

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held on **TUESDAY, 7TH JUNE, 2022** at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

MEMBERS OF THE FORUM PRESENT

Committee Room 2, Crowndale Centre

Katy Forsdyke, Christ Church School, Hampstead (Chair)

Alan Chesters, Acland Burghley

Jen Allan, Eleanor Palmer

Vijita Patel, Swiss Cottage School

Colin Reader, Swiss Cottage School

Luca Salice, Torriano Primary School

Alison Lowton, Haverstock

Remote, Microsoft Teams

Jane Hindle (Vice-Chair) Camden School for Girls

Rob Earrey, Fitzjohns Primary

John Hayes, Gospel Oak Primary

Perina Holness, Thomas Coram Centre

Jemima Wade, Argyle School

MEMBERS OF THE FORUM ABSENT

Claire Burns, Emmanuel School

Daniel Silverstone, Parliament Hill

Nick John, Acland Burghley

ALSO PRESENT

Eve Stickler, Director of Early Intervention and Prevention

Pauline Maddison, Interim Director of Education Commissioning

Nick Smith, Head of Education Commission & School Organisation

Karen Flanagan, Head of Special Education and Inclusive Intervention

Paul Tanton, Finance and Commissioning Manager

Victor Saunders, Schools Budget Financial Advisor

Louise Coster, Senior Energy Management Officer

Julie Granger, Senior Energy Management Officer

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 HYBRID MEETINGS

RESOLVED

THAT the guidance be noted.

2. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP LIST

It was noted that the terms of office had expired for Kim Isroff (Fleet Primary Governor Member) and Peter Sprintz (Swiss Cottage Reserve Member).

RESOLVED

THAT the membership list be noted.

3. APOLOGIES

The Committee Clerk stated that apologies had been received from Daniel Silverstone, Claire Burns, James Hadley and Councillor Marcus Boyland (Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families).

Jemima Wade and Alison Lowton attended as substitute Members.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no interests declared.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.”

The Chair welcomed Pauline Maddison in her new post of Interim Director of Education Commissioning.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED

THAT the minutes of the last meeting held on 8 February 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. SCHOOLS, HIGH NEEDS AND EARLY YEARS OUTTURN AND FUNDING UPDATE

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

The Team Leader Schools and Designated Schools Grant, Victor Saunders, outlined the report and summarised; the financial outturn position for 2021/22; updated the Forum on the latest funding situation for the current financial year 2022/23; the range of current pressures; the current funding arrangements for the next few years; and the measures to support schools through this transition and to help schools to continue to prepare for reductions in real terms funding.

In response to the report, the following was discussed:

- It was confirmed that Camden had not overspent on EHCP funding.
- A Forum Member asked if the decrease in awarding Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) was related to the impacts of Covid, also noting that the trend of EHCPs reducing was a surprising trend given the number of pupils presenting with SEND was increasing.
- It was confirmed that there was not a backlog in processing statutory assessment requests and that the number of requests had decreased. The trend could be explained by Camden's devolved funding, access to funding for children without recourse to EHCP and that Camden increased their number of total plans before the 2014 reforms.
- In relation to **Teachers Pay award from September 2022 (3.1f)**, it was confirmed that the final decision would be before September 2021, not July 2021.
- Underspends could be explained by Camden schools being given funding during the pandemic period where they were limited on spending activities.
- It was confirmed that devolved delegated funding to schools could be a risk to the local authority and Camden Learning, where schools would have the choice on what services to opt into, however detail on these arrangements was to be confirmed.

Schools Forum - Tuesday, 7th June, 2022

- In relation to **MTFS saving - Pensions Back funding (3.10)**, it was requested that schools be informed before forums, allowing more notice, to enable better financial planning. In response, the Team Leader Schools and Designated Schools Grant stated that he would speak to the Pensions Team to ask for earlier estimates of pension valuations for support staff to be shared with schools.
- It was confirmed that the summary of school balances would be circulated to the Forum. It was confirmed that the Council were speaking to schools with particularly high balances and what actions they were planning to reduce those.
- ESFA school management advisory team would be contacted, to follow up pre-pandemic plan, to re-engage and visit schools and provide financial advice.

Actions by - Team Leader Schools and DSG

RESOLVED

THAT the Schools Forum

- a) Note the 2021/22 outturn for all the blocks of the DSG as set out in section 1;
- b) Note the current 2022/23 level of funding (section 2) and the range of current pressures and future funding challenges for schools' funding (section 3) and also the current and proposed next steps in the transition towards the "hard" national funding formula in section 4 and 5;
- c) Note the issues and support to date around the current Covid-19 emergency for schools (section 6);
- d) Provide advice to the authority regarding the type of any ongoing support that would assist schools in improving financial planning as described in section 7.6; and
- e) Agree that any reserve remaining in the Schools and Central Schools Services block be applied to offset any schools block deficit arising from pressures on Camden schools budgets following any proposed reorganisation - section 1.5.

9. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK (HNB): HNB FINANCIAL POSITION AND PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL SPEND

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

The Director of Early Intervention and Prevention (Eve Sticker) was accompanied by the Head of Special Education and Inclusive Intervention Service (Karen Flanagan) and the SEN Finance and Commissioning Manager (Paul Tanton) to present the report. They outlined the report which provided an update on; the HNB outturn 2021/22 and a projection for 2022/23; headlines from the SEN2 census data; and the progress with HNB transformation work.

Schools Forum - Tuesday, 7th June, 2022

In addition, the Director of Early Intervention and Prevention told the Forum that the SEND Review government green paper had been launched since the last meeting which was now in the consultation phase until 22 July 2022. Camden was collating its collective response and welcomed contribution from individual Camden schools and that briefing sessions would be held. Secondly, she told the Forum that the development of the Local Area SEND Strategy was in its final stages and encouraged schools to participate in the formal consultation during July-August 2022.

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

- In relation to **proportionality payments (Section 1, 3.2)**, it was confirmed that the current approach had been agreed for a 3 year period, but to be kept under review. Budgets were not expected to be reduced for any school, however there may need to be increases for some schools with a particularly high number of SEN pupils.
- A typo was noted: 2.1% should read 2% (Section 2, 1.3).
- It was confirmed that compared to the national average, Camden were managing the number of ECHPs, however that needed to be considered in the local context of devolved Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG) funding.
- In relation to the **split of ECHPs by placement type in Camden (Section 2, 1.8)**, a Forum Member suggested that the analysis of pupil profiles lined to the need of external special school placements should be included in the next report. Additionally, the Forum Member noted that there should be a priority to keep children using local provisions and not to outsource.
- In relation to **SLAs for ARPs (Section 3, 1.1)**, it was noted by a Forum Member that many governors were not ready to sign off ARPs at this stage because there were still questions they felt needed to be answered.

A Forum Member asked for a future report which focussed on the increasing number of SEND pupils in Early Years. There was a consensus among some colleagues that there were increasing numbers of children with so far undiagnosed special needs in nursery and reception. This pressure to school staff was alongside circumstantial issues where toddlers required more support due to repeated lockdowns during the pandemic and those effects on child development. They stated that, in light of pressures, it was surprising to see the figures in the report suggesting that SEND numbers were reducing. In response, it was confirmed that:

- The SEND2 stats were a year behind and the requests for those figures were impacted by the pandemic.
- Concerns had been raised that there was an increasing number of children with complex needs in Early Years. A different approach of robustly reviewing every child would be made this coming year.
- The dip in EHCP requests would be monitored.

Schools Forum - Tuesday, 7th June, 2022

- The number of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pupils was increasing exponentially, over the years past and forecasted going forward. It was noted the ASD criteria was broadening.
- There was a correlation with children being born early and SEND diagnosis, however the local figures to support those not unavailable.

It was confirmed that the number of placements in day maintained independents schools was increasing. Increasingly, more expensive placements in the residential sector were avoided as a result of the work to increase the local Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARP). Camden needed to assure parents of the offer and boost parents confidence that Camden were able to meet required provisions. It was agreed a breakdown would be provided at the next meeting which separated the residential and day costs to the Council.

In relation to **Mediations and effectiveness (Section 2, 1.13)**, it was agreed that a breakdown of appeals and tribunals in relation to Camden, to include the proportion of upheld cases and those capitulated before hearing, would provided to the next Schools Forum meeting.

Actions by - Head of Special Education and Inclusive Intervention Service

RESOLVED

THAT the report be noted.

10. RENEWABLE ENERGY TARIFFS AND ENERGY PROCUREMENT STRATEGY (PRESENTATION)

Senior Energy Management Officers for Camden Council, Louise Coster and Julie Granger, presented slides which covered; the background and current context of the energy wholesale market; Camden's energy contracting arrangements; energy price forecasts and the financial impact for schools; renewable electricity tariffs; and the concerns, mitigations and next steps to respond to the challenges. It was confirmed they would write to all schools in relation to Camden's energy contracts with more information and provide a renewable energy tariff opt-out option.

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

- It was confirmed that schools had the option to opt out of LASER. Most schools were part of the contract, however it was noted that if many schools choose to opt out the aggregate contract would be at risk.
- A Forum Member stated they were not provided with the information of how much money each school would save if they opted out of the renewable tariff. Governors would need to be consulted ahead of any decision. Another Forum

Schools Forum - Tuesday, 7th June, 2022

Member indicated that if retaining the tariff meant a trade-off of losing staff, it may be a realistic consideration to opt out.

- It was confirmed that elected Members had not been consulted, due to the election period, and that the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families would be briefed on the matter.
- The Chair stated that the communications to schools should be clear in that the renewable tariff would be a significantly small proportion of the energy cost increase for schools.

To Note: All

11. EDUCATION STRATEGY (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation, Nicholas Smith, updated the Forum on the Education Strategy. He outlined the following:

- Primary school head teachers had been briefed on the implementation plan of the Strategy.
- The role of Schools Forum in the Strategy would look at the collaboration streams in more detail. This would feed into the Schools Standards paper to consider collaborations that already existed. Schools would be preparing information to feed into the work in advance of September 2022.
- The Schools Organisation paper would report to the next Schools Forum meeting with revised numbers in school data. They had provided updates to primary and secondary heads around the position.
- The Local Government Association (LGA) indicated there would be a significant drop in application numbers and school roll in Camden for 2021/22. The actual drop in the number of form classes for primary and secondary was by 2.5 and 1, respectively, which was a lower fall than predicted. They needed to continue to address the forecasted reduction in pupils over time and the implications it might have on secondary schools
- Following the strategies of collaboration detailed in the white paper, the Council and Camden Learning would be working together on what that meant going forward. An updated position would be given in September 2022.

To Note: All

12. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The date of the next meeting would be on 13 September 2022 and would be the first meeting of the 2022/23 academic year.

Schools Forum - Tuesday, 7th June, 2022

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END