

Minutes (*Draft*)

Schools Forum

Notes of meeting on **15 November 2023**

Members:

Paul Lufkin (PL)	Primary School rep (Wimbledon Park) - Chair
Fr Simon Peat (FSP)	Primary School Governor rep (St Mary's)
Martin Roughley (MR)	Primary School rep (Cranmer)
Emma Greer (EG)	Primary School rep (Pelham)
Steve Donegan (SD)	Primary School rep (Malmesbury)
Adrian Laing (AL)	Secondary School rep (Wimbledon College)
Kirsten Taylor (KT)	Secondary School rep (Raynes Park High School)
Chris Roberts (CR)	Secondary School Governor rep (Ricards Lodge)
Alun Evans (AE)	Academies rep (Benedict Primary)
Jacqueline Hyland (JH)	16-19 rep (Rutlish)

In Attendance:

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (EF)	LBM CLLF – AD for Education and Early Help
Tom Procter (TP)	LBM CLLF – AD (Interim) Strategy, Commissioning &
Andrew Good (AG)	LBM CLLF – Finance
Patricia Harvey (PH)	LBM CLLF – Finance
Patricia Kearney (PK)	LBM CLLF – Note taker
Collette Levingston (CL)	LBM CLLF – Finance
Jayne Ward (JW)	LBM CLLF – Finance

Apologies:

Rachel Shephard-Walwyn (RSW)	PVI rep (Montessori Children's House)
Carla Chandler (CC)	PRU School rep (Melrose)

1.	Welcome and introductions – Paul Lufkin
	PL welcomed everyone in-person and attending online.
2	Minutes from previous meeting – Paul Lufkin
	Actions from last minutes were reviewed and the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed for accuracy.
3	Consultation for 2024/25 Schools Funding formula - Pat Harvey
	PL noted the focus for the meeting today is to make sure the consultation document is correct for consultation, does it present the information clearly and are we asking the right questions. Is it fit for purpose.

<p>The consultation document circulated is in draft and is being shared with Schools Forum members to review for accuracy prior to the consultation being circulated to schools.</p> <p>Schools will be asked which funding formula option they would prefer to be used for 2024/25 funding allocation. Option A is a replica of the NFF. Option B is a Local Formula with additional funding through AWPU factors. The group discussed the pro and cons of both options in detail.</p> <p>AG and PH talked through a PPT being presented to Primary Heads to help them understand and respond to the consultation.</p> <p>Key Points to Note (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Pupil Per Pupil Funding – 1.9% increase on last year; • New Funding Floor introduced – each school will get additional 0.5% more pupil-led funding per pupil than last year; • Minimum Funding Guarantee – safety net to ensure each school gets at least the same amount of overall funding as the prior year; • MSAG now rolled into the main funding; • Split-site funding – now formal part of the formulae and only for Mainstream schools. <p>AG explained falling roles which is an additional factor / protection to the minimum funding guarantee.</p> <p>Key Points to Note (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth – now part of formula no LBM flexibility; • Falling Rolls – now linked to the SCAP, operation unclear as yet; • School Block Transfer of 0.5% of total School Block possible with SF agreement; • Capping and Scaling – once the final allocations are received from the DfE LBM will apply the agreed formula and then to ensure we fit within the overall available funding – options will be considered impact. <p>PH - Page 4 of consultation document, third paragraph clarify per pupil reference PH – typo page 4 of consultation document 8th bullet double aa PH – typo on PPT 3rd bullet page Key Points to Note (2)</p> <p>Option A Individual Schools Budgets calculated using the NFF identified Pupil Led Factor rates identified (as closely as possible)</p> <p>Option B Pupil Led rates are currently identified within a range by DfE, this option uses the prescribed maximum rate for Primary Schools AWPU in order to mitigate falling rolls within this sector.</p> <p>The group discussed the two options and the different implications for Primary and Secondary schools and whether we needed to give two options. Whilst it is not mandatory to offer two options, exercising some local discretion over elements of the funding formula may allow dynamic factors like falling rolls to be coped with more smoothly. However, convergence with the NFF is still required at some point in the future years and exercising local discretion might make this convergence more abrupt when it occurs.</p>

EF – provided some context in terms of schools with deficit budgets and the reason for offering Option B

- 18 Schools setting a deficit budget
 - 16 Primary
 - 2 Special schools
- 5 / 6 primary schools are heading towards a deficit budget

Historically it costs more for secondary schools to operate they require more funding for IT, facilities, resources, science labs, wider curriculum.

The principle is that all pupil led factors have a secondary weighting to address disadvantage.

PH – to expand ‘APT’ throughout Consultation document.

Option A – brings local approach in line with NFF, which the Government will want the LA to adopt in the future (date still unclear)

Option B – better supports primary schools facing financial difficulties

It was decided to change indicating a preference for one option in the consultation document:

2.1.7 “This is Merton Local Authority’s preferred option as it aligns the LA with the NFF before we are compelled to do so and aligns us with the majority of other LAs” to “This option aligns the LA with the NFF before we are compelled to do so and aligns us with the majority of other LAs”

2.1.10 “Appendix A provides an illustration of the differences between the two funding options. If you do not agree with Merton’s preferred option A, please provide your reasons why you think option B would be better for all Merton schools in section 2.1.7 of the feedback questionnaire.” changed to “2.1.10 Appendix A provides an illustration of the differences between the two funding options. Please provide your reasons why you think your chosen option would be better for all Merton schools in section 2.1.7 of the feedback questionnaire.”

Consultation question 2.1.7 “Please indicate below which schools’ funding formula option you would prefer Merton to use for the 2024/25 allocation. If your preferred option is B, please provide your reasons why you think this option would be better for all Merton schools.” change to “Please indicate below which schools’ funding formula option you would prefer Merton to use for the 2024/25 allocation. Please provide your reasons why you think this option would be better for all Merton schools.”

PH – to amend in the Consultation document.

Consultation Process:

Schools’ Forum make a recommendation

Full Merton Council will need to sign it off

Minimum Funding Guarantee (Pupil Led factors)

Safety net to ensure no school overall has a reduction in funding compared to last year:

0.5% will support an overall increase of 0.5%

0% will maintain at last years allocation

NNDR (National Non Domestic Rates)

At the moment the LA recompenses schools in year. There is a very recent email from the ESFA asking Merton to move away from local practice. This needs to be considered in detail as the move would create a lag in the payments received by schools.

Separately AG clarified that Merton runs a risk of losing circa £250K funding if we don't readjust the in year payment process.

This is local authority decision, and as such there is no requirement to consult with schools. However, the principle of partnership working with schools means that the LA will share and seek feedback (separately to the schools' funding consultation currently under consideration).

De-delegations

Collectively protect any individual school from risk

- Contingencies – supporting in schools in challenging circumstances
- Attain
- Tree Maintenance
- Kitchen Equipment
- Licences and subscriptions
- Supply staff cost
- Support to under-performing ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners
- Behaviour support
- Insurance
- School Improvement
- School Attendance

Action PH

Table 4 on Page 9 doesn't match the figures on page 32 Appendix B

Table 4 on Page 9 doesn't match the figures quoted in 2.4.9 Page 11 - Licenses and Subscriptions

The group discussed special schools and academies accessing de-delegation funds and SLAs.

The group discussed the implications if a school converts mid year to an academy and the agreed settlement prior to conversion.

Growth and Falling Rolls

Do you support the creation of a separate £300K fund for falling rolls

AG and EF to clarify this question

School Block transfers to High needs Block

Two ways in which the Schools Block can support the High Needs Block

0.5% of total proposed which equates to indicative number of £737K or (can be done locally without sign off)

Additional £0.5m (requires sign off)

PH – 2.1.9 Page 6, bullet 2 refers to a figure of £781,288 to clarify

EWS funding Page 12 / Page 13 – the group acknowledged this point due to the high needs being significantly overspent.

	<p>Additional £350K SEN allocation for mainstream schools For schools that have a higher proportion of EHCPs than average, which changes each year.</p> <p>PH - 5.2.1 Page 21 and 28 amend question to be clearer.</p> <p>Action for next year clarifying the deductions to the schools block in a table to make this clearer and help to summarise to see what we are consulting with in term of what is being moved between the blocks.</p> <p>PH - Table formatting on page 20 to be corrected.</p> <p>Following an increase and budget pressures, Merton will keep its band funding for 2024/25 at the same level. If the £737,000 transfer from the Schools Block to the HNB is not agreed, these banding values will need to be reviewed.</p> <p>5.2.3 to clarify exclusions and the £10,200 figure stated.</p> <p>Page 18 to clarify inflation costs in support of salary cost.</p> <p>Next steps PH and AG will aim update the consultation document in line with the feedback received, and send out by Friday 27 November to all schools.</p> <p>Early Years funding block consultation – we are still waiting for information from central government, and so the consultation will take place early in the new calendar year.</p> <p>PH - Update 4.1 to reflect this.</p> <p>PL thanked AG and PH for their work in getting the consultation ready.</p>
8.	<p>AOB – Paul Lufkin</p> <p>TP provided an update from the Schools Forum DSG Sub Group Meeting earlier in the month. He presented the DfE Q2 return: current projections show that we are slightly off track, but, following the creation of more, local maintained place in particular, we will be on track to meet expectations by the end of the agreement. The group were provided with a progress update on the 9 action plans which are a requirement of the safety valve agreement highlighting the pressures being faced.</p> <p>The next Schools' Forum meeting is 17 January 2024 @ 4pm</p>