Wilkinson (JW)	Councillor	Apologies
Acting Headteacher	Peter Shaw (PS)	The Greycoat Hospital	Present
Director of Finance and Administration	John McDonald (JM)	The St Marylebone CE School	Present

Item		Action
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies were received from Mr Ian Heggs, Mr Andy Balmer, Cllr Jacqui Wilkinson, Ms Louise Ritchie, Mr Eugene Moriarty and Ms Wasim Butt,	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.	
3.	CONSTITUENCY AND MEMBERSHIP AT reminded members that the constituency and membership of the Schools Forum were being reviewed. A consultation would take place with a paper being brought to the January 2020 meeting. For the March meeting, the membership would be in transition with the new Membership in place for June or September 2020.	
	RESOLUTION: AT to circulate a paper, with recommendations on constituency and Membership, to the next meeting.	AT
4.	HIGH NEEDS BLOCK REVIEW The Chair reported the review was on going, with one more meeting likely to be required. The review process had been thorough and robust, and a paper would be brought to the next meeting.	
	RESOLUTION: To present a paper on the High Needs Block to the next meeting.	AT
5.	PROVISIONAL DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT (DSG), NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA AND LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA 2020/21 – ITEM 4 ON AGENDA AS referred to Paper A1 and reported the LA had received the indicative levels of funding for 2020/2021, including the proposed NFF allocations, along with the requirements regarding local funding formulae. AS highlighted Paragraph 2.2 of the report, advising members there was no intention for the NFF to be a cliff edge for schools. There would be no reduction when the NFF comes in, although it is not known when this will be, possibly 2021/2022; the outcome of the general election would be likely to inform this. With the National Minimum Funding level being brought in, it would no longer be appropriate to have a local minimum funding level. The area cost adjustment for	

London LAs, of 18%, will also need to be taken into account.

AS referenced paragraph 2.6 and table 1. She reminded members the schools block has to fund planned growth – such as Ark King Solomon. She was asked if the Schools' Forum has a choice, but she explained they did not as the funding was above the minimum funding level and funding was based on historical allocations.

AS pointed out that the Schools Forum had previously agreed (in January 2019) after considering five different options that stability for Schools was the priority and to enable this the recommendation was to remain with the WCC formula. She also referenced the two appendices, A and B, highlighting the two suggested options; remain with the WCC funding formula or agree the NFF with a gains cap of 5.98%.

AS informed members the draft October 2019 census figures for WCC indicate a total reduction of 238 pupils. This shows a significant decrease in primary numbers with an increase in secondary numbers. Thirteen schools had a decrease in numbers in excess of 5% of places.

AS was asked how WCC could justify allocating less funding through the vulnerable factors when all indicators are indicators of deprivation. It is a particularly challenging time with more issues developing for schools, such as violent crime, gangs and terrorism. AS explained historical decisions taken by the Schools' Forum were impacting on the current position. AT agreed and informed members that schools in WCC are well-funded in comparison to schools in other LAs. WCC is in the top 10% for school funding in the country. In 2016, the LA put options to the Schools' Forum for consideration but none of the options were supported by the Schools' Forum. This was because funds would have been taken from 7-8 schools. As a result, decisions taken then mean some schools are now locked in to the MFG (-1.5%). AS also reminded members that in December 2018, the Schools' Forum had taken a decision that stability for schools was the main priority. This was in preference to allocating more funding to the deprivation funding formulae factor. AT agreed, reminding members that they had voted on the options put forward at the time and as the NFF was not known, had advised the LA that stability must be the priority. Members recalled FSM6 pre-dated Universal/FSM, decisions taken in the past made sense at that time, were taken in good faith and based on what was known at the time.

Members considered whether there was likely to be a baseline for the NFF, noting originally it was anticipated that the 2017/2018 figures would be used. It was suggested that there was now an opportunity to bring schools' baseline up as high as possible, in the interest of all schools, increasing all schools funding by 1.84%, rather than wait for the National Funding Formula. A member pointed out a decision was needed urgently but no decision had been forthcoming about the High Needs Block. Members were reminded it was important decisions were only made once all the facts were known.

A member reminded everyone the Schools' Forum is an advisory body and Cllrs make the final decision. AT agreed stating he did not want Cllrs to be in a position where they had to go against the recommendation of the Schools' Forum. The Vice

Chair said it was important to support officers' views, but the Schools' Forum also needed to keep some options available regarding balances.

The Chair advised the Schools' Forum will need to consider the principles in January, but the issues of reserves may need to be deferred until the meeting in March 2020. A full discussion was required on reserves and school deficits with the implications being fully understood if funds were taken from reserves for the High Needs Block and then the NFF was not brought in.

AS explained that the expectation was that funds would be ring-fenced in future. However, if funds were not transferred this could increase the baseline for all schools.

The Chair asked if this would result in the baseline being immediately overspent and was informed it would. He informed members this would then mean funds may need to be taken from reserves. Another member pointed out funding could be transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block or reserves could be transferred to the High Needs Block.

The Chair queried whether there would be a difference in the lump sum between WCC funding and the NFF. AS said most factors would increase by 1.8%. The Chair questioned whether the lump sum could be increased in the WCC formula to create parity. AS said it could and all schools funding would increase but to balance that funds would have to be taken from elsewhere. It was noted this would mean small schools would gain and secondary schools would lose out.

AS was asked if the NFF would protect the lump sum and she advised it would be more likely that the total would be protected.

Members agreed they would need to look at the impact of all options and consider whether they felt small schools should be subsidised from well-funded large schools, if there should be equity between the primary and secondary sectors or if they wanted to increase the lump sum.

The Chair reminded members that the demographics had changed since the last review. Members pointed out that the change in the benefits system had created a negative effect for some families. If stability for WCC schools was the priority, then primary schools should receive more funding.

AT informed members as the Schools Forum had agreed stability was the priority, modelling would not normally be carried out annually. A decision had been made last year, intended to take effect until the NFF came in. It was now important to agree the direction of travel and make further decisions in January.

The Chair asked if modelling could be carried out, noting the secondaries had made the decision to put funding to options A, B and C, but the primaries did not. He was asked where the secondaries had taken funds from and was advised it was from the secondary funding allocation. Funding for primaries would have to come from secondaries funding now. A member suggested the primaries in the poorest areas

	<p>should receive any funding taken from the secondaries if that was the decision. It was also suggested modelling of funds under options A, B and C for both primaries and secondaries could be undertaken, although AT pointed out if one area was changed this would result in other areas changing.</p> <p>A member suggested that the MFG benefits all schools but AT said he would be reluctant to recommend increasing the MFG as this will expose schools. RBKC Schools' Forum has moved away from a high MFG as it exposed schools.</p> <p>Another member asked what would happen if NFF did not come in, stating if it did not come in it would affect the neediest. AT said the High Needs Block funding had always been a challenge and all aspects would have to be considered.</p> <p>He was asked if it was possible to review A, B and C options but said it was not possible to split individual sectors.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: i) To agree the WCC formula for calculating school budgets in 2020/21 should remain unchanged from 2019/20.</p> <p>ii) To note that proposals will be brought to the January meeting of the Schools' Forum regarding any transfer to the High Needs Block and falling rolls fund.</p> <p>iii) To review updated figures after information has been received from the ESFA on roll numbers and pupil data, but before the 21st January 2020 statutory deadline for APT submission.</p> <p>iv) To model costs for A, B and C of the 2020/21 comparison of school funding models and use of reserves for the March meeting.</p>	
6.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>The Chair was informed that there was concern amongst schools that school's finances were moving towards a cliff edge. He was asked if someone from Finance could attend the Heads Executive meeting the following Friday, to reassure Headteachers. The Chair reminded everyone that Purdah was now in place, due to the General Election. No major decisions could be made during this time. AT stated neither he nor AS was available. The Chair asked if AT could provide a statement to the Heads Executive for the meeting, which he agreed to do.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: AT to provide a statement to the Heads Executive for Friday 6 December 2019.</p>	
7.	<p>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS FOR</p> <p>13th January 2020 – 4.45pm – Westminster City Hall 23rd March 2020 – 4.45pm – Westminster City Hall 1st June 2020 – 4.45pm – Westminster City Hall</p>	

Meeting closed at 6.15pm

ACTIONS

Item 3	To circulate a paper, with recommendations on constituency and Membership, to the next meeting.	AT
Item 8	To provide a paper to the next Schools' Forum meeting in January 2020 regarding transfers to the High Needs Block and the falling rolls fund.	AS
Item 8	To review updated figures after information has been received from the ESFA, but before the 21 January 2020 statutory deadline for APT submission.	AS
Item 8	To model costs for A, B and C of the 2020/21 comparison of school funding models and use of reserves for the March meeting.	AS