

ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES

KINGSTON SCHOOLS FORUM: THE FUNDING CONSULTATIVE GROUP

18 June 2019
(7:00pm – 8.55pm)

MEMBERS OF THE FORUM

Councillors (2)

Councillor Maria Netley

*Councillor Olly Wehring (for whom Councillor Christine Stuart attended as substitute)

School Governors (Primary Schools) (4)

Geoffrey Hilliard Maple Infants School

Margie Lindsay Maple Infants School

*Steve Mole – St Luke's C of E Primary School

*Richard Williamson – Alexandra School

Head Teachers (Primary Schools) (4)

*Rachel Nye Tolworth Infant and Nursery School

Tracy Coton – Christ Church Primary

Emily Newton – King Athelstan Primary School

*Mark Clutterbuck - Coombe Hill Junior

Head or School Governor (Secondary School) (1)

*Ash Ali Chessington Community College (for whom Sonia Molnar attended as substitute)

Academies (7)

Debbie Walls Head Teacher, Coombe Secondary Schools

*Tom Gibson Head Teacher, The Holy Cross School

*Lou Anderson Head Teacher, Castle Hill Primary School

*Sean Maher, Richard Challoner School

Mike Gascoigne Head Teacher, Tiffin School **(Chair of the Forum)**

*Sophie Cavanagh, Head Teacher Kingston Academy

*Ian Keary, Head Teacher, Tiffin Girls School

Pupil Referral Units (1)

Samantha Axbey Head Teacher Pupil Referral Units

Head or School Governor (Special School) (1)

*Julia James, Head Teacher Bedelsford School

Head or School Governor (Nursery School) (1)

Esther White, Surbiton Children's Centre Nursery

Local Authority 14-19 Partnership (1)

*Mike Tweedale Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality), Kingston College

Private, Voluntary and Independent Provider (2)

*Clare Cozens Acacia Pre-School

*Michelle Akintoye Castle Stars Day Nursery

* Absent

1. Introductions & Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Michelle Akintoye, Ash Ali (for whom Sonia Molnar attended as a substitute), Lou Anderson, Mark Clutterbuck (for whom Emily Newton attended as a substitute), Tom Gibson, Ian Keary, Sean Maher, Steve Mole, Mike Tweedale, Councillor Olly Wehring (for whom Councillor Christine Stuart attended as a substitute), and Richard Williamson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2019 were AGREED as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. SEND Transformation Plan update - Review of Alternative Provision

As part of the SEND Transformation Plan, all budget lines in the High Needs block are being reviewed to identify where resources may be misaligned with need or where efficiency savings can be made through improving processes; Alternative Provision has been specifically identified for review. Alternative provision is education outside school, arranged by local authorities or schools, for pupils who do not attend mainstream school for reasons such as school exclusion, behaviour issues, school refusal, or short- or long-term illness.

The Forum received a detailed report on the approach to the review of the alternative provision provided by Anstee Bridge and Malden Oaks. In relation to Malden Oaks, following discussions with the centre's headteacher, it is planned to reallocate £200,000 from the Malden Oaks budget to other high needs priorities (of which £125,000 reflected the underspend from 2018/19); the current delivery model will continue to be reviewed during 2019/20 and the Forum will be given the opportunity to comment on any changes that may directly impact on support available to pupils. In relation to Anstee Bridge, options will be considered which could make Anstee Bridge financially self-sufficient, including the flexibility to charge schools for services or become an independent charitable body with the ability to seek grant funding outside of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Forum expressed its support for the excellent service provided by Malden Oaks. The Secondary Headteachers Forum had expressed concern that reductions to the Centre's funding could exacerbate pressures on the centre's waiting list, with delays leading to pupils being excluded from schools. (It would be important not to trigger the perverse incentive of increasing exclusions, given that excluded pupils attend the Centre, anyway) While recognising that the invitation by rota to schools to attend the Referral Panel ensures transparency of allocations, it was hoped that there might be some potential for streamlining the process of allocating places in order to place pupils more quickly, to try to prevent exclusions. It was also recognised that it is difficult to predict pupil numbers and, because of the complex movement in and out of pupils, difficult to drill down to collect data on pupil numbers during the year, as a base for the budgeting, but a budget for the Centre has to be

set, and there would then need to be flexibility for the future to adapt funding if an increase in numbers and demand for the Reintegration Support Service required it.

A working group of headteachers (including two nominated by the Secondary Heads Forum and the headteacher of Malden Oaks), AfC officers and other relevant parties will assess options and develop proposals for Key Stage 3 and 4. If changes are agreed, they would take effect from September 2020.

5. Education Commission report

The Forum considered a report about the Education Commission which had been set up to take an independent view as to how the overspend on Education Services in Kingston had occurred and make recommendations on how high quality services can be delivered within the available funding envelope. The Commission's report (available to view at [this link](#)) was considered at the meeting of Kingston Council's Children's & Adults' Care and Education (CACE) Committee on 13 June, the cover report for which meeting is available to view at [this link](#). The CACE Committee had accepted the Commission's recommendations and endorsed an Action Plan (available to view at [this link](#)) to address the issues.

The Commission's recommendations included the following three recommendations to the Schools Forum:

That the Forum:

- i. "Considers the value in expanding membership of sub committees or working groups to cover specialist areas (such as High Needs) in order to broaden the base of the Forum's work to include collaborative consideration of existing and emerging issues as they relate to the funding environment.
- ii. Annually, considers the need and scope for reallocation of funds from the Schools Block into the High Needs Block, in order to make optimum provision for all Kingston children and young people.
- iii. Facilitates and supports all schools' commitment to the recommended whole system approach to the use of the DSG and the application of the DfE recommended levels of balance requirements."

The Forum was asked to discuss the Commission's findings and the Council's action plan and make recommendations.

In relation to the Commission's first recommendation, the Forum considered that the issues relating to the DSG and High Needs Block were so significant (and so fundamental to the remit of the Forum) that these needed to be regularly considered by the full Forum, rather than by a specialist sub-committee of the Forum, and that there should be no dilution of the consultative status of the Forum. There would continue to be flexibility for members of the Forum to serve on ad hoc working groups such as the working group to review Alternative Provision. (It was noted that Sean Maher from the Forum had served on the Education Commission, and Mike Gascoigne and Emily Newton had served on the SEND Transformation Plan working group.)

In relation to the second recommendation, the Forum considered that the annual consideration of the Schools Budget was a task which the Forum already undertook. The Forum agreed that one additional approach would be for reports to be provided

to support the Forum to take an in-depth look at specific budget lines during its regular meetings. However, it was emphasised that the Forum would need high quality executive summaries of the issues as Forum members do not have time to read excessive quantities of lengthy documents for Forum meetings.

In relation to the third recommendation, Forum members confirmed that they were committed to a 'whole school' approach to the use of DSG, though this would not necessarily mean that the Forum would automatically agree to transfers to the High Needs Block.

6. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2018/19 Outturn and Deficit Recovery Plan

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on: the final 2018/19 DSG grant allocation and its application to the Schools Budget in 2018/19; the final DSG outturn for the 2018/19 financial year; and the draft DfE Deficit Recovery Plan. [Schools Balances for 2018/19 were attached as Appendix A (Maintained Schools) and Appendix B (Academies and Free Schools. An Update on the SEND Transformation Plan was attached as Appendix D to the report.

The Government has introduced a new requirement for authorities with a cumulative overspend on the DSG fund of more than 1% to submit a three year Deficit Recovery Plan. (Kingston's overspend on its DSG is 8% of the annual grant allocation – with a cumulative overspend of £11.071m comprising £0.381m overspend in 2018/19 and £10.690m overspend from 2017/18 carried forward.) The draft Deficit Recovery Plan for submission to the DfE was circulated at the meeting as 'Appendix C' to the report.

The Forum was asked to note the final DSG expenditure for the 2018/19 financial year and comment on the DfE Deficit Recovery Plan.

The Forum explored in detail the causes of under and overspends in the different Blocks of funding, including the increase in the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) (an increase by 144 during the year to 1201 EHCPs in force currently).

One important element within the SEND Transformation Plan will be to seek more contributions from the Kingston Clinical Commissioning Group to contribute to funding therapy services to support delivery of SEND provision within the borough thus reducing the need to resort to expensive out of borough private placements.

There was a request for the AfC to undertake some research and monitoring over the next few years into how many parents of children with SEND accept in-borough places who might otherwise have expected out of borough private placements. This would be added as a task for the relevant workstream in the SEND Transformation Plan.

Forum members indicated that they had been surprised at how many out of borough pupils benefitted from the borough's SEND provision and hoped that places in the new special schools in Kingston and Richmond will be allocated mainly to Kingston (and Richmond) pupils, rather than attracting pupils from other boroughs.

Forum members hoped that the review that Eamonn Gilbert had undertaken on placement commissioning would continue and other efficiencies in commissioning be likewise explored.

Members of the Forum indicated that, although the list of school balances appeared to indicate that schools had plenty of reserves, some of the figures provided by the DfE were not accurate and in reality virtually all schools had found that their reserves were reducing and were now being used to fund deficits in their budgets. The Chair of the Forum commented that all Kingston's Secondary Schools were expecting an in-year deficit and it was to provide for this eventuality that schools had been accumulating reserves.

The Forum considered that it was unrealistic to expect that Kingston's in-year deficit (let alone the cumulative overspend) could be resolved within three years, and agreed that a five year recovery plan would be more feasible. (It was recognised that, without the £3m loan from central Government, Kingston's deficit would have been even worse.)

The Forum recognised that this was a nationwide problem and that the scale of the problem is such that local authorities across the country risk going bankrupt from the overspends.

The Forum encouraged all schools to send information about their deficits to the Secretary of State and DfE who are currently calling for evidence up to the end of July – the more detailed evidence that is provided by individual schools about the funding crisis, the greater support will be given to the lobbying by local authorities across the country.

The Forum noted and agreed the 2018/19 DSG Fund outturn position

The Forum unanimously AGREED to support the AfC and the Council in writing to central Government to lobby the DfE to increase funding to the DSG to reflect the massive increase in demand for SEND provision across the country. (The Council's Health and Wellbeing Board had already written to the Secretary of State to lobby on this matter.)

The Forum AGREED to support the submission of a five rather than three year deficit recovery plan, agreed that it would not be possible to recover the cumulative deficit position and supported the general content of the plan.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2019/20 Finance Update

The Forum received a report on the current 2019/20 Dedicated Schools Grant allocation and its application to the Schools Budget in 2019/20, together with the projected DSG position for the 2019/20 financial year.

There is a current projected overspend of £6.256m on DSG funded education services for 2019/20 (a spend of £145.627m, compared to a grant allocation of £139.371m). Savings of £4.7m are planned of which £1.7m have been achieved so far. The latest version of the SEND Transformation Plan to bring the DSG fund back to a more balanced position over a four-year period can be viewed at this link:

https://5f2fe3253cd1dfa0d089-bf8b2cdb6a1dc2999fecbc372702016c.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/uploads/ckeditor/attachments/4610/SEND_Transformation_Plan_MARCH_19.pdf

The Forum's queries on details within the report included:

- whether there was yet any news from central Government on the introduction of a national funding formula (none yet received).
- whether there was likely to be an underspend on Early Years funding as there had been in 2018/19 (not likely, as there has been an increase in requests for these services)
- whether the Business Rates contingency of £71,000 was likely to be needed (not certain, but from past experience it is likely to be overspent)
- whether the CCG is likely to contribute to the £982,000 cost of therapies (the indications from the KCCG representatives at CACE Committee had been positive)

With reference to the 2020/21 budget timetable in paragraph 5.1 of the report, at the request of members of the Forum, it was AGREED that the consultation on the Central School Service Block and Schools Block de-delegation be commenced earlier than July to ensure it could be carefully considered before the school holiday period.

It was RESOLVED that the Forum:

- noted the allocation for the DSG: Schools Block, Central Schools Services Block, and High Needs Block for the 2019/20 financial year and
- noted the projected DSG position for the 2019/20 financial year.

8. 2019/20 Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum considered a report to which an updated Scheme for Financing Schools was attached at Appendix A.

The updated Scheme contains all directed revisions and updates from the Secretary of State for Education (which are to be effective from 2 February 2019).

The revised Scheme also included some other amendments including:

- following the removal of the mechanism for a local authority to provide financial support to schools, the option for the local authority to loan money to schools has been removed
- the Scheme's definition for the calculation of the permissible level of contingency held by schools has been simplified.

Maintained schools have been consulted on the proposed changes to the Scheme and all 12 schools which responded to the consultation (38% of the maintained schools) agreed the changes.

A Forum member queried whether the reference to Bank Accounts within the revised Scheme contradicted DfE guidance. This would be checked.

The representatives of maintained schools at the Forum voted on the revised Scheme and unanimously RESOLVED that the revised Scheme for Financing Schools at Appendix A of the report be agreed.

9. Forum Update

There were no updates from the Forum.

10. Proposed Dates of Next Meetings

It was noted that the proposed dates of the next meetings were:

- 17 September 2019
- 19 November 2019
- 14 January 2020

(Venue: King Charles Centre, Surbiton. Time: 7pm)

The meeting which began at 7:00pm ended at 8:55pm.

Signed.....Date.....
Chair