

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held on **TUESDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY, 2023** at 6.00 pm in Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams. This meeting can be viewed at www.camden.gov.uk/webcast.

MEMBERS OF THE FORUM PRESENT

Katy Forsdyke, Christ Church School, Hampstead (Chair)
Jen Allan, Eleanor Palmer Primary School
Claire Burns, Emmanuel School
Alan Chesters, Acland Burghley School
Rob Earrey, Fitzjohns Primary School
John Hayes, Gospel Oak Primary School
Perina Holness, Thomas Coram Centre
Bob House, Camden School for Girls
Deborah Issacs, Edith Neville Primary, Richard Cobden Primary, Primrose Hill Primary
Nicholas John, Acland Burghley School
Vijita Patel, Swiss Cottage School
Colin Reader, Kentish Town School
Luca Salice, Torriano Primary School

MEMBERS OF THE FORUM ABSENT

Daniel Silverstone, Parliament Hill School (Vice-Chair)
James Hadley, Haverstock School

ALSO PRESENT

Steve Harris, Head of Facilities Management
Joe Lynch, Schools Financial Advisor
Shola Matiluko, Contracts Performance and Commercial Manager
Pauline Maddison, Interim Director of Education Commissioning
Eve Stickler, Director of Early Intervention and Prevention
Nick Smith, Head of Education Commission & School Organisation
Victor Saunders, Schools Budget Financial Advisor
Sharon Scott, Interim Head of SEN and Inclusive Intervention Services

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Schools Forum and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. GUIDANCE ON REMOTE MEETINGS

RESOLVED -

THAT the guidance be noted.

2. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP LIST

A new secondary school representative had been elected; Bob House, school governor at Camden School for Girls.

It was noted that Alex Yates, substitute Special School & Hospital representative from The Royal Free Hospital Children's School, term of office expired in February 2023.

RESOLVED -

THAT the membership list be noted.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from David Silverstone and Councillor Boyland (Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Broadcast of the meeting

The Chair announced the following: "In addition to the rights by law that the public and press have to record this meeting, I would like to remind everyone that this meeting is being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and can be viewed on our website for six months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts are archived and can be made available upon request.

If you have asked to address the meeting, you are deemed to be consenting to being filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you are addressing the Committee your contribution will be recorded and broadcast."

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED -

THAT the minutes of the last meeting held on 6 December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

7. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

8. SCHOOL FUNDING 2023/24 – UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation.

The Team Leader Schools and Designated Schools Grant presented the report which updated the Forum on the estimated funding available for 2023/24 following the recent Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) finance settlement notification on 16 December 2022; detailed the anticipated use of that money to fund schools Early Years and high needs; and further outlined the future funding pressures, the current DSG reserves position, de-delegation, and the latest advice on energy costs.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and opened the Forum to questions and comments. The Following was discussed:

- In response to a member, it was explained that following the increase in funding per pupil, overall Camden saw a real terms increase of 1.6%. Due to the local formula, the uplift in funding varied between schools (above and below 1.6%) to distribute funding outlined in Appendix 1. Officers confirmed they would provide information to members on the levels of increased funding by individual school.

Action By - Team Leader Schools and Designated Schools Grant

- It was noted that for many schools there was a real terms decrease in funding due to fewer pupils, thus fewer pupils to receive per pupil funding.
- In relation to section 2.14 Table 1, it was confirmed that the mainstream schools additional grant (MSAG) 3.5% per pupil rate would apply to each school.
- In relation to section 5.1-5.2, it was confirmed there was £8 million in the DSG reserves. In response to a member querying if any of the reserve money could help fund the increasing Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND) needs, where schools were struggling to fund using existing budgets, it was confirmed that there were government announcements expected in relation to SEND funding. Additionally, officers stated that due to the levels of funding in the DSG reserves, it was appropriate that a discussion could take place through the Forum and with the Council in how the money should be spent.
- In relation to section 2.17 C, high needs block (HNB) allocations, members asked officers to present options and set out the parameters of how Schools Forum could use and manage the underspend budget. Officers agreed they would present a paper to the next meeting.

Action By - Team Leader Schools and Designated Schools Grant

- In relation to section 4.6, a member noted that five Camden schools had a licenced deficit. In response to the member, it was confirmed that If any schools with a licensed deficit converted into an academy the deific would transfer to the Council, but unlikely to the DSG reserves. However, Camden schools were not

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able to hold a debt higher than 10% of their balance. Officers confirmed they would present the values at the next meeting. As described in section 4.6, schools were continuing to be advised to maintain a three year financial plan. While there were many schools currently presenting as surplus, the improving financial position over the pandemic was masking schools entering a worse position. Licensed deficits were tightly regulated and monitored by the Director of Children's Services, the Head of Education Commission & School Organisation and Camden finance colleagues against a three-year recovery plan.

- Officers confirmed that the DfE SEND green paper would be published in March, which would include HNB funding. Officers confirmed an update would be presented at the next meeting.

Action By - Interim Director of Education Commissioning

RESOLVED -

THAT Schools Forum

- a) Note and agree the latest estimates of individual schools and growth budgets (section 3.6) and Appendix 1 and 2.
- b) Note and agree the provisional Early Years funding rates (section 3.9)
- c) Provide any further comment regarding the 2023/24 funding (section 2.14)
- d) Identify any areas of funding for review in autumn 2023 ahead of the funding year 2024/25.

9. SCHOOL MEALS CATERLINK CONTRACT

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management.

The Head of Facilities Management and the Contracts Performance and Commercial Manager introduced the report which explained that Camden Council's Caterlink contract to provide a school meals service would end on 31 March 2023. Schools Forum were told the Council's current position with regard to the future of the contract, and other options available going forward.

The following resolution was passed to enter private session, proposed by Rob Earrey and seconded by Alan Chesters, at 6.35pm:

RESOLVED –

THAT the press and public be excluded from the proceedings of the Schools Forum during consideration of the respective item on the agenda on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that were members of the public to be present, there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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Specifically - Publicity in respect of item 9 would be likely to lead to the disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information) in accordance with paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Part II

Officers outlined the Council's current position of the renegotiation with Caterlink and the Forum asked questions of clarification and commented on future options.

Part I

The meeting returned to public session at 7.10pm.

RESOLVED –

THAT the current position of the renegotiation of the school meals contract and the changes to price that may occur be noted, detailed within the report.

10. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK (HNB): UPDATE ON FINANCIAL POSITION AND PROPOSALS FOR 2023/24

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Early Intervention and Prevention.

The Director of Early Intervention and Prevention introduced the report. The report set out the HNB funding position, 2022/23 monitoring, 2023/34 HNB funding, and the proposals for increase spend in 2023/24.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and opened the Forum to questions and comments. The following was discussed:

- In relation to table 1 and section 1.5, officers confirmed that £5 million additional pounds would be contributed into the existing reserves.
- Officers confirmed they understood the bids made by the Pupil Referral Unit (PRUs) to be granted and funded by the reserves. Having listened to comments from members, officers understood the Forum supported similar funding models to run similar services in areas of need, given the level of reserves.
- A member asked if the reserve money could be used to build capacity for additional support schools, because many sites had no spaces. Members explained the current position was schools having to turn young people away who had Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) indicating a required provision, due to a lack of capacity. Members suggested that given there were schools that did have space, unfortunately due to continually fewer children, there were potential locations ready for expansion. In response, officers told the Forum that there was sustainable financial modelling and contingency planning work about to take place, supported by external national expert Peter Gray. When considering expansion, the location of services and accessibility for parents had to fit the

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need. Officers agreed with a members' suggestion to hold Camden head teacher focus groups as part of the review work and devising a future model.

Action By - Director of Early Intervention and Prevention

- Officers confirmed that in their latest DfE data submission, the requirements of the SEND data were more detailed and Camden would benefit for the more forensic evidence gathering when planning future services.
- Officers confirmed that Early Years block funding and High Needs block funding had to adhere to different guidance, which not always aligned in terms of how local authorities were allowed to allocate. Camden had to be creative and Camden made efforts to distribute as equitably a possible across groups. Officers confirmed the Camden Local Inclusion Fund (CLIF) came through the Early Years block.
- Members noted that as well as the need for a systematic review of the future of funding SEND, attention was also require on how EHCP provisions were funded in mainstream schools, because there was a real terms cost for schools. Officers confirmed there was work taking place to address this issue and they were forming proposals with finance colleagues. Officers would report back to head teachers in due course.

RESOLVED –

THAT the updated High Needs Block position and additional funding proposals be noted, detailed within the report.

11. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The next meeting, and the last meeting of the academic year, would be on 6 June 2023.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END