

Meeting	Schools Forum
Date	30 th January 2024
Time	2pm to 5pm
Venue	Teams

Attendees

Chair	Jo Marsh
Core Group	Alun Williams, Christopher Wilford, Fiona Skinner, Gary Lewis, Jo Marsh, Kevin Burnett, Louise Malik, Mary Kearney-Knowles, Philip Frankland, Olwyn Donnelly, Richard Morgan, Roz Lambert, Hayley Trotman, Paul May (Cllr), Mary Cox, Fiona Skinner, Jo Stooling, Georgia Spirrell, Jonathan Wilmshurst, Becky Biddlecombe (notes)
Apologies received	Will Godfrey, Mandy Bishop, Rosemary Collard Tim Howes, Clare Crowther, Liz Beazer, Mark Wilson, Mark Thompson, Claire Curtis.

1.	Welcome and Apologies	ACTION
	JM welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies noted as above.	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
	Members were reminded to complete the declaration of interest forms once per year and to declare anything pertaining to the papers being presented.	
3.	Minutes of the last meeting	
	All forum members agreed that the previous minutes were an accurate representation.	
4.	Budget 24-25	
	<p>Discussion was had regarding the 24-25 Budget (Paper attached) RM informed members of the current position.</p> <p>Comments: LM – numbers in appendix 1 if you take primary as an example, the primary entitlement under the MPPFL has increased by a lower increase than the overall increase thus impacting on the lowest funded schools adversely.</p> <p>RM – In the regulation there isn't anything stopping us from increasing this, it is one of the factors set by the DfE as part of the national mechanism. The overall average was at 5.1% increase whilst the MPPFL increase set by the DFE was a 4.65% increase.</p> <p>The rationale is to follow the National methodology and not over fund any school in comparison to that methodology so that when a Hard funding formula is created there will not be any schools that would see a reduction as a result. This is in line with the approach we have used in prior years.</p>	 4.0 Budget Update.docx

	<p>KB – After the budget updates is there going to be enough budget increase to compensate the inflation pressures?</p> <p>The DSG deficit – is that to say that the deficit is high needs and at the moment that hasn't impacted on schools?</p> <p>RM – inflationary pressure is higher than what has been allocated to schools. The DfE have set funding values and additional grants at levels they believe will deal with inflation pressures The DSG deficit doesn't sit in the school budget.</p> <p>AW – based on knowledge of other local authorities, do you think we have fared well in B&NES?</p> <p>RM – we have done reasonably well; our funding allocations seem better than other local councils.</p> <p>Early February there will be official DFE confirmation of our submission. The appendix 1 will be sent to all schools and academies trusts along with as much data as we can so schools and academies can plan their budgets.</p>	
5.	Early Years Funding Formula	
	<p>PF presented a paper on the proposed Early Years Funding formula and informed members of the changes which will be happening to the Early Years offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 hours of funded childcare (38 weeks of the year) for working families with a 2-year-old from April 2024. There are eligibility start dates so not immediately after they turn 2. • 15 hours of funded childcare (38 weeks of the year) for working families with a 9-month-old from September 2024. There are eligibility start dates as well • An increase to 30 hours (38 weeks of the year) of the above offer for working families for children from 9 months upwards from September 2025. • The funding has increased, in addition to the additional uplift from September last year. Since then, there is a further increase in the 3-4 year of rate and change in the methodology for the 2-year-old funding rate. • There has to be a funding formula as required by the DfE, to set a formula we use our early years reference group to review the matter and that meeting was held at the beginning of December. The reference group wanted to look at other options when considering a generic fund for children who do not qualify for the disadvantaged criteria. • A consultation was held following that (paper attached) 81% voted to maintain the current formula and this has been reported and agreed with the Reference Group. <p>Comments: KB – given current state of cost-of-living crisis, did you discuss the EY</p>	 <p>5.0 January 2024 EYE Funding Rates De</p>  <p>5.1 Consultation on funding rates for 2024</p>

	<p>pupil premium and whether this was still the best measure to use to help disadvantaged children– given that there are many ‘just about managing families? What was the overall view from the reference group? PF – we have looked at how we can boost the income for the eligible children, the link has come about because one of the aspects we have to cover were attainment outcomes. In our early years in the last year the gap has widened not narrowed. Given we have a limited amount of head room in the budget to make supplements linking it to EYPP is the best option.</p> <p>Member vote – All members agreed to set the Early Years Funding Formula.</p>	
6.	DSG Safety Valve Commissioned services	
	<p>Discussion was had regarding the need to resubmit our Safety Valve Plan and the potential implications for commissioned services, OD shared papers with forum members, describing each of the services commissioned via ‘discretionary spend’ from the HNB, the impact of each service and the risk (including financial) if reduced/ceased.</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>KB – In looking at these commissioned services, there are some ‘key principles’: (1) In terms of what we do in schools forum we look at prevention and early intervention, most of those service seem to hit that button. (2) IF you were forced to do something, leave those untouched that the LA would be fined over if they weren’t provided. (3) We should also keep those services that attract additional funding. Has St Johns been approached?</p> <p>AW – Linked to what KB said about those areas that are focused on younger children, is that because there isn’t anything else that could be cut elsewhere? What is the long list of things you could get rid of?</p> <p>RM – We are spending 4 million more than we should be in our planning process. We have quite a few plans we are looking to develop in our safety valve to support the 4 million.</p> <p>OD – BOP supports mainstream settings to include children with SEND alongside the specialist support at BOP and it also promotes the Comic Relief early years inclusion training from Dingley’s.</p> <p>AW – Could make a good argument for all.</p> <p>OD – With the Family Support & Play Service We could look at reducing the DSG element of the funding.</p> <p>GS – I would need more information to make a decision. The other option could be using a percentage cut from each of them.</p> <p>JS – I work with all the services, on a case-by-case basis what does it cost for that intervention. Useful to know how many families and how many training sessions. The work the collective services offer, it would be a huge loss. We need comparative measures to look at this.</p> <p>KB – Is there any overlaps? Would another support service take over</p>	 <p>6.0 Paper to Schools Forum re Discretionar</p>

what would be lost? Would St Johns foundation take any of these on?

OD – Some will have more of a lean towards family support/social care and have wider elements supporting them. St Johns were clear where children have that level of complexity that is not where they are delivering their support.

MC – We are cutting the most imperative services for the most vulnerable. As soon as this is done the pressure will go back into the schools. You will push the problems further down the line.

RZ – I would like to come back on Kevin's suggestion about St Johns, it is very difficult to fund raise for something the funder believe should be funded by the government or local authority. I think the cost down the line would be greater if cuts were made at this level now.

AW – I agree that you are cutting the services for the most vulnerable. I do think that schools compared to other services are not as badly funded as some of those other services.

GS – The target that is being set for you to achieve, what is the conversation back to the DfE, we can't keep making cuts. Where is the line that needs to be drawn and the push back to the DfE.

RM – We are in a constant debate with the DfE.

CW - It has been a very difficult conversation. The comment around the DfE position, we are in a difficult position. We do not have enough, and we have been told to deliver it within a certain time scale. No one has done this before, there isn't the muscle memory in the LA. There is something about us pushing back and articulating that we are doing our very best. The stick behind this is that the statutory override that stops it from going on to the balance sheet is due to end in two years' time. There is a real art with how we manage the discussions over the next few months.

There is the first stage – we need to go through the whole exercise for where we can save money. B&NES will be in a better position, we are doing lots of plans for enhancing certain services, more resource bases and specialist provision. We will be transparent with forum members.

KB – Just to pick up two points one on the pushing back – as a school's forum member I did approach Wera and her Office assistant and filled her in on cutting the preventative services. Chris did mention about an education consultant to examine if there were any other savings to be made or the LA had missed something. Has this happened? Also, if Alun is serious about schools having to pick the tab up once these services have gone, is there anything that can be saved by schools and the MATS contributing towards keeping these preventative services going in B&NES?

MC – All of the schools have an increase in SEND needs, in a recent meeting. Gather the evidence and show it to them.

ISOS consultancy update – reviewing B&NES Safety Valve plans

	<p>CW - they have been checking all our plans. The LA has no issue with giving School Forum feedback as to what they have found. They are running workshops in the next few weeks with LA Officers and then CW will provide feedback to Schools Forum.</p> <p>OD – Thanked panel members for their valuable feedback, it is very useful.</p>	
10.	AOB:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KB – the letter to Damian Hinds, did we get any replies? • RM - reply attached not from Damian Hinds office but from ESFA • CW – Informed schools forum there is a group called F40 who do campaigns on a regular basis. • OD – I sent an invitation out to colleagues we are hosting a SEND Day. To talk about our safety valve and our future plans. Event Information below: <p>As a key professional/stakeholder working to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) in B&NES, you are warmly invited to this <u>In Person</u> half-day event at the Somerdale Pavilion in Keynsham on 22nd Feb 12.30 – 3.30</p>	 Letter Response.docx
11.	Date of next meeting: 26th March 2024.	

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