 **Minutes**

**Schools Forum**

Notes of meeting on Thursday 28th January 2021

**Members:**

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| Frieda Perry (FP) | Chair - Primary School rep (Hatfeild) |
| Kirsten Heard (KH) | Secondary School rep (Raynes Park High School) |
| Hamish Dowlen (HD) | Secondary School Gov rep (Raynes Park) |
| Paul Lufkin (PL) | Primary School rep (Wimbledon Park) |
| Carole Cook (CC) | 14-19 rep (TRP Ltd) |
| Julia Waters (JW) | Secondary School rep (Ursuline) |
| Fr Simon Peat (FSP) | Primary Governor rep (St Mary’s) |
| Steve Donegan (SD) | Primary School rep (Malmesbury) |
| Phyllis Sternberg (PS) | Academies rep (Beecholme) |
| Lee Mallin (LM) | Academies Governor rep (Harris Morden) |

**In Attendance:**

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| Jane McSherry (JMc) | LBM CSF – Assistant Director for Education |
| Patricia Harvey (PH) | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Andrew Good (AG) | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Robyn Northcott (RN) | LBM CSF – PA to Jane McSherry (Note Taker) |
| Allison Jones | LBM CSF – Early Years, Family Wellbeing and Early Help |
| Tom Procter | LBM CSF – Contracts and School Organisation |
| Jayne Ward | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Colette Levingston | LBM CSF - Finance |

**Apologies:**

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| Carla Chandler (CC) | Special School rep (Melrose) |
| Fiona Duffy (FD) | Primary School rep (Dundonald) |
| David Erridge (DE) | Special School Governor rep (Perseid) |

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| **Item 1** | **Welcome and introductions** |
|  | FP invited everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted. |
| **Item 2** | **Minutes from previous meeting (14th November 2020)** |
|  | Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed for accuracy.  TP provided an update on Insurance:  A group was set up with TP, HD and 3 Business Managers to discuss how the RPA scheme would reduce insurance premiums – it was noted that there were some areas not included in the RPA scheme that are covered by the existing council scheme including cyber insurance, loss of data and loss of revenue.  The group agreed that it was not practical for all schools to move to the RPA scheme as a collective as some maintained schools already have their own insurance arrangements.  All schools were contacted in January and a number of schools have expressed interest in moving over to the RPA scheme. TP noted that if large numbers of schools choose to move over, this will impact on rates for those remaining in the council scheme.  TP will bring back to a future Schools Forum with a review of what schools have elected to do for the coming financial year. |
| **Item 3** | |  | | --- | | **(a) Merton’s DSG Funding Allocation 2021/22 and Schools Funding Formula**  **(b) Schools’ Consultation Responses**  **(c) Early Years Consultation Responses** | |
|  | PH apologised that there are words missing due to a technical issue. The full version will be uploaded to the Merton website.  Funding announcement 17th December – PH noted the increase in the DSG allocation from £183,656 in 2020/21 to £188,859 in 2021/22 (Table 1).  **Recommendation (a)**  Schools Forum members noted the published DSG allocations for 2021/22.  Schools Block - Table 2. PH noted the Growth Fund is £640k for 2021/22.  **Decision (b)**  Schools Forum members approved the Growth Fund provision.  Transfer £656k from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to fund the growing cost pressure of increased numbers of EHCPs.  **Decision (c)**  Schools Forum agreed the transfer at the Schools Forum meeting on 4th November 2020.  JMc noted that this is the maximum amount that can be transferred without Secretary of Statement agreement.  **Decision (d)**  Both Primary and Secondary schools de-delegated budgets have been set based on the agreement by the relevant phase representatives at Schools Forum on 4th November 2020. However, each phase and line by line de-delegated budget has to be agreed by School Forum for 2021/22 as detailed in table 3 below:   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Service** | **Schools Forum members (Primary)** | **Schools Forum members (Secondary)** | | Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) | Agreed by all | Agreed by all | | Primary schools meals management | Agreed by all | N/A | | Support & Challenge Programme | Agreed by all | Agreed by all | | Attain | Agreed by all | Agreed by all | | Parenting cover & public duties | Agreed by all | Agreed by all | | Ethnic minorities and bilingual learners | Agreed by all | Agreed by all | | Tree maintenance / insurance | Agreed by all | Agreed by all | | Behaviour Support | Agreed by all | Agreed by all | | School Improvement | Agreed by all | Agreed by all |   JW queried the relevance of the unit cost to the total de-delegated budget. PH confirmed that unit costs are based on numbers on roll, e.g. Ethnic Minorities is based on EAL numbers, Behaviour Support is based on low attainment numbers. Costs have gone up due to change in primary census.  To maintain statutory central duties to maintained schools, schools are required to make a contribution towards these services based on numbers on roll through the AWPU factor at a cost of £31.95 per pupil to provide an overall de-delegated budget of £650k.  **Decision (e)**  Schools Forum members approved this contribution.  PH noted a change in the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index). The consultation was based on 2015 data and this has been updated to 2019 data. There has been a slight reduction in the deprivation rate in comparison to the previous year.  FSP queried why is Band A so much greater than Band B for IDACI. PH noted that change of rates is driven by drop in census or move between postcodes. Band A is the highest level of deprivation.  PH noted that the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) was set at 1.84% in 2021/21 and is set at 2% for 2021/22. This is positive for Merton.  PH raised that the Pupil Premium criteria changed on 17th December – this was previously based on January census for funding but is now based on October census. PH flagged that some Schools Forums have complained about this. This can result in a loss of funding for Reception pupils.  **Decision (f)**  School Forum to approve the APT 2021/22 in accordance with the Consultation exercise held in November 2020 of school budgets 2021/22 and to note is subject to ESFA data validation and checking and may be subject to minor change(s).  Schools Forum members approved this.  **Decision (g)**  Schools Forum approval is required for Central Schools Services below:  School admissions – all Schools Forum members agreed  Servicing of schools forum – all Schools Forum members agreed  Prudential borrowing – all Schools Forum members agreed  Statutory and regulatory duties – all Schools Forum members agreed  **Early Years Block**  Providers have had funding based on historical numbers or take-up.  **Decision (h)**  Schools Forum is required to comment on the budget setting of the Early Years formula for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, SEN inclusion fund, DAF and approve the retainer of 5% towards central support costs.  Schools Forum members agreed to approve the retainer of 5% towards central support costs.  **High Needs Block**  In addition to £10,000 per place, special schools to be provided with £660 per place in support of the Teachers’ Pay Grant and Pension Employer Contribution Grant.  LM queried if 7.9 is national policy or Merton's policy. PH confirmed it is a local policy agreed by Schools Forum.  **Recommendation (i)**  School Forum to note the budget setting of the High Needs block for 2021/22.  Schools Forum members noted this and made no further comments.  JW asked for clarity around the split schools funding. It was noted that All Saints Primary School is on a split site. |
| **Item 4** | |  | | --- | | **Merton’s DSG Recovery Plan** | |
|  | JMc provided an update on the DSG Recovery Plan. Deficit forecast is estimated to be £28.1 million. SEN2 return data is being gathered and data will be brought to Schools Forum with a comparison.  There has not been a meeting of the Schools Forum sub-group, however PH, AG, TP and Karla Finikin have been working on the Recovery Plan. A meeting of the sub-group will be set up to discuss ways forward and an update will be brought back to the Schools Forum.  There was not a visit from the DfE in November as expected. It does not appear that they are going to visit all authorities with a deficit. Around a third of authorities have a deficit. |
| **Item 5** | **Any Other Business** |
|  | PH noted that Lambeth Schools Forum members are collectively writing to the Government regarding Covid funding not being sufficient to the amount being spent. Schools Forum members agreed to do the same.  **Action**: JMc and PH to produce draft letter to be shared with Schools Forum members, to be signed by FP and JMc on approval.  **Date of next meeting: 23rd March 2021** |