

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES**  
**KINGSTON SCHOOLS FORUM: THE FUNDING CONSULTATIVE**  
**GROUP**

**15 Jan 2019**  
**(7:00pm – 8.45pm)**

**MEMBERS OF THE FORUM**

**Councillors (2)**

Councillor Maria Netley

Councillor Olly Wehring

**School Governors (Primary Schools) (4)**

Geoffrey Hilliard Maple Infants School

Steve Mole – St Luke's C of E Primary School (apologies received)

Richard Williamson – Alexandra School

Vacant

**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 (apologies received, substituted by

**Academies (7)**

Debbie Walls Head Teacher, Coombe Secondary Schools (apologies received)

Tom Gibson Head Teacher, The Holy Cross School

Lou Anderson Head Teacher, Castle Hill Primary School (apologies received)

Sean Maher, Richard Challoner School

Mike Gascoigne Head Teacher, Tiffin School

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 and Apologies**

Apologies were received from Lou Anderson, Debbie Walls, Ash Ali (substituted by Sonia Molnar) and Steve Mole.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

None

## **3. Minutes of the Meeting and Matters Arising**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2018 were AGREED as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

## **4. KINGSTON CAMHS LOCAL TRANSFORMATION PLAN**

Forum were presented with an overview of the CAMHS transformation plan, detailing priorities and actions to deliver service improvements. The Plan was developed following additional money being allocated in 2015, to secure improvements by 2020. The Plan was refreshed annually and submitted to the DfE on the 31<sup>st</sup> October.

It was asked if the expansion of the Single Point of Access had made it easier for service users to see a specialist. Officers responded that an increased staffing capacity had created a more effective triage system, leading to more accurate referrals and signposting. Members also asked if the threshold for accessing the services had been lowered and were informed that there was not money in the system for increased capacity in the specialist services for more severe mental health issues.

There was a ten year plan being put together to look at what funding might be available in the future. Richmond and Kingston had not been part of an initial wave of mental health funding support teams in schools, but it was hoped there might be a second wave for this initiative in late 2019. In order to qualify for funding the CAMHS service would need to meet local access targets and an investment standard.

Whilst it was noted that there were some gaps in provision for the 17-18 year olds and an issue with the Youth Justice Data time lag, it was emphasised the plan was a work in progress. Officers stressed that accountability and transparency was a priority and members were informed the plan had been examined through the local authority's committee system. The plan also linked to the SEND Transformation plan and complemented the early intervention workstream.

It was noted that the officer lead now had the benefit of the view across both Kingston and Richmond boroughs and there was learning that could be used from other areas. A strong local offer for therapeutic and mental health services could potentially have a positive impact on SEND transformation. Forum members noted their concerns at the growth of mental health issues amongst young people and recognised the increased demand for CAHMS.

## **5. 2018/19 FINANCE UPDATE INCLUDING HIGH NEEDS UPDATE**

Officers gave an overview of the 2018/19 Finance Update. Members were informed that the Government had announced some additional funding and Kingston had received an allocation of an extra £414k. The overspend on the High Needs Block was £1.1m, but as that figure included £4m of one off funding, the actual funding shortfall was closer to £5.1m. There were underspends on other blocks which reduced the net position on current cohort to £646k overspend. The cumulative debt brought forward from previous years was £10.7m. Demand had continued to increase but positively in the post 16 figures, average costs were decreasing. The additional £414k had gone into top ups as attempts were being made to place children in local or maintained schools instead of independent placements where appropriate. The increase in special school places was helping to achieve this.

It was RESOLVED that Forum;

- NOTED the latest 2018/19 DSG grant settlement from the DfE
- NOTED the anticipated position on the 2018/19 DSG fund as at the 30 November 2018.

## **6. 2019/20 BUDGET**

Officers informed members that the Council would be meeting to agree the budget on the 7 February 2019 and therefore the information in the report had not yet been formally finalised.

Officers gave an overview of the report, noting the total DSG allocation was £139m. AfC officers would be submitting the Authority Pro-forma Tool on the 21 January to the DfE. The total schools block amount would be £102.924m and the APT budget would be £102.424m after allowing for the Growth Fund and Targeted High Needs Fund. The borough was not yet using the full NFF - the lump sum amount was still different even after the area cost adjustment. The MFG would help schools to transition from the formula and could be set at between minus 1.5% or plus 0.5% and although Schools Forum could make a recommendation on this figure, the final decision on the level of transition funding / protection was made by the Council.

Members discussed the Growth Fund that was used to fund new classes and which included a protection for empty places. Members were referred to the additional information in the supplementary agenda. In October 2016 a schools consultation had voted to phase out the protection element of the funding over a three year period. 18/19 was therefore the last year of providing the protection funds and Schools Forum members were asked to consider if they still wanted to remove the protection element of the funds.

Officers noted they would check the figures that were contained in the additional information as some out of context information may have been included. Members were concerned about the sensitivities of overturning a previous decision made through consultation. It was noted that the previous decision to phase the protection element out over 3 years had been made in view of the expectation that the full NFF

would be in place by the time the protection fund expired. It was also highlighted that the previous consultation did not actually include an option to keep the protection element; schools had only been able to choose between removal and phasing out.

Schools noted that without the protection element there was little incentive for a school to provide the additional resource of a bulge class. It was noted schools providing bulge classes provided a benefit to the schools community across the borough but took on a financial risk across the 7 years in order to do so. There was an issue in the borough with a lack of school places in areas where there was a demand. Waiting lists needed to be monitored in order to help assess levels of demand.

AfC officers agreed to provide further information on the overall costs of classes throughout the primary and secondary years.

Members were informed that if reinstated, the protection element would come out of the schools block as part of the Growth Fund. Schools on the MFG would not need to contribute as they were already receiving protection that topped them up to a minimum funding guarantee. It was noted that the reasons for empty bulge classes were not related to mismanagement by schools but were due to families either moving out to other areas or placing children in private education. Officers were not able to confirm what reserves schools had in place to help fund classes but a list of maintained school reserves would form part of the June outturn report.

Officers noted it would be possible to issue a brief electronic consultation on the issue, with a plain English explanation. Forum members felt that providing too many options in the consultation would reduce the number of responses and that any option to provide less than 95% protection would not be a meaningful choice.

It was RESOLVED that Forum

- AGREED for AfC officers to issue a consultation to schools, presenting two options, to either reinstate the protection rate at 95% or not to reinstate the protection fund at all.
- AGREED The result of the consultation would need a minimum of a 60/40 % split to effect any change
- AGREED An indecisive consultation response would require the final decision to be put to an electronic vote to Schools Forum members.

Officers informed Forum that, following the last meeting, a disapplication had been submitted to the DfE, which had agreed the Council could overrule the Schools Forum decision not to fund the St Phillips capital borrowing from the Schools Block. However, the Council were proposing to match fund the amount. The Council were prepared to contribute £141k to the High Needs block, providing the St Phillips capital build costs still came out of the schools block. This was a decision that the Council would be looking to approve at the budget meeting of Full Council in February 2019. Members were in favour of this match funding option.

Officers drew members attention to the additional funding to support special educational needs, that had been announced by the Education Secretary in December 2018. The Director of School Place Planning would be working with

colleagues to allocate use of the funds. The Government announcement had also indicated that specialist free schools had increased chances of being approved, which bode well for the application for a free school in Chessington.

Forum's attention was drawn to the 2019/20 allocation for the High Needs Block. Adjustments had been made for imports and exports, but it was clear that the funding allocation would still be insufficient to meet spend.

Officers presented Forum with the information on the Early Years Block, noting that the allocation would be updated once further census information was available. Forum was asked to approve the early years central items spend.

It was RESOLVED that Forum

- AGREED the early years central items spend for the:
- early years advisory service and
- Home visits service for children with SEND

Forum discussed the early years SEN inclusion fund and the options for increasing the value of the fund, as recommended in the report. It was noted that the Early Years National Funding Formula had been beneficial to Kingston. The impact of funding the high needs element from the hourly rate would be to set the rate at £5.21. Forum referred to the recommendation in the SEND recovery plan to move the Early Years High Needs Block spend. It was though the sector would be able to cope with the rate as it was consistent with that set in 2018/19.

It was RESOLVED that Forum

- AGREED to recommend the early years hourly funding rate in order to fully fund Early Years SEN units /top ups for children without an EHCP
- AGREED to recommend the funding rates for 2 year olds be set at £5.92 per hour.

## **7. Forum Update**

There were no updates from Forum.

## **8. Proposed Dates of the Next Meeting**

It was noted the proposed date of the next meeting was

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

The meeting, which began at 7.00pm, ended at 8.45pm.