

Minutes of Schools Forum Meeting held on 13th July 2017 at The Avenue Centre, Reading

Present: Peter Kayes - Governor of Ridgeway (Chair)
 Charles Clare - Head of Geoffrey Field Juniors (Vice Chair)
 Jo Budge - Head of Blagdon Nursery
 Richard Rolfe - Governor of Micklands
 Ali McNamara - Trades Unions
 Justine McMinn - Head of EP Collier
 John Cosgrove - Head of Christ the King
 Leo Gilbert - Head of Reading Girls
 Simon Uttley - Head of Blessed Hugh
 Rachel Cave - Head of Highdown
 Isabel Sandy - Business Manager of Kendrick
 Dorothy Company - Business Manager of Highdown
 Mandy Wilton - Head of Cranbury
 Ita McGullion - PVI Nursery rep

RBC: Chris Kiernan - Head of Education
 Steven Davies - Principal Education and Schools Accountant
 Simon McKenzie - Interim SEN Manager

Notes: Rhiannon Schoepe

Apologies: Jean Read - Nursery Governor
 Yvonne Jackson - Head of Wilson
 Tonia Crossman - Head of Emmer Green
 Joanne Harper - UTC

STANDING ITEMS

1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	PK welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.	
2.	Minutes of the meeting held on 18th May 2017	
	The minutes for the meeting held on 18 th May were agreed. CK clarified the cost of the school improvement service which was approved at £234,000 from the de-delegation. The actual amount should be £264,000*. This will be in full to 31/03/17 and beyond. Sue Briggs to be funded from the high needs block. An explanation will be circulated by SD next week to schools forum on the school improvement de-delegation. RC raised the issue of the Highdown/Chilton Edge pupil submissions. She will bring the issue to tonight's meeting to clarify during item 5. (* After the meeting the correct amount was reported to be £233k)	
3.	Matters Arising from the Minutes/ School Forum and Membership	
	CK apologised that he had not brought a paper identifying how the School Improvement Service was using the de-delegated budget agreed at the January meeting. He confirmed he had details of how the allocation was being used and this would be confirmed by e-mail after the meeting.	

	<p>It was noted that Charles Clare was retiring at the end of the school year and that therefore new Vice Chair would need to be appointed for Schools Forum for the 2017-18 school year. After a short discussion it was decided to elect the Vice Chair, and John Cosgrove was elected.</p> <p>There are three vacancies remaining.</p> <p>Sue Bourne will be leaving from The Avenue.</p>	
4.	DSG Budget Monitoring 2017/18	
	<p>SD presented.</p> <p>Referring to Appendix 1, the lines have been numbered to correspond with the report. SD spoke through the below points:</p> <p>6.2.1 refers to the de-delegations (lines 1-5). Schools Forum Members to understand that any changes regarding 17/18 are shown here.</p> <p>6.2.2 refers to Special Needs & High Needs Block (lines 6-13). This spend will continue to be reviewed throughout 17/18.</p> <p>6.2.3 refers to Early Years (lines 14 & 26). A review on Central Spend is taking place and the 30 hr project will be starting September 17. These will be reported back on at the December meeting. As agreed with Schools Forum, the 16/17 underspend of 200k will be kept separate from High Needs block until further discussion.</p> <p>6.2.4 refers to Schools Retained Block. Any under/over spend will be shown in lines 15 - 18.</p> <p>6.2.5 refers to Growth fund (line 19). The Growth Fund is 900k for 17/18 and will cover any additional requests such as an additional class at Highdown.</p> <p>6.2.6 refers to any other adjustments and c/fwds through the year (lines 27 & 28). DSG allocation is higher than notified due to £3.2m c/fwd.</p> <p>Overall there is a forecasted pressure of 3.5m on the DSG due to c/f from 16/17 & pressure on High Needs Block.</p> <p>6.4 refers to Equal Pay. A pre hearing discussion with Legal is planned for August. The current liability for this is 1.5m. There is no timeline for Equal Pay so far and any provisions will be c/f. If nothing is paid out, this will be put back into the Schools Block.</p> <p>Comment from PK. The de-delegation costs for the Trade Union Facilities agreement spoken about at the January meeting was 50k overall not per school. Three schools have bought back into the de-delegation scheme since the meeting. It was suggested that anyone wanting more details should contact the Trade Union rep or RBC officers.</p>	

5.	Application For Financial Support	
	<p>PK vacated the Chair which was taken by CC.</p> <p>Three years ago Schools Forum agreed to establish a fund for extra financial support for schools facing financial difficulty. This fund is part of the de-delegations agreed at the January 2017 meeting and relates to support for one off costs incurred by schools, for example incurring redundancy costs when they need to restructure to reduce their overall expenditure. Bids for this are made through Schools Forum.</p> <p>LG made a request from Reading Girls School for restructuring costs (50k during 17/18). There will be financial support from sponsors in September on converting to Academy (not guaranteed as of yet). This would use up all funds allocated to this 'pot'. Reading Girls ticks all boxes for the application criteria as agreed in point 5.</p> <p>If the fund is unspent at the end of the financial year, Schools Forum can approve a move any remaining balance to another 'pot'. However, if the funding is denied RBC would pick up deficit on academy conversion. No other schools have applied for financial support. Reading Girls School is currently in special measures and has an academy order, this means the LA cannot supply a loan to the school.</p> <p>A vote was held and unanimous agreement for the requested funding was reached.</p> <p>As agreed at the May meeting, RC raised again the issue of extra pupil submissions at Highdown from Chilton Edge. There were 24 additional children at Highdown since Easter 2017 and no additional funding had been received as they were not included in the October 2016 census. Due to the financial year difference for Academies funding would not come from DfE until September 2018. Funding was discussed as per option A of Growth Fund Review (October 2016). Highdown had absorbed the additional costs since Easter but requested extra funds from September '17 until funding is received in September '18.</p> <p>Some members expressed that others schools who received unplanned growth didn't receive funds and what makes Highdown situation any different.</p> <p>A vote was held and agreement to the principal of funding was reached. Highdown and SD to review numbers in the Autumn term and come to an agreement. SD will review the DFE funding guidance to see if additional funding should be allowed and then report back any agreement/information in October School forum.</p>	

	<p>Chilton Edge School will not be closing.</p> <p>It was discussed that scenario planning should be recommended for all primary schools regarding any significant extra costs and the impact on the growth fund.</p>	
6.	Schools Funding - Formula 2018-19	
	<p>SD presented.</p> <p>It was requested at the March Schools Forum that a Funding Formula Working Group should come together to review funding. The group met on 14th & 29th June. They looked at current & proposed formulas as outlined in point 5.2.</p> <p>The transition towards national formula was agreed. The working group agreed five main questions to be asked in a consultation with schools in September, for DFE approval (point 6.2). At the October Schools Forum, SD will report back and ask for Schools Forum’s views on any proposed changes. The Local Authority will have the final decision as to the outcome of the formula, which would then have to be sent for DFE approval.</p> <p>The formula had not been reviewed for some time due to the upcoming changes. Schools Forum members will be able to see the impact of the proposed changes as part of the consultation. The working party also looked at IDACI and how it would affect all schools.</p> <p>A vote was held in regards to the questions and agreement was reached.</p>	
7.	DSG Expenditure Benchmarking Report	
	<p>CK presenting</p> <p>The paper examined the 16/17 budget for the DSG and the grant allocations for 17/18.</p> <p>A correction was made to point 4; the number of pupils receiving DSG should read 18,731.</p> <p>The High Needs block has been overspending on its budget. The report shows comparisons in regards to expenditure.</p> <p>Appendix 1:</p> <p>Sheet 1 shows a comparison between 16/17 school budgets and central spend for Reading and it’s statistical and South East neighbours. The statistical neighbours (SNs) are close. Reading is the median in comparison to statistical neighbours and below South Eastern neighbours.</p> <p>Sheet 2 shows a comparison between 17/18 grant allocations for</p>	

	<p>Reading, SNs and South East neighbours. The total allocation of Schools block & HN block. SB% of DSG = 73%, lower than median. More expenditure in Early Years and High Needs. RBC need to control High Needs expenditure going forwards (point 5.14).</p> <p>Sheet 3 shows a comparison of 16/17 High Needs expenditure for Reading, SNs and South East neighbours. Top up funding is higher in Reading than other areas at 41.9% of HN Block (5.16). Low budget for independent providers (5.17). Therefore expenditure on EHCP at earlier stages than other authorities. (5.18 & 5.19).</p> <p>There is a need for a full analysis of the DSG budget especially in regards to overspending and there should be a plan in place to reduce expenditure.</p> <p>RBC should look to use personal budget in areas other than LSA. EHCPs had seen increased costs in Reading since the change from Statements.</p> <p>Point 6 refers to the working group created in 2015. Recommendations were made with lack of outcome.</p> <p>It was agreed that a Schools Forum working group is to look at expenditure on High Needs block and report back with proposals to reduce overspend. Volunteers for this are Mandy Wilton, Justine McMinn, John Cosgrove and Leo Gilbert who will work alongside the parent’s forum.</p>	
8.	SEN Banding for Primary and Secondary Schools	
	<p>SM presenting</p> <p>A change in the SEN banding system for top up funding was presented. Schools Forum looked at how to transition over to this by April '18 with a pilot programme starting in Autumn 2017.</p> <p>The proposed funding descriptions can be found in Appendix A. These will be refined if necessary before April '18.</p> <p>A vote was held in regards to moving towards the new banding system and this was supported by all.</p> <p>SM can be contacted with any queries.</p>	
9.	Agenda Items For Future Meeting	
	<p>Members were reminded to let the Chair of RBC Officers know if there were any items they wanted included on the agenda for the October meeting.</p> <p>The next meeting will be held 19th October 2017 at The Avenue Centre but in a different meeting room (TBC).</p>	
10.	Any Other Business	

	A vote of thanks was given to Charles Clare for his contribution as Vice-Chair to School Forum and he was wished well for his retirement. There was no other business.	
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