

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held on **TUESDAY, 6TH JUNE, 2023** at 6.00 pm in Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams. This meeting can be watched at [www.camden.gov.uk/webcast](http://www.camden.gov.uk/webcast)

### **MEMBERS OF THE FORUM PRESENT**

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

### **MEMBERS OF THE FORUM ABSENT**

Jen Allan, Eleanor Palmer Primary School  
James Hadley, Haverstock School  
Deborah Issacs, Edith Neville Primary, Richard Cobden Primary, Primrose Hill Primary  
Vijita Patel, Swiss Cottage School  
Colin Reader, Kentish Town School

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for the Best Start for Children and Families  
Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion  
Joe Lynch, Schools Financial Advisor  
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**

Luca Salice had stepped down as a governor at Torriano and Brecknock and was therefore no longer a member. Claire Burns would be stepping down as head teacher at Emmanuel Primary and would therefore no longer be a member. Members gave thanks for their contribution to the Forum.

### **RESOLVED -**

THAT the membership list be noted.

## **3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received by Vijita Patel and Colin Reader.

## **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."

### **Next meeting on 13 September 2023**

The next meeting of Schools Forum would be the first meeting of the 2023-24 academic year and hold the annual elections for Chair and Vice-Chair. The meeting would be held fully in-person at the Town Hall.

### **Officer updates**

The Chair welcomed Vikram Hansrani in his new post of Director for Education Commissioning and Inclusion, replacing Pauline Maddison in her interim post. The Chair noted that it was Eve Sticker's last meeting before leaving Camden and her post of Director of Early Intervention and Prevention. The Chair thanked outgoing officers for their contribution to the Forum.

## **6. MINUTES**

In response to members, it was noted by officers that there would be a formal update report on the food catering contract, outlining the progress and range of options, to the September Forum meeting. It was noted this report would include how the Greater London Authority (GLA) announcement of universal free school meals (FSM) grants would affect Camden's position and how schools would have the opportunity to engage in the process.

### **RESOLVED -**

THAT the minutes of the last meeting held on 7 February 2023 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 the report of the Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation.

The Team Leader Schools and Designated Schools Grant (DSG) presented the report which updated the Forum on the financial outturn position for 2022/23, funding for 2023/24, existing spending pressures, 2023/24 onwards, recent Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) grant announcements, and further support to schools.

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

- In relation to section 3.1 b), high needs block (HNB) forecast, it was clarified by officers that the £5 million underspend was in addition to the current £8.7 million underspend, therefore the total end of year position would be c. £13 million.
- In relation to the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG), it was confirmed that the MSAG amounts had already been included in the schools budgeting and calculations. MSAG would cover pay awards of over 4% for teachers, but did not include support staff.
- In relation to section 6.6-6.9, GLA primary FSM grants, it was confirmed by officers that the grant money would firstly be paid to the Council who would then distribute to schools. Officers explained the potential negative impact a universal offer could have on maintaining levels of registration of FSM and the effect this would have on pupil premium funding for schools. Camden were in talks with the GLA in how best the Council can manage the grants when considering the indirect effects. The GLA told the Council they should find creative ways of encouraging parents to register for FSM and officers asked the Forum for

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suggestions and ideas. Officers confirmed that one route the Council would take was requiring eligible parents to register for FSM as part of the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) sign-up.

- Officers referred to section 8, the finance comments in the report, that the Forum should start to consider the appropriate actions to manage the level of DSG reserves. When reserves were above 5%, Councils were contacted by the ESFA to question their status and planning. Camden was currently on c. 20%, with the HNB accounting for half of that (10% of the total). Officers confirmed that reserves could be used into different spending areas and were not ringfenced to specific spending.
- Members stated they should be using the reserves to serve the current need for additional resources in schools and they asked officers how the process of forming proposals could begin. Officers responded that the Forum needed to discuss how to manage the reserves with the education department. Having been suggested by the Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion, and supported by members, it was agreed that a sub-group of the Schools Forum be established to inform spending proposals and recommendations.

### **Action by: Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion**

- Members agreed they would like an update of the Council structure, showing which officers managed different areas in education, to inform the Forum on who could support them in creating spending proposals.

### **Action by: Head of Education Commission & School Organisation**

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT the Schools Forum

- a) Note the 2022/23 outturn for all the blocks of the DSG as set out in section 1.
- b) Agree that as previously any reserve remaining in the Schools and Central Schools Services block continue to be applied to offset any schools block deficit arising from pressures on Camden schools budgets following any proposed reorganisation - section 1.5.
- c) Note the current 2023/24 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.
- d) Note the most recent grant announcements since February 2023 from the ESFA relating to Afghanistan Resettlement (Education) Grant 2022 to 2023 and the GLA universal grants for Free School Meals for primary pupils from September 2023 (section 6).
- e) Provide any advice or comments to the authority regarding the type of any ongoing support that would assist schools in improving financial planning as described in section 7.6.

**9. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK (HNB): 2022/23 OUTTURN AND POSITION 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 which set out HNB outturn for 2022/23 and an updated HNB position for 2023/24. In addition, the following was outlined:

- Peter Grey would be presenting proposals and recommendations in June 2023 on his work at Camden Council on sustainable financial modelling and contingency planning and included focus groups with head teachers. It was suggested, the final proposals and recommendations could be considered by the Forum.
- In relation to section 4, the SEN2 return, it was noted this data set was the largest return to date because the requirements had recently been broadened by the DfE.

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

- In relation to section 4, members stated they would like Educational Needs Grants (ENGs) to be included in the data, because otherwise the real level of Camden's additional needs was not reflected; the lowering number of educational health and care plans (EHCPs) were attributed to the increase in ENG provision. A significant rise in additional needs had been observed in schools, however the trend was not recorded by the number of EHCP. In response to a member asking if the government was aware of the ENG system in Camden and if it resulted in lesser funding, officers responded that Camden was positively referenced by the government using this system and was acknowledged by the DfE to be ahead of the curve. It was stated that SEN2 did not currently pick up ENG as a pre-statutory intervention, but was expected to in the future.
- Members raised the experience of financial difficulties for Early Years settings due to the lack of SEND budget and increase in the number of SEND children. They also noted the effect of lack of resources for that age group and would carry with children through the key stages. Officers suggested that the proposed sub-group could look into long-term planning and growth in this areas to bring back recommendations to the Forum.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the updated High Needs Block position, as detailed in the report, be noted.

**10. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The following meeting dates for the 2023-24 academic year were noted:

- 13 September 2023
- 1 November 2023
- 5 December 2023
- 6 February 2024
- 4 June 2024

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

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**