

TRAFFORD BOROUGH MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM 7th NOVEMBER 2023

DAY/DATE/TIME	VENUE
TUESDAY 7TH NOVEMBER 2023 MAIN MEETING: 2PM	Committee Rooms 2&3 Trafford Town Hall
Christine Clarkson	Clerk to Schools Forum 0161 912 4404 christine.clarkson@trafford.gov.uk
FORUM MEMBER ATTENDEES:	
Maintained Primary Headteacher Representatives (9) of which 6 attended:	
Wayne Hitchcock	St Mary's, Sale
Alison Kelly	Moorlands
Louise Owens	Broomwood
Darren Morgan	Kings Road Primary
Linda Davison	Holy Family
Kirsten Lyde	Broadheath
Primary Academy Headteacher Representatives (2) of which 1 attended:	
Clare Walmsley	Park Road Academy (Sale)
Maintained Primary Governor Representatives (3) of which 2 attended:	
Karen Smyth	Urmston Primary
Philippa Williamson	All Saints Primary
Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representatives (3) of which 2 attended:	
Nicola Doward (Chair)	Stretford High
Kate Worsley	Blessed Thomas Holford
Academy Secondary Headteacher Representatives (7) of which 3 attended:	
Kieran Done	St Ambrose College
Gemma Tunstall	Wellington
Matt Innes	Sale Grammar
Maintained Special School Headteacher Representative (1) of which 1 attended:	
Sally Judge	Delamere
Academy Special School Headteacher Representative (1) of which 0 attended:	
Trafford Alternative Education Provision Headteacher Representative (1) of which 0 attended:	
Non School Members (7) of which 3 attended:	
Dee McKenzie	Early Years PVI
Roz Morton	NEU
Scott Caplan	NEU

Total members = 34
 Quorum = 14 (40%)
 Number in attendance = 18

OBSERVERS ATTENDEES:	
Zoe Carter-Jones	One Education
Jac Casson	NASUWT
Cindy O'Connor	Brentwood Special School

TMBC OFFICER ATTENDEES:	
Christine Clarkson	Accountant – Childrens' / CLERK
Anne-Marie Steadman	Senior Accountant – Childrens'
Michelle Perry	Senior Accountant – Childrens'
Amy Nield	Finance Manager – Children's
Karen Samples	Director Education, Standards & Performance
Shona Gallagher	Education
Sarah Butters	Head of Education, Places & Vulnerability
Councillor Karina Carter	Trafford Council

APOLOGIES	
Danielle Taylor	Altrincham College
Graeme Bentley	Director of Finance, Trafford Council
Kay Gallimore	NEU
Kate Markham	Well Green Primary
Joanne Daley	Urmston Grammar
Rifat Wall	Urmston Grammar
Tom Johnson	Seymour Park Primary
Bev Norton	Head HR Operations
Debbie Vrlec	Victoria Park Infants
Stephanie Gill	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls
Lynda Thompson	Trafford AEP

1. WELCOME ALL AND APOLOGIES:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The above apologies for absence were accepted.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 20th June 2023

The minutes were approved with the following amendment. Gemma Tunstall attended the meeting – minutes to be amended to include this.

3. MATTERS ARISING

All matters arising were to be covered in the agenda items.

4. FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair.

There has been one expression of interest for position of Chair – Nicola Doward. Members unanimously agreed to the appointment.

There had been no expressions of interest for the position of Vice-Chair. Wayne Hitchcock agreed to put himself forward for the position and was unanimously elected.

Agreed – Nicola Doward be appointed as Chair and Wayne Hitchcock as Vice - Chair.

Forum Membership.

A list of the current membership of Forum was presented. Anne-Marie highlighted there were a number of vacancies for both members and substitutes.

Agreed – Darren Morgan would progress primary vacancies, Nicola Doward secondary vacancies and the clerk the Governor vacancy

5. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) 2023-24 AND 2024-25

Amy Nield presented the current DSG position for 2023-24 (as at Period 4) and provisional allocation for 2024-25. The summary of the current projected 2023-24 is an overspend of £5.257m broken down as follows:

Table 1	DSG Budget 2023/24 £m	Expected Outturn 2023/24 £m	Difference 2023/24 £m
Schools Block (SB)	204.047	204.047	0
Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)	1.503	1.466	(0.037)
High Needs Block (HNB)	40.875	46.168	5.293
Early Years Block (EYB)	17.848	17.848	0
Total	264.273	269.530	5.257

The in-year overspend is on the High Needs Block (HNB); together with the deficit brought forward this makes the projected deficit at the year end £9.4m. As reported to Forum previously, the Local Authority (LA) is working with the Department for Education (DfE) on a deficit management plan for the HNB. Under current regulations any deficit remaining by 2026-27 will revert to the LA which poses a significant risk to the Council.

The provisional DSG allocations for 2024-25 are a detailed below; these will be updated for pupil and high needs data and re-issued in December.

Table 2	2023/24 (£m)	2024/25 (£m)	Change (£m)
Schools Block (SB)	204.047	214.975	10.928
Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)	1.503	1.485	(0.018)
High Needs Block (HNB)	40.875	42.037	1.162
Early Years Block (EYB)	17.848	17.848	0
Total	264.273	276.345	12.072

As in previous years there is a requirement to transition towards the National Funding Formula (NFF) which the LA is complying to.

Amy then went on to present the proposed spend on the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) for 2024-25 based on this years spend and asked Forum to agree this. This is currently £28k more than the initial allocation but will be adjusted when the final allocation is received in December.

CSSB	2024/25 Budget £
Admissions	534,011
Primary Targeted	75,000
School Funding Forum	5,000
Prudential Borrowing	77,000
Gas Tests in Schools	2,824
DfE Licences	239,235
Contingency	(28,331)
ESG Retained Duties	580,000
Total	1,484,739

Forum agreed to the spend on the CSSB for 2024-25 as follows. For 14, Against 0, Abstentions 0.

Amy presented the overall financial position without and with mitigating actions. Even with mitigating actions there is projected deficit of £30m by 2026/27 which is a significant risk to the Council.

Karen Samples went on to present a paper on the work being undertaken to mitigate the overspend on the HNB. She re-iterated the significant pressures on the HNB due to increasing numbers of children with EHC Plans together with increasing complexities of need. The paper provided data on the trend in EHC Plans and split between areas of need. The challenge is how to reverse this trend. She introduced Shona Gallagher who is undertaking work to assist the Council with SEND improvement work. There are a number of areas being worked on including managing parental expectations, improving the effectiveness of data systems and improving commissioning especially joint commissioning with health and social care.

Much discussion and questions took place around this item.

A member asked if the EHC Plans were up to the age of 25 and how do we compare with other LA's in terms of primary secondary and post 16. Shona replied that there is a significant spike in Year 7 in Trafford due to anxieties from parents whose children are transitioning to secondary school. She is looking at why this is.

A member asked if comparisons had been made with other LA's to compare the level of specialist provision to see if we have more or less children in mainstream education as a result of this. Shona replied that this was being looked at both locally and nationally.

A member asked if it was possible to look at the financial viability of supporting mainstream schools to support specialist provision as mainstream schools may be more willing to take children with special needs if it is more financially viable. Karen Samples agreed this could be looked at. It was also asked how Trafford's bandings and top-up rates compare with other LA's and Anne-Marie responded that work had been done on this and they had been found to be comparable.

A member asked where health fitted in with this. Karen Samples responded that Trafford currently do not have a Tri-partite funding arrangement based on a joint decision-making panel. Shona is working towards the setting up a panel with both Health and Social Care to allow improved joint decision making and commissioning, putting the needs of the child first.

It was generally agreed that this is a complex issue and there is not enough funding currently to meet the needs in this area. This is a national issue with 2/3 of LA's projecting deficits on their HNB by 2026-27. There is work by the f40 Group to highlight the issue and lobby Parliament. The challenge is two-fold – how to get additional funding and a better understanding and managing of needs.

Forum noted the reports.

6. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK SUB-GROUP

Michelle presented the minutes of the HNB meeting in March. There has been a recent meeting held on 1st November but the minutes are not yet available.

The meeting discussed the Period 4 monitoring position, Out of Borough placements, complexity of special needs and the LA's Deficit Management Plan. The minutes will be circulated the members when available.

The item also included details of work being undertaken by the f40 Group on highlighting SEN issues and lobbying Parliament for increased funding. It was suggested schools should share this with Governors so they have an understanding of the wide variation in funding levels between LA's and work being undertaken. A member suggested Governors Section be asked to put any f40 presentations/ information on the website.

Action – Minutes of HNB meeting on 1st November be circulated when available. Julie Lawson be asked to add the links to the documents on the Governors website.

7. MAINSTREAM SUB-GROUP AND PROVISIONAL SCHOOL BUDGETS

Michelle presented the Mainstream Sub-Group minutes of the meeting held on 6th October. The meeting discussed the DSG 2023/24 and 2024/25, de-delegation and provisional school's budgets for 2024/25 based on the July announcement of funding. Later that day the DfE announced there had been in error in the July calculation and re-issued provisional allocations; the effect was a lower percentage increase in funding for 2024/25.

Michelle then went onto present provisional school budgets for 2024/25. The main changes to the National Funding formula for 2024/25 are:

- There is a new factor for split sites
- MSAG is being rolled into the formula
- Increase in rates for all the formula factors
- Increase in the Minimum Funding Level (MFL) for schools
- Introduction of a Falling Rolls Factor (Trafford do not qualify for this)
- Prescription that the LA must follow the formula for the Growth factor.
- LA's can set their Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) at between 0.0% and 0.5%.

Trafford is already moving towards the NFF and has set the MFG at 0.5% if this remains to be affordable once the APT and allocations are received in December. Provisional school budgets based on the updated announcement in funding shows the majority of schools receiving an increase of around 1.5% to 1.6% in funding from 2023/24 with 32 schools at MFL levels of funding and 10 schools receiving MFG. School budgets will be revised in December following updated DSG allocations based on October 2023 Census data.

Roz Morton (NEU) said that the pay review bodies had based their settlement discussions on the July announcement of funding; the DfE error had resulted in reduced levels of funding. The Joint Unions continue to lobby government for increased levels of funding for schools and encourage everyone to lobby MP's to do the same.

Forum noted the minutes and Provisional School Budgets for 2024/25.

8. DE-DELEGATION

Amy presented a report which outlined the proposed items for de-delegation as below, asking if schools wished to continue to de-delegate these items in 2024-25. Amounts will be agreed at January Forum when the position on likely amounts spent this year are available.

De-delegated budget monitoring	Carried forward in reserves (£)	Budget 22/23 (£)	Expected outturn 22/23 (£)
Behaviour Support Services	0	52,568	52,568
Licences/Subscriptions	150	0	0
Staff costs supply cover – Maternity	128,525	281,550	281,550
Staff costs supply cover - Union duties	24,920	54,027	54,027
Redundancy	553,322	220	220
Total	706,926	388,365	388,365

Only members in maintained schools from the relevant sectors to vote on this.

The following was agreed for de-delegation.

Behaviour Support (Primary) – Agreed 8, Against 0, Abstentions 0

Licences/Subscriptions(Primary and Secondary)– Agreed 10, Against 0, Abstentions 0

Supply cover – Maternity (Primary) – Agreed 8, Against 0, Abstentions 0

Supply cover – Union/ duties – Agreed 8, Against 0, Abstentions 0

Redundancy (Primary and Secondary) – Agreed 8, Against 0, Abstentions 0

9. SEN PROTECTION POT

This item is an update on an action from June Forum where a member asked if the SEN Protection Pot included Out of Borough pupils. It was confirmed that this was the case and the paper presented the latest position on allocations to schools from the SEN Protection Pot.

Forum noted the report.

10.GROWTH FUND

For 2023-24 £0.770m from the Growth Fund was used to fund the shortfall in the mainstream funding formula. Together with the allocation for this year (£1.584m) and infant class size spend (£0.074m) this makes total spend of £2.428m leaving a balance of only £0.376m in the Fund. This is unsustainable going forward and the item will be taken to the Mainstream Sub-Group to consider options for future rates to be used for allocations to schools. Trafford are unlikely to get any DSG funding from the Falling Rolls Factor in the National Funding Formula.

Action – The Growth Fund position and future rates for allocation be referred to the next Mainstream Sub-Group.

11.SPECIAL SCHOOL BUDGETS

Anne-Marie presented a paper taken to the High Needs sub group. Indicative Special school budgets will be discussed at the Special school meeting on 6th December. LA's are able to set the MFG at between 0.0% to 0.5%; Trafford are likely to adopt an MFG level of 0.5%. As discussed previously all efforts are being made to keep as many pupils as possible in Trafford special schools.

Forum noted the report.

12. REVIEW OF SCHOOLS SURPLUS BALANCES 2022/23

This item follows discussion at June Forum. Anne-Marie presented a review of excess surplus balances from those schools meeting the criteria at March 2023 (balances in excess of 8% primary and 5% secondary of school budget share). The report provided school's details of proposed use of these balances. She outlined that Sale High have a high balance because they have been accumulating funds for a new build project. Trafford Forum do not currently have a clawback scheme for reclaiming excess balances from school.

Forum noted the report

13. EARLY YEARS – EXTENSION OF OFFER TO 2 YEAR OLDS

Anne-Marie outlined details of a consultation received from the DfE in July on the proposed funding method for the extension of the Early Years offer as detailed below.

- From April 2024 all working parents of 2 year olds can access 15 hours free entitlement.
- From September 2024 – extension from 9 months to 2 years for 15 hours
- From April 2025 – all working parents of 9 months to 3 year olds can access 30 hours free entitlement.

The DfE proposes funding on the same formula basis as the current 3-4 year olds. The LA has also received grant funding to assist in the implementation of this. The outcome of the consultation and indicative hourly rates for 2024/25 are expected later this month. The indicative hourly rates shown in the consultation document indicate a potential 5p reduction in the 2 year old hourly rate from 2023-24.

Forum noted the report.

14. SCHOOL SUFFICIENCY

This item follows a presentation at March Forum on School Places Planning and was presented by Sarah Butters. Overall, the current planning shows there are sufficient Primary school places for main admissions at September 2024 but insufficient places in some areas in secondary school. In-year school admission places shows there is medium risk of insufficient places in some areas in both sectors. She then went on to provide more detail at individual area level with pressures mainly showing in the upper year group for primary and most year groups for secondary.

It was agreed that this was useful information for all schools and the data should be presented to the Primary and Secondary Heads Groups.

Action - Forum agreed this presentation by taken to the next Primary and Secondary Heads Groups.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Staff Pay Awards.

Michelle outlined that, at the request of a Forum member, there had been a 'round robin' across schools asking about the budgetary impact of the NJC pay award (mainstream and academy). Currently there had been 48 responses with 40 showing no major impact and 8 showing some impact.

The meeting closed at 15.45.

**Date of the next Funding Forum meeting:
Tuesday 16th January 2024 at 2pm – Trafford Town Hall**