

**THE SOUTHWARK SCHOOLS FORUM  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

- 1. Attendance and Apologies**

See Annex A. Lynn Charlton substituted for Liz Robinson who was absent on maternity leave, Karen McBride substituted for Maddy Webb.
- 2. Declaration of Interests**

Members were asked to declare any pecuniary or other interests they might have that were greater than the interests of other members of the Forum in any matter on the agenda for discussion. These were declared by Sharon Donno and Nick Tildesley for parts of item 5 and Irene Bishop for Item 6.
- 3. Minutes of the Meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

These were agreed as a true record. Mark Parsons asked that draft minutes were distributed within 2 weeks of the actual meeting. The clerk said he would endeavour to do so.
- 4. Review of the Schools Forum**
  - 4.1 Notes of the two meetings held and a draft constitution had been circulated with the agenda. Merril Haeusler, Deputy Director, thanked all those who attended what were two very good and very professional meetings.
  - 4.2 In addition to looking at the roles and responsibilities of the Schools Forum as set out by the legislation and the DfE Best Practice Guide, the first meeting identified a number of issues that the group felt were important. These were set out in section 8 of the notes.
  - 4.3 Sister Anne Marie Niblock said that she had checked the regulations herself and confirmed the predominant advisory role of the Schools Forum. A number of the members were not fully appreciative of this and felt that it was not what they actually put their names forward for. Sister Anne Marie said that the issue of the “bidding” culture is not helpful in the current tight financial climate. Also that those attending the first meeting felt that sometimes officers brought items that were about formulating overall strategic policy rather than the financial consequences of an already agreed strategy.
  - 4.4 Nick Tildesley felt that the Schools Forum should have more understanding of the overall national and local pictures so as to put reports etc in context. It would be useful to have this at the beginning of the year. This will help with what is sometimes a lot of information that has to be absorbed and assessed. The Clerk referred to the induction and briefing sessions that were previously held for members of the Schools Forum.
  - 4.5 Mark Parsons also said that as it appears that the Schools Forum only has a role regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG); it still needs to know about other funding the borough has, again to set any advice or decision into context. Fay Hammond said that often opinions are sought by the Local

Authority (LA) from the Schools Forum. Merrill Haeusler added that this is one way that schools can hold the LA accountable for its financial decisions.

- 4.6 Nick Tildesley added that the Schools Forum needed to be certain when it is being asked for its advice and when it is to make a decision and Mark Parsons said that all needed to be certain that there was value for money in what is being proposed.
- 4.7 Merrill Haeusler said that the model of having working groups of the LA, that include Headteachers and Governors, which help to develop strategy and policy prior to financial decision making at the Schools Forum, had worked in the past and needs to be developed more. She also asked that if any members of the Schools Forum have any comments on the notes of the group they should feed them back to her.
- 4.8 Members then looked at the issue of “bidding” and following a question from Lyn Charlton, Merrill Haeusler confirmed that the Schools Forum would still be able to discuss papers brought to it by its own members which put forward proposals that required funding. The comments of the Schools Forum would help the LA in deciding if what was being proposed was in line with its own strategy and was what the majority of schools wanted. Mark Parsons said that much was often discussed at the CLAN meetings in advance of discussion at the Schools Forum.
- 4.9 Elaine Garlick said that from a governors perspective, requests need to be fed through in the right way so that the right people could contribute from a position of knowledge. Nick Tildesley said that Schools Forum members often ask other Headteachers and Mark Parsons said that Headteacher reps are elected by other Headteachers.
- 4.10 Irene Bishop felt that, although she was not at the meetings, she could support the principles set out in section 4 (i) and 4 (ii) but the wording of 8 (vii) regarding “that all schools need to make their own decision in relation to buying into initiatives/activities” sounded as if it prohibited central provision of some form. Merrill Haeusler said that these were the notes of the meeting but agreed that in the final version this may need re-wording, key though was the LA needing to hear a wide number of schools views and the principle of transparency.

**5. Headteachers Council Paper – Schools’ Business Development, Information and Communication Project – a paper by the Headteachers Executive.**

- 5.1 This had been circulated to members and was introduced by Sharon Donno. It was explained that the Schools Forum was being asked to support the Southwark Headteachers Council request for funding of £216,517 in 2012-13. This was needed to fund the Business Manager Post and the running costs of the Headteachers Council. Sharon Donno then took members through the detail of the paper.
- 5.2 It was explained that this request had been discussed at the Headteachers Council AGM and Conference, as well as at a number of other meetings. If granted it would ensure effective communication across all schools and academies and help support the development of both current and future Headteachers. Schools, as individuals, often would not have the funds, nor

the expertise to facilitate development themselves but collectively, they could go forward. It would also enable good communications between schools and the LA.

- 5.3 The Chair said that her position was that if schools wanted it then they should pay for it themselves, including such activities as the Reading Festival, especially as the availability of money was getting more difficult. Nick Tildesley said that the original proposal had undergone a number of changes and some schools were looking for a clearer understanding as to how the monies had been spent with feedback of the outcomes of that spending.
- 5.4 Lyn Charlton said that at her CLAN group there was support for this request and the need for some sort of security for the post holder. The final version of the paper had been put on the website and there had been talk about income generation.
- 5.5 Irene Bishop said that she saw that the request was in fact in three parts, the Business Manager post, the reimbursement of the Chair's time and the operating costs, and that she had different views on each. Previous requests to support this proposal were when there was a surplus of funds, although generally secondary schools do not use what is on offer, her school found it useful when, on occasions, she wanted to communicate with a number of primary schools.
- 5.6 Virginia Bridge said that the communication function was extremely valuable but questioned whether it was a full time post as the tasks do not equate to what her school business manager has to do in a large primary school. Mark Parsons felt that with all that Headteachers have to do, the communication cohesion between schools needs organising.
- 5.7 Fay Hammond said that she would like to see the functions of the Headteachers Council formally set down, Irene Bishop confirmed that the Headteachers Council does act as a communication bridge between schools and the LA, Lyn Charlton also felt that it benefitted pupils, Teresa Neary said that it was well supported by the Bermondsey CLAN and special schools in general and Merrill Haeusler suggested that the Headteachers Council might look at setting up a Service Level Agreement with schools.
- 5.8 The Chair then asked that members vote on the motion to support recommending to the Local Authority that they propose to fund the post of Business Manager for *three* years:
- In favour 5    Against 7    Abstentions 0
- 5.9 The Chair then asked that members vote on the motion to support recommending to the Local Authority that they propose to fund the post of Business Manager for *one* year:
- In favour 11    Against 1    Abstentions 0
- 5.10 The Chair then asked that members vote on the motion to support recommending to the Local Authority that they propose to fund the release of a Headteacher for 2 days a week in order to undertake the role of Chair of the Headteachers Council:

In favour 0    Against 6    Abstentions 6

- 5.11 The Chair then asked that members vote on the motion to support recommending to the Local Authority that they propose to fund overheads and operating costs:

In favour 6    Against 6    Abstentions 0

**6. Excellence in Southwark – Retention of funds in 2012-13 to Support the Administration and the costs of Activities and Projects**

- 6.1 The paper previously circulated to members was introduced by Irene Bishop. It asked that the Schools Forum recommend to the Local Authority to retain £1.094m in 2012-13 to fund both the direct and indirect costs of a number of activities and projects previously resourced from Standards Funds.
- 6.2 Irene bishop said that the project had been in place for 12 years and so was well established. It required £210k for officer and administration costs and £884k for the actual projects themselves. These were all directly linked to raising pupil achievement.
- 6.3 The funds are held by a number of schools who act as “banker” schools. The projects include Philosophy for Children, Gifted and Talented Pupils, School Leadership and a wide range of Curriculum Enhancement activities such as visual arts, social cohesion.
- 6.4 Sharron Donno asked how the £210k is spent; Irene Bishop said that it covered three officer posts plus administration and other running costs. The activities are communicated to all schools via email and newsletter often via the Headteachers Council Business Manager. Lyn Charlton thought that it offered fantastic opportunities but asked whether schools should actually buy these themselves.
- 6.5 Nick Tildesley said there were huge benefits but wondered if enough was known on how the funding was spent. Irene Bishop said there was a Joint Steering Group and Mark Parsons confirmed he was on that group, and yes they can publish more widely what they spend the resourcing on and the outcomes that are achieved. Kerry Crichlow wondered whether it should be delegated to schools with Headteachers choosing, or not, to buy in. Fay Hammond had concerns about the longer term model for funding this project with all the changes proposed by the DfE for 2012 onwards.
- 6.6 The Chair then asked that members vote on the motion to support recommending to the Local Authority that they propose to retain funds of £1.094m from the 2012-13 DSG to resource the Excellence in City overheads and projects:

In favour 12    Against 0    Abstentions 0

**7. Funding Formula Changes for 2012-13 – Premises Data**

- 7.1 The paper circulated with the agenda was introduced by Fay Hammond. This set out the options for 2012-13 regarding the source data to be used for the premises factor of the funding formula that is currently based on the metre square of schools.

- 7.2 It was stated that the data held is still not 100% accurate and that there had not been time to review and clean it ready for use in 2012-13. Sister Anne Marie said that with Building Schools for the Future programme, schools premises data is still changing and will do so for a number of years to come. Mark Parsons believed that the LA should use the latest data if they have it.
- 7.3 Fay Hammond said schools are given the opportunity to query the data used in the indicative budgets each year, change could lead to instability of funding levels for a number of schools. It was agreed that Age Weighted Pupil Units is not appropriate for premises funding.
- 7.4 The Chair then asked that members vote on the motion to maintain the status quo by using the same data for 2012-13 budgets:

In favour 11    Against 1    Abstentions 0

#### **8. Funding Formula Changes for 2012-13 – Balance Control Mechanism**

- 8.1 This report, previously circulated, proposed to amend the wording of the current Balance Control Mechanism in order to relax the existing mechanism but still retain the scrutiny role with the powers of clawback.
- 8.2 This would go out for full consultation with schools in the new year.
- 8.3 The Chair asked members to vote on whether they agreed with the change:

In favour 11    Against 0    Abstentions 1

#### **9. Funding Formula Changes for 2012-13 – Ex Standards Funds Grants – not mainstreamed in 2011-12-22**

- 9.1 This report circulated by Fay Hammond set out proposals to distribute the remaining ex standards funds by the boroughs schools funding formula. This included the old School Development Grant for Specialist School Funding, Leadership Incentive Grant, Diploma Support Grant and Advanced Skill Teachers. The other element, Excellence in Cities, was a separate item on the agenda.
- 9.2 The Chair said that some of the proposals were unfair as they propose allocating funding to those that were never entitled to it. Also the Leadership Incentive Grant was not in fact directly linked to the number of socially deprived pupils a secondary school had but whether it was over a certain threshold or not.
- 9.3 The Chair had tabled options that she had worked on. Lyn Charlton thought it could all be allocated by the formula, Grahame Shaw said that it was impossible to consider the Chair's paper as nobody had time as yet to look at.
- 9.4 Fay Hammond said she would take away members comments to consider when devising the funding allocations for 2012-13.

**10. Dedicated Schools Grant - 2012-2013**

- 10.1 This report set out the initial identified budgetary issues for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2012-13. Fay Hammond said that the DfE were yet to publish the funding rates for 2012-13.
- 10.2 The report was noted.

**11. Review of Special Schools Funding**

- 11.1 The paper circulated with the agenda was presented by Yvonne Ely.
- 11.2 The Schools Forum noted the progress made and proposals for further work and agreed that interim arrangements for Spa and Highshore schools will be needed for 2012-13.

**12. Allocation to schools for Further DSG in line with Schools Forum Decisions**

- 12.1 This was noted.

**13. SEN & Best Value**

- 13.1 At the request of the Schools Forum, Yvonne Ely had produced a further report on how the Local Authority ensures Value for Money when it commissions provision for children with SEN in the independent and the non-maintained provision sectors.
- 13.2 Teresa Neary asked about the Tribunal statistics for Dyslexia, Yvonne Ely confirmed that these were often difficult cases to win.
- 13.3 The Chair thanked Yvonne Ely and commented that it gave the Schools Forum details of the process that the LA has to go through.

**14. Review of Education Other than at School**

- 14.1 Darren Coghlan explained that there was an updated paper that he would circulate to the Schools Forum. This was noted.

**15. Dates of Next Meetings**

January 26th 2012  
March 15th 2012  
May 17th 2012  
July 5th 2012

Venue Rye Oak School

SCHOOLS FORUM 2011

**Annex A**

**SCHOOLS FORUM ATTENDANCE SHEET**

**8<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

**VOTING MEMBERS**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONSTITUENCY</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>
Nick Tildesley	Primary School Headteacher	Yes
Vacancy	Primary School Headteacher	
Teresa Nouri	Primary School Headteacher	Apologies
Virginia Bridge	Primary School Headteacher	Yes
Liz Robinson	Primary School Headteacher	Represented by Lynn Charlton
Maddy Webb	Primary School Headteacher	Represented by Karen McBride
Mark Parsons	Primary School Headteacher	Yes
Grainne Grabowski	14-19 Representative	Apologies
Pauline Sacre	Vulnerable Children	Apologies
Pat Tyler	Diocese Board	Apologies
Gillian Reeve	Early Years – Private/Voluntary and Independent Settings	Apologies
Sharon Donno	Nursery School Headteacher	Yes
Michael Davern/Betty Joseph	Teachers Unions	MD Yes BJ Apologies
To be nominated	Support Staff Unions	
David Sheppard	Academy	Apologies
Vacancy	Academy	
Elaine Garlick	Primary School Governor	Yes
Canon Grahame Shaw	Primary School Governor	Yes
Teresa Neary	Special School Headteacher	Yes
Dr Irene Bishop	Secondary School Headteacher	Yes
Sister Anne-Marie Niblock	Secondary School Headteacher	Yes

Senior Officers in Attendance

Kerry Crichlow	Assistant Director
Fay Hammond	Head of Children's Services Finance
Pauline Armour	Assistant Director - Apologies
Mike Smith	Assistant Director - Apologies
Merril Haeusler	Deputy Director
David Cross	Clerk

Apologies from Councillor McDonald