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## THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held on **TUESDAY, 6TH DECEMBER, 2022** at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

### MEMBERS OF THE FORUM PRESENT

Katy Forsdyke, Christ Church School, Hampstead (Chair)  
Daniel Silverstone, Parliament Hill School (Vice-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  
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

James Hadley, Haverstock School

### ALSO PRESENT

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 HYBRID MEETINGS

#### RESOLVED -

THAT the guidance be noted.

## **2. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP LIST**

### **RESOLVED -**

THAT the membership list be noted.

## **3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from James Hadley.

## **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."

### **Discussion on how meetings will be held going forward**

After consideration of the feedback from members on how meetings were best conducted, the Chair stated that going forward meetings would be held remotely as a default; however, members should be flexible to periodically attend a meeting in-person. The subject would be revisited following the last Forum meeting of the academic year.

### **Deputation**

A deputation statement titled 'Camden's School Funding Crisis' was presented to the Forum by Hugo Pierre (Camden UNISON Schools Co-convener) and had been published as supplementary agenda.

The Chair thanked Hugo Pierre for his deputation and invited comments and questions from the Forum. The following was discussed:

- Some members expressed interest in joining a joint campaign, as detailed in the closing paragraph of the statement.

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- A member stated that some schools had been involved in taking a letter to the Department for Education (DfE).
- A member noted that it was difficult at this time to envisage a recovery from the critical funding situation schools were currently in and projected to worsen.
- It was noted by a member that special schools were not included in the National Education Union (NEU) website figures. There was a high number of support staff in those schools and these figures would be useful to share across those networks. The special school representative member stated that they would be in favour of joining a letter of support.
- In response to members asking what activities a campaign might pursue, it was stated that it could involve letters to the press, action from head teachers and politicians and demonstrations in the borough. Activities could aim to involve as many groups as possible, including parents. Camden should also connect with other boroughs on the issue who were experiencing similar funding challenges.
- It was noted that some head teachers across the borough may be prepared to be more publicly vocal than others.
- Parents needed to be reassured that schools were giving their best efforts to provide for all students and those with the greatest need, and teachers and head teachers needed to be supported to do so.
- The Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families stated that he would like to discuss the deputation, and what has been feedback by the Forum, with the depute outside of the meeting.

The Chair thanked Hugo Pierre for attending the meeting.

### **6. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED -**

THAT the minutes of the last meeting held on 1 November 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 FUNDING 2023-24**

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

The Schools Budget Financial Advisor introduced the report which outlined funding formulas; de-delegation of funding; Designated School Grant (DSG) Blocks for High Needs and Early years; recent funding announcements and cost increases for schools.

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The Chair thanked the officer for the report and opened the Forum to comments and questions:

- It was confirmed that the recently announced funding through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) would unlikely cover pay rises.
- Members stated that schools needed additional support to reflect the unusually difficult economic conditions.
- London boroughs had met with the EFSA, including Camden, and received the same information. London borough authorities faced different circumstances and challenges in overspending. There were suggestions externally that Camden received inequitably high funding.
- It was confirmed that Camden was working with other local authorities to monitor the impact on schools, and there were increasing concerns for years 2024/25 onwards. The additional funding was welcomed, however it was clearly not enough to cover the need. Camden schools needed to be looked on a school-by-school basis and support given to them to make efficiencies and share resources. The funding challenge they were grappling with was not only falling school rolls, but not enough money in the system.
- It was confirmed that it should be assumed ahead of receiving any funding, it would be allocated to Camden using the NFF.
- It was confirmed that any money not spent would return to the DSG reserves.
- A member requested information and advice on how the rise in utility costs would affect schools. It was confirmed officers would be invited to a future meeting to present an update to the Forum.

### **Action By - Schools Budget Financial Advisor**

- It was confirmed that it was unlikely that the EFSA would reclaim money following the flat rate supplementary grant.
- It was raised by a member that it would be essential for schools to collaborate and work together to save money. Further to that, it was stated that there should be research to carefully review the financial benefits of schools sharing structures, balanced with the educational benefits. It was also crucial that school sharing arrangements were executed at the right pace and correctly for any local context. It was noted by another member, after their school having become a federation, that there had been financial and educational benefits observed.

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT The Schools Forum

- a) note the level of reserves to be used to support the funding allocations to schools as set out in paragraphs 1.9;
- b) note the provisional NFF allocations to individual schools discussed in the report in section 1.1 and set out in Appendix 1. Also, that these are only indicative NFF allocations and are not yet the final school budgets;
- c) note the current forecast spending plans and funding for the high needs and early years blocks as set out in sections 4 and 5 respectively;

- d) note the continued use of the central school services block (CSSB) replacement of the former top sliced amounts detailed in section 1.4;
- e) approve the de-delegated budgets as set out in section 2.1 a) – e); and
- f) note the potential effects of the future funding and cost pressures outlined in sections 7 and 8 on schools' budgets.

**9. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK (HNB): ANALYSIS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SPEND TRENDS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Early Intervention and Prevention, who introduced the item.

Presented by the Director of Early Intervention and Prevention, the report provided a briefing on spending on independent schools from the HNB, as requested at the last meeting of the Forum.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and opened the Forum to comments and questions:

- In relation to tribunals in section 1.3, it was confirmed that the Council only pursued this route if they wholly believed the child's needs would be best met in-borough. Parental preference was usually favoured by tribunals. It was further confirmed that before reaching tribunal stage, mediation was primarily pursued. Either party, the local authority or parents, could withdraw at any stage before reaching tribunal.
- It was confirmed that the Council was using savings to create additional provision in the borough. They were using place planning work to project demand and ensure efficiency of provision.

**RESOLVED -**

THAT the report be noted.

**10. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The following remaining meeting dates for the 2022-23 academic year were noted:

- 7 February 2023
- 6 June 2023

**11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm.

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**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**