

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA EDUCATION BOARD/ SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 7 December 2016 at 8.15am The Tickfield Centre.

Present:

Tim Barrett
Robin Bevan
Lisa Clark
Neil Houchen
Jim Johnson
Anthony McGarel
June Mitchell
Jackie Mullan
David Parker
Lionel Pryor
Stuart Reynolds
Maurice Sweeting
Vicky Wright

Category:

Primary Head
Academy Head
Academy Head
Academy Head
Primary Head
14/19 sector
Special Head
Academy Special Head
Academy Governor
Primary Governor
Secondary Head
Academy Governor
Early Years providers

School:

Temple Sutton Primary
Southend High for Boys
Hamstel Infant
Eastwood Academy
Edwards Hall Primary
South Essex College
St Nicholas Special
St Christopher Special
Shoeburyness High
Fairways Primary
Futures Community College
Hinguar Primary

In attendance:

Simon Leftley
Ian Ambrose
Paul Grout
Elaine Hammans (EH)
Christine Hickey
Ian McFee (IM)
Brin Martin (BM)
Mike Singleton
George Crowe (GC)

Director for People
Corporate Services Directorate
Corporate Services Directorate
People Directorate
Corporate Services Directorate
People Directorate
People Directorate
People Directorate
Independent Clerk

The Clerk in the chair

Action

1. Apologies for absence, substitutions and introductions

Apologies for absence were received from Jerry Glazier (Trade Unions), Paul Hayman (Westcliff High for Girls), Margaret Rimmer (Kingsdown Special School, substituted by June Mitchell) and Jane Youdale (Early Years providers).

Apologies for absence had also been received from Tim Coulson, the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Apologies for late arrival were received from Robin Bevan (Southend High for Boys) who arrived at 9.50am).

2. Membership

The up-to-date list of members was tabled at the meeting and it was noted that:

- Vicky Wright had been returned as an early years representative;
- Anthony McGarel was the new 14/19 sector representative;
- Jackie Mullan was the representative of academy special schools;

- Maurice Sweeting had been the only nomination to fill the vacancy for a primary academy governor;
- two nominations had been received to fill the vacancy caused by the end of the term of office of Paul Hayman as a representative of secondary academies and that a ballot was, therefore, taking place;
- no nominations had been received to fill the two vacancies for academy primary schools (school representatives) but that a late nomination had been received from Lisa Clark;
- no nominations had been received to fill the two vacancies for maintained primary schools (one governor and one school representative);
- there were still Pupil Referral Unit (Seabrook College) and Alternative Provision Academy representative vacancies to be filled.

At the end of the meeting it was noted that Joseph Parsad, a governor representative of secondary academies (St Thomas More High School) had not attended a meeting since the 13 January 2016 Schools Forum meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the current membership situation be noted.
2. That the late nomination from Lisa Clark be accepted.
3. That further request for nominations be sought to fill the vacancies for maintained primary schools and primary academies. **GC**
4. That the Clerk be asked to write to Joseph Parsad to ask him whether he wished to continue to be a member. **GC**

3. Election of Chair

Resolved: That Maurice Sweeting be elected Chair until the first meeting of the 2018/19 academic year.

Maurice Sweeting in the chair

4. Election of Vice-Chair

In his absence, members were informed that Robin Bevan was content to be re-elected as Vice-Chair if members wished him to do so.

Resolved: That Robin Bevan be elected Vice-Chair until the first meeting of the 2018/19 academic year.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2016 were received.

Resolved: That the minutes be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

6. Matters arising from the minutes

(a) Funding for Nurture bases (minute 6(c) refers)

Members were reminded that information had been requested on the amounts of funding that individual schools had received for their nurture bases. A paper had previously been circulated that advised that, in 2014/15 provision was split into 3 areas, eastern, western, and central and that each had a budget of £161k, a total budget of £483k. A breakdown was included in the paper of how the budget had been spent in each of the three areas.

A breakdown was also provided on the expenditure in 2015/16 and it was particularly noted that central schools that needed to retain some of the nurture pump priming resources for one more transition year, had received funds to give time to plan for 2016/17.

In answer to questions members were advised that:

- the funding was included in the accounts under Centrally Retained Funding;
- it was still being used for primary nurture;
- there had been discussions with the relevant schools about the allocation of the 2016/17 funding;
- a breakdown of the allocated funding would be provided at the next meeting. **IA/IM**

With regard to the 2015/16 funding, Tom Barrett and Lisa Clark said that their schools had asked for an allocation of the funding for their schools but had not received any and that they had not taken part in any discussions. Members agreed that the allocation of the funding should be open and transparent and Simon Leftley commented that it appeared that something may have gone wrong. He said that discussions would take place before the next meeting. **IA/IM**

(b) Early Years National Funding Formula (minute 10 refers)

Members were informed that it appeared that funding would be in line with the projections in the report to the last meeting. A report would be submitted to the next meeting setting out the proposed changes. **EH**

(a) Feedback on Service Level Agreements with Seabrook College (minute 11 refers)

Brin Martin reported that information was still being sought from the Department for Education (DfE) to enable the proposed contract with Parallel Learning Trust to be completed.

7. Summary action sheet

The Forum received the Summary Action Sheet. It included items that had been added arising from the last meeting and Mike Singleton informed members of progress in the implementation of the decisions.

SCHOOLS FORUM MATTERS

8. Schools Budgets 2016/17 and 2017/18

Ian Ambrose presented his report that updated members on the anticipated outturn for the 2016/17 Schools Budget, presented a draft 2017/18 Schools Budget and outlined some expected future financial pressures. It was noted that the overall position for the 2016/17 Budget indicated that there would be an overspend of £218k against the budgeted £140.9m. This would need to be met from Direct Schools Grant (DSG) balances

brought forward from 2015/16. £571k would remain in reserves to support the 2017/18 Schools Budget. Appendix 1 to the report summarised the breakdown of the DSG Schools Budget.

Appendix 2 set out the draft 2017/18 Budget and the report outlined the bases for the funding blocks and the anticipated income. It was noted that:

- the Budget was subject to change once the DfE data release was provided to the Council in late December;
- the overall position was an in-year deficit of £476,468 which would be drawn from the DSG reserves.

The report also set out the criteria for applying for the disapplication of the Minimum Funding Guarantee, information that had been requested at the October meeting (minute 6(a) refers). It was noted that a request for disapplication may be considered where there had been ‘significant change in a school’s circumstances or pupil numbers’ that would lead to inappropriate levels of protection. Examples of previously approved disapplication requests were provided and it was noted that there was no reasonable basis on which to request MFG disapplication for Southend for 2017/18.

Resolved:

1. That, in relation to 2016/17:
 - The anticipated outturn for the 2016/17 Schools Budget and the anticipated carry forward to 2017/18 be unanimously accepted.
2. That, in relation to 2017/18 the following be unanimously accepted:
 - The indicative draft Schools Budget for 2017/18, based on maintaining the current Schools Funding Formula be noted.
 - The de-delegation of funding back to the Local Authority for the continuance of the following services be agreed-
 - Behavioural Support;
 - Licences and Subscriptions;
 - Staff costs (trade union duties).
 - The continuation of the centrally retained services be agreed.
 - The continuation of the funding of the growth fund to support schools that are required to provide extra places to meet basic need within the authority be agreed.
 - The ESG retained rate funding be agreed to be centrally held to continue to fund the costs of the local authority’s role in supporting the provision of excellent education for all children of compulsory school age.
 - Minor adjustments to the basic entitlement allocations once the funding formula data is available in December be approved in principle.
 - The various future financial pressures anticipated to affect the Schools Budget be noted.

9. Specialist places and consultation on changes to High Needs top-up funding

Whilst presenting his report, Ian McFee apologised for it being tabled. It provided an update on:

- pressures on the High Needs Block and special school places;
- the progress of conversions and timeliness of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs);
- the consultation on proposed changes to funding High Needs top-ups.

The report set out the Southend context which has a relatively high number of pupils with statements/ EHCPs and a high proportion of pupils in specialist provision but relatively few in high cost independent placements. It also has a relatively small High Needs Block. A number of Southend special schools are full and over-capacity and the population in Southend is set to increase over the next 5 years. There was no way in which the capacity could be increased further without significant capital cost.

The report explained the way places were to be allocated to ensure that available places would be allocated to those with the greatest need for specialist provision.

It also provided the information requested at the last meeting (minute 13(a)) about how many children meet the criteria for attendance at special schools but were not in one, how many were on the waiting list for September 2017 and the numbers of EHCPs that had not been issued after 26 weeks. The changes that had been implemented to enable the 20-week target for the issue of EHCPs to be met were outlined.

Appendix 1 to the report was the consultation document on the proposed changes to how High Needs top-up funding is passed to maintained schools. It also looked at a possible way of releasing top-up funding to schools without the need for an EHCP needs assessment.

In answer to questions/comments it was noted that:

- the Eastern Region Consortium was trying to work out a protocol/agreement on the placing of children in special places in schools in other LA's areas;
- the delay in issuing EHCPs is due to under-capacity at the LA and health services. The 20 weeks target is now included in contracts and the health services were attempting to recruit paediatricians;
- the LA is currently transferring money to schools as soon as it is agreed to issue the EHCP to minimise impact of LA delays;
- the LA was now becoming aware of children with special needs around the age of 2 so that there would be no delay in the funding for special needs when they enter school;
- having a learning support assistant for 25 hours is not necessarily the best way of allocating funding to support children so the consultation proposes that hours are no longer specified in EHCPs;
- in order for parents to better understand what the needs of their children are and how they will be met, provision will be described in more detail and meetings will be held with them;
- some issues relating to the proposed arrangements would be better considered in more detail by the Vulnerable Learners sub-group of the Education Board.

Members commented as follows:

- the creation of free school places in other LAs to educate those children who had traditionally been placed in high cost out-of-LA establishments could mean that more children will be placed in Southend special schools;
- there is a national trend for more parents to request special school places for their children;
- the number of pupils in Southend special schools from outside the LA's area is falling;
- a full year of special needs schooling can be lost by some children due to the delays in issuing EHCPs. The delay may also be hiding a greater need than is currently known;
- consideration should be given to whether priority should initially be given to new applications rather than conversions from statements ;
- it is vital that appropriate staffing is available to support special needs children in mainstream schools, especially those with a high proportion of such children. Assessments must be completed earlier and be really rigorous;
- it is a pity that the consultation document on top-up funding has already gone to schools because there is the danger that some schools will only look at and comment on their funding figures;
- there would be the need for transitional arrangements when the new funding system is introduced;

- whilst it was important for SOPHA and SOSHA to consider the consultation document, this should not prevent the matter being considered at the Forum's next meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted and that all schools be encouraged to respond to the consultation.

EDUCATION BOARD MATTERS

10. Draft note of the initial meeting of the School Performance Sub Group

Brin Martin presented his report that had previously been circulated. It updated members on the progress made and activity of the School Performance Sub Group (SPSG) of the Education Board.

The report outlined the discussions which had been on:

- the operation of the sub-group;
- school performance;
- the draft School Performance Strategy;
- School Performance Officers (SPOs).

During the presentation of the report it was particularly noted that:

- Neil Houchen had been elected Chair and Jim Johnson was the Vice-Chair;
- the judgements of the sub-group on schools had, in most cases, matched those of Ofsted;
- SPOs were officers of the LA who report back to the sub-group;
- the School Performance Strategy was being redrafted taking account of the feedback at the sub-group meeting and subsequent comments.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the distribution of the minutes be restricted to full members of Education Board.
3. That the proposed actions be approved and implemented.

11. Draft notes on the 'audit' of the Education Board

Brin Martin's report that had previously been circulated and it was presented by him. It set out the summary of the findings which, the Board was informed, would be easy to implement.

It was noted that the formal 'audit' report had yet been received but that it would be generally very positive.

Resolved:

1. That the findings of the audit be noted.
2. That, following the publication of the management letter, it be ensured that the recommendations are built into the formal review of the first year of implementation (March 2017).

3. That the recommendations be approved and implemented in full.

12. High level summary of the OFSTED annual report of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2015/16; and the associated Education and Skills Annual Report, regional information pack: East of England

Brin Martin tabled and presented his paper that had previously been circulated and which informed members of the relative performance of schools and settings within Southend as referenced in the above reports, one national and one regional.

The report set out the direct references to Southend on Sea in the reports and the commentary advised that:

- The significantly positive references to the performance of schools in Southend on Sea is both a credit to and testament of the hard work of schools over the last year.
- The notable performances referenced in the report rightly indicates the strength within the school system.
- Southend Council will continue to work with and support all schools through the Education Board and SPSG.
- Narrowing the gap in performance remains a high priority for schools and the Council alike.

Resolved:

1. That the strong performance of schools in Southend nationally and regionally be recognised.
2. That the School Community Board be formally recognised and congratulated on this achievement.
3. That the SPSG take into account the areas identified in relation to narrowing the gap in determining support priorities for the future.

13. Standard items

(a) Area-based review of Post-16 and Further Education provision

Brin Martin advised members that he had attended a meeting earlier that week at which a presentation was made by the colleges. He referred to there being emerging differences in approach and these were outlined.

(b) Other standard items

There was nothing further to report at this meeting on the following standard items:

- SEND area inspection progress.
- Ofsted Common Inspection Framework (CIF) Action Plan.
- Local Authority School Improvement inspection.

14. Any other business

(a) English as an additional Language (EAL) funding

Robin Bevan referred to members having previously raised questions about the relative levels of EAL funding received by schools. He also referred to Appendix 2 to the report considered in minute 8 above showing that there continued to be differences in such funding levels. He said that he was not sure that all headteachers understood that their pupil census returns were effectively an invoice to the LA. He suggested that there should be a clarification of the basis for concerns about the accuracy of all returns in respect of EAL funding.

In response to a question from the Chair about whether an audit of the returns could be carried out, Ian Ambrose said that he would look into the possibility. Brin Martin suggested that a letter could be sent to all schools pointing out the necessity of accurate returns and Neil Houchen suggested that the letter should set out the procedure and basis for collating the data. **IA/BM**

(b) Secondary School places

Simon Leftley reported that there were sufficient places in secondary schools in Southend for the projected secondary pupil population up to the 2018/19 academic year. However, plans need to be put in place to ensure that there would be a sufficient number of places beyond that. He indicated that an item would be included on the agenda for the next Education Board meeting on 18 January 2017 to enable the issue to start to be addressed. **BM**

(c) Mike Singleton/George Crowe

The chair reported that, as Mike Singleton's contract with the LA would shortly be ending, this would be his last meeting of the Education Board/Schools Forum.

He also mentioned that George Crowe had decided to stand down as the Clerk and that the role would be undertaken by the LA's democratic services section.

To show their appreciation of their service by these officers, members gave a round of applause.

15. Items for next meeting

The following items were identified for inclusion on the agenda:

- 2017/18 Schools Budget;
- Funding of nurture bases;
- Early Years National Funding Formula;
- Secondary school pupil places;
- Launch of the Ambitions document;
- Dates for meetings in 2017/18 academic year;

16. Dates of future meetings

Members were reminded that it had been agreed that meetings would be held on the following Wednesdays at 8.15am at the Tickfield Centre:

- 18 January 2017;

- 15 March 2017;
- 7 June 2017.

The meeting ended at 10.15am.