

HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM MINUTES

Civic Centre, Committee Room 6

Present

Headteacher Members	Mr. Andrew Wilcock, Bishop Ramsey (Chair) (AW) Dr. Philip Rutter (Breakspear Junior) (PR) Ms. Sue Pryor, Swakeleys School, (SP) Ms. Tricia Black, Chantry (TB) Mr. Robert Lobatto, Barnill (RL) Mrs. Ann Breslin-Bowen, Hillingdon Primary (ABB)
Governor Members	Mr. Phil Haigh, Cherry Lane Primary and Grangewood Special (PH) Mr. Peter Ryerson, Guru Nanak Secondary (Vice Chair) (PRy) Mr. Tony Eginton, Minet Nursery and Infant and Hillside Junior (TE) Mr. Jim Edgecombe, Rosedale College and Willows Special (JRE) Ms. Jo Palmer, Newnham Infant School and Hillside Infant and Junior Schools (JP)
Other Representatives	Mrs. Barbara Glen, Breakspear Junior (BG) Ms. Leonora Smith, Barnhill Community High (LS) Mr. Richard Burton, Meadow (RB) (<i>arrived at 5.25 pm</i>)
Observers	Ms. Elaine Caffary, CEYS (EC) Ms. Alison Booth CEYS (A.Bo)
Also Present	Mr. Chris Spencer, Director of Education and Childrens' Services, LA (CS) (<i>left at 6.00 pm</i>) Ms. Kamla Jassal, Schools Finance Manager, LA, (KJ) Mr. I. Watters, Schools Finance LA (IW) Mr. Bradley Soo, Consultant Advisor to Early Years/ Schools Finance Team (for consultation paper only) LA, (BS) (<i>arrived at 5.30 p.m.</i>) Ms. G. Ayling, ECS Finance, LA, (GA) Ms. Alison Moore, Senior School Improvement Officer LA (AM) (<i>arrived at 5.15 p.m.</i>) Ms. Pauline Nixon, For DSG Funding Proposals, LA (PN) Ms. Sarah Durner, Food in Schools Team (SD) (<i>left at 5.55 pm</i>) Mr. D. Kidner, Hillingdon Grid for Learning (DK) Mr. D. Stevens, Hillingdon Grid for Learning (DS) Mr. D. Thorpe, ECS Extended Services LA, (DT) (<i>left at 6.45 p.m.</i>)
Apologies	Mrs. Patsy Crowley (PC) Belmore Primary Ms. Ludmila Morris, McMillan (LM) Mr. Peter Sale, Hillingdon Training (PS) Ms. Sarah Harty, Head of Resources, Policy and Performance, LA (SH) Mr. Amar Barot, Senior Finance Manager, LA (ABa)

The meeting was quorate

Mr. Wilcock opened the meeting and gave a special welcome to Mr. D. Kidner and Mr. D. Stevens (representing Hillingdon Grid for Learning), Mr. D. Thorpe (representing ECS Extended Services) and Ms. S. Durner (representing Food in Schools Team).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr. Peter Sale, Mrs. Patsy Crowley, Mrs. Ludmila Morris, Ms. Sarah Harty and Mr. Amar Barot.

As Mr. Peter Sale had not attended a Schools Forum since March 2009, CS would check, on behalf of Schools Forum, whether in view of his changed role he would be attending future meetings.

CS to contact PS

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING (Paper 1)

The Minutes of the last meeting, held on 9 December 2009 had been circulated. These were accepted and signed as a true record of the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 9 DECEMBER 2009

Item 6 – Key Issues for the Budget Consultation – Full details of the SLA Planned Changes November 2009 formed part of the final Consultation Document which had been distributed.

- *TYST* – The data requested had been circulated
- *Single Funding Formula Termly Count* – This had only been a suggested inclusion. It was also noted that Code of Conduct should read Code of Practice (top of p.4 Minutes of 9 December 2009).
- *Details of Funds Awarded via the Extended Schools Initiative* – A paper on Extended Schools would be tabled at a future meeting. **Future Agenda Item**

Item 7 – Budget Consultation Paper – AW had written to DCSF regarding FMSiS. A response was still awaited. **AW to advise when reply received**

4. DECLARATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS (For Future Meetings)

No declarations made.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declarations made.

6. SCHOOL FUNDING 2010 – 2011 (DECISIONS FOR CABINET, CEL, CONSULTATION REONSES) (Paper 2)

AW outlined the way he proposed taking the meeting through the various decisions required in the Consultation Document. Additional papers were tabled at the meeting and it was requested that if further questions arose from these papers, an e-mail should be sent to the Finance Team and the Chair should be copied in. Any outstanding matters would then be covered at the March meeting and if further information is requested then KJ would e-mail all members of SF with any additional information .

In the first instance members were asked to consider the proposal that LA hold a contingent sum of money to support expanding schools. This would mean LA would be temporarily in breach of the CEL by an estimated £0.139m as a result of this contingency. LA were requesting a “technical breach” of the CEL in respect of this item.

From the 15 responses received from individual schools and the responses from Primary Forum and HASH, 100% were in favour of the proposal.

It was proposed by Mr. Peter Ryerson and seconded by Mr. Phil Haigh that Schools Forum also approve this request. On a show of hands, 14 members were in favour of the proposal, there was no opposition and no abstentions.

Schools Forum agreed to support the request of LA for a “technical breach” of the CEL by an estimated £0.139m.

In view of the above decision, Schools Forum would now only act in an advisory capacity regarding the Schools Procurement Manager, the TYST Practitioner and Local Leaders in Education project as there would be no breach of the CEL.

In total, 24 responses had been received (1 from PVI, 12 Primary, 5 Secondary, 3 Specials, Primary Forum, HASH and HIP)

Schools Procurement Manager: The suggestion for this appointment came from presentation made at a Heads' Termly Meeting when it was considered efficiencies could be achieved through collective purchasing. Utilities had been identified as one area where, if purchased centrally, significant savings might be achieved. Some members of Forum thought this was already in place. LA would retain resources to finance this appointment.

TYST Practitioner: There had been very little response regarding this post, although the service was being used by many secondary schools. One member felt there would be benefits from expanding the facility. LA would retain resources to finance this appointment.

Local Leaders in Education: LLE complements the work of Schools Improvement Service and Additional Skills Teachers. It provides additional resources and capacity in assisting schools to move from satisfactory to good/good to outstanding. LA would retain resources to finance this project.

	Result from Responses				Voting at Schools Forum			Action
	Total Support	Total Not Support	Primary Forum	HASH	Total Support	Total Not Support	Abstentions	
Schools Procurement Manager	2	8	Do not Support	Support	10	2	2	SF gave support
TYST Practitioner	4	0		Support	13	0	1	SF gave support
Local Leaders in Education	8	0	Support	Support	12	0	2	SF gave support

(RB joined the meeting at this point, increasing the number of voting members from 14 to 15)

Introduction of Early Years Single Funding Formula (SFF). The final decision regarding the introduction of SFF would be taken by the Director of Children's Services, but the views of Schools Forum would be taken into consideration.

Primary Forum was opposed to the introduction this year as it felt there were too many issues still to be resolved. ABo, a member of the SFF Technical Group pointed out the rationale for SFF being introduced in 2010 rather than 2011 was that

- the LA had been working with Heads on SFF since 2007
- in the light of unknown funding in future years, it was better to work within a known environment
- the formula had been based on last year's figure
- there was a transition mechanism which would give some schools a measure of phased reduction in funding
- some PVIs were working on a shoestring budget

EC also pointed out that within the PVI sector, costs incurred for CRB checks were high due to the increased numbers of staff employed. She also commented that if SFF was not adopted at this point, some PVI nurseries would face closure which would be to the detriment of children, particularly those in areas of deprivation, and schools as the children would not have experienced the pre-school environment.

Schools Forum was asked to show their support, or otherwise, for the introduction of Early Years Single Funding Formula from April 2010.

	Result from Responses				Voting at Schools Forum			Action
	Total Support	Total Not Support	Primary Forum	HASH	Total Support	Total Not Support	Abstentions	
Introduction of Early Years Single Funding Formula Block	1	14	Do not support	Do not support	1	14	0	No support from SF

It was noted there were a number of issues that would need to be addressed over the next 12 months and the possible change in Government may alter the situation.

CS thanked SF for the time they had taken to discuss SFF and their decision would be taken into consideration but he would be minded to delay implementation until next year CS indicated that, in the light of the representations he had received and the view of SF, he did not intend to put Hillingdon forward as a pathfinder LA in respect of the introduction of the SFF. The Chair thanked CS for this decision, which would be widely welcomed.

In response to the comment regarding costs involved in obtaining CRB checks, AW agreed to lobby DCSF for a reduction. **AW to write to DCSF**

In view of the decision of Schools Forum on the above item, it was not necessary to take any action on :

- The Removal of Nursery Elements from Primary Formula
- Adjustment to Primary MFG
- The Introduction of Termly counts for Nursery Funding

Adjustment to KS1 Class Size Factor. LA proposed adjusting the KS1 Infant Class Size Factor to reflect the authority's change to a single intake of Reception aged pupils that commenced in September 2009.

	Result from Responses				Voting at Schools Forum			Action
	Total Support	Total Not Support	Primary Forum	HASH	Total Support	Total Not Support	Abstentions	
Adjustment to KS1 Class Size Factor	15	0	Support	Support	15	0	0	Supported by SF

Additional Funding for SEN/Special Schools. Concerns were expressed that although £700,000 had been granted last year, there still seemed to be an increase in the number of

children placed out of Borough. The aim for securing the funding was to equip mainstream schools to deal more effectively with SEN, which would create more capacity in Special Schools for the more complex cases, therefore saving out of borough placement. When benchmarked against other authorities, Hillingdon was not a very inclusive borough.

Schools Forum was asked to show their support, or otherwise, of the second tranche of £700,000 in respect of SEN/Special Schools

	Result from Responses				Voting at Schools Forum			Action
	Total Support	Total Not Support	Primary Forum	HASH	Total Support	Total Not Support	Abstentions	
Additional SEN/Special Schools Funding - Overall	5	2	Support	Support	14	1	0	Supported by SF

As a number of issues were raised regarding out of borough placement, availability of funds and accountability, SEN/Special Schools Funding would be an agenda item for further discussion at a later Schools Forum.

Future Agenda Item

LA also put forward two options in respect of the second tranche of funding.

- Option 1 – LA would commission services (outreach, inset, transition and re-integration) with the ultimate aim of reducing out of borough placements with any related savings being re-invested back into the system through the SLAs. The model would be reviewed again on an annual basis ahead of the new formula funding review for 2011/12
- Option 2 – LA would continue with the 09/10 model of distributing the additional funding in 2010/11, which would provide the schools with a greater degree of funding stability and predictability to maintain current programmes that have been developed or earmarked with the first tranche of funds this year. However, this approach would lead to the council having to put forward a case for retaining a greater central element of DSG for 2011 onwards to fund the ongoing overspend in the SEN Team.

Various points for and against each option were put forward after which members were asked to show their support for one of the suggested options.

	Result from Responses				Voting at Schools Forum			Action
	Total Support	Total Not Support	Primary Forum	HASH	Total Support	Total Not Support	Abstentions	
Additional SEN/Special Schools Funding – Option 1	1		Do not support	Do not support	0	15	0	No support from SF

Additional SEN/Special Schools Funding – Option 2	10		Support	Support	14	0	1	Supported by SF
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Harnessing Technology Grant: DK presented the revised proposals outlined in the Harnessing Technology Grant paper that had been distributed prior to the meeting. He referred in particular to Appendix 1 to the paper which showed the key differences between the proposals in the Consultation Paper and the final Harnessing Technology (HT) document, the main one being the suggestion to create a permanent School MLE Support Officer, rather than using a Consultant for a fixed period of time. The DCSF grant for 2010/11 was approximately £860,000, of which there was a committed expenditure of £537,918. The suggested spend for the balance of the HT Grant included Cashe Paq replacement (£105,000), increase in bandwidth (£114,278), remote access (£4,000) and remote back up (£99,104).

Schools Forum was asked to show their support, or otherwise, to the committed expenditure as outlined in Appendix 1 of the Harnessing Technology Grant – Revised Proposals

On a show of hands, 14 members were in favour of the proposal, 0 members opposed and 1 member abstained from voting.

Schools Forum were then asked to show their support, or otherwise, for the additional expenditure as itemised above.

On a show of hands, 11 members were in favour, 2 opposed the proposal and 2 members abstained from voting.

Changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools. LA proposed changes to audit, borrowing by schools and reporting on and control of the use of surplus balances.

- LA proposed that schools be required to submit to internal audit scrutiny at least once every three years instead of once every two years, but this may be more frequent for schools regarded as higher risk (on the basis of previous audits and the financial reports provided to the Authority).
- LA proposed the following amendment regarding the use of purchase cards. Schools cannot borrow money, unless they have the written permission of the Secretary of State. This does not apply to any loans granted by the LA within the provisions of this scheme. This provision also extends to the use of credit cards by schools, which are regarded as borrowing. This provision should not bar schools from using debit cards or the government purchase card, which can be a useful means of facilitating electronic purchase. Schools are required to manage the use of the purchase card and must abide by the repayment criteria. Schools are required to adhere to separate guidance on the use of purchase cards issued by the LA Guidance to Financial Management. The use of purchase cards is not considered to infringe the borrowing restrictions imposed on schools as long as the balance on the account is cleared in full within the month. All costs and charges for cards should be met from the school's budget share.
- LA proposed changes for the implications of revenue v capital to recognise contributions to Building Schools for the 21st Century projects. Schools are reminded of the guidance from the DCSF that revenue budgets should not generally be used for capital expenditure as it is provided for the delivery of education and services to pupils currently in the school. Schools receive separate capital funding to support their investment needs. Devolved Formula Capital can be invested in buildings and facilities and can be rolled over to support larger projects. Schools should not therefore be transferring

revenue funds into capital. Please refer to the guidance at 2.14 of the Scheme for Financing Schools, which provides advice to schools on the process to follow if utilising revenue funding to support capital expenditure. Schools will be allowed to make contributions towards expenditure and costs of BS21 projects. Copies of the relevant parts of the School's Development Plan, BS21 School Strategy for Change and school's Asset Plan will be required.

Schools Forum was asked to show their support, or otherwise, to the above changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools.

On a show of hands, 14 members were in favour of the proposals, 0 members opposed and 1 member abstained from voting.

Arrangements for School Meals The Schools Lunch Grant amounted to £436,451 of which £315,416 was the devolved element. Schools Forum were requested to consider a retained element of £121,000 which would be divided as £70,000 for nutritional analysis and the expertise to run the software, £21,000 for school food and £30,000 for small pieces of equipment.

On a show of hands, 14 members were in favour, 0 members opposed and 1 member abstained from voting. Schools Forum agreed the retention of £121,000 of the grant as set out in the proposals.

Funding to Support 14-19 Reform. Deep concerns were expressed as to how this initiative could be taken forward. It was agreed to defer the matter to the March meeting.

March agenda item

Arrangements for Capital. A number of health and safety issues were raised within the arrangements for capital including the size of the contingency and what criteria would be adopted. This matter would be addressed further at the March meeting. **March agenda item**

7. EXTENDED SCHOOLS FUNDING 2010/11 (Paper 3)

The Extended Services and Children's Centre Steering Group (comprising 4 headteachers representing all sectors including Children Centres plus two Governors) had set up a sub-group to consider funding for 2010/11. The sub-group representation was a Headteacher, a Governor, an Extended Schools Co-ordinator, the Extended Schools Manager and the Extended Schools Delivery Advisor. In previous years funding had been allocated evenly across the 9 collaboratives in the Borough, although this was felt to disadvantage some of the larger ones (largest collaborative has 15 schools and smallest 6). The Steering Group had agreed:

- There should be a fixed sum for each collaborative to recognise co-ordination costs and Parent Support Advisor costs
- The model should be based on number of schools rather than the number of pupils in recognition of the additional transaction costs in providing services from more locations
- There should be differential allocations for schools, with the highest allocation of funding recognising the additional costs of providing services in Special Schools, the second level of funding being allocated to Secondary Schools and the lowest level to Primary and Nursery Schools.
- Collaboratives would be expected to draw up an agreed and signed service delivery plan based on need.

Members of Schools Forum considered there should be more accountability and transparency in the use of the funds. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting and requested additional information including how the Steering Group was drawn

up and confirmation as to whether representatives were elected through professional groups. **March agenda item**

8. DISTRIBUTION OF DSG RESERVES FOR EQUAL PAY (Paper 4)

Schools Forum were asked to act in an advisory capacity regarding the options available for the distribution of £376k from the 2008/09 retained DSG under spend to fund schools' payment of the equal pay settlement.

As the total settlement amounted to £725k, which exceeded the retained DSG available, four options were tabled for consideration.

- Option 1 – the funding be distributed proportionally in line with the size of settlement available
- Option 2 – those schools who provided for the equal pay settlement in order to prevent balances being clawed back under BCM for 2008/09 be excluded from the distribution
- Option 3 – funding for Special Schools and those schools in deficit would be covered by 100% of their settlement, with the remainder being allocated to all affected schools
- Option 4 – a combination of Options 2 and 3, with schools holding a provision excluded while remaining Special Schools and those in deficit are funded at 100%.

Comment was made that Schools Forum had not been informed that a settlement had been reached and at what level. There were also concerns around the accuracy of the information provided insofar as voluntary aided and foundation schools appeared on the settlement list and the numbers of staff within each school was incorrect. Members were informed that the £725k was an initial estimated liability cost which the forum had been advised of at the July meeting however since January schools have been liaising with Personnel and HR to validate individual personnel data, this has caused the total liability figure to change and as at 26.1.10 stood at £507k. The final liability will only be known when settlement is reached. A revised spreadsheet of reimbursement scenario excluding VA and Foundation schools based on a revised liability of £507k (figure estimated as at 26.1.10) was tabled at the meeting.

On a show of hands 12 members were in favour of using Option 1 as above as the form of mechanism for distribution of the funds.

9. DSG FUNDING 2011 – 2014 REVIEW GROUP (Paper 5)

LA proposed setting up a Schools Forum Working Group to review DSG funding for the next three year funding period, 2011-14. The Group would work with LA officers to consider :

- The review and co-ordination of the consultation by DCSF of proposals for schools funding for the period 2011-14
- The development of a strategic review of the local funding methodologies, formula and related funding agreements.

It was recommended there be a minimum of 5 members consisting of Heads and Governors representing the different sectors (Primary, Secondary, Special and Nursery). It was anticipated there would be 5 or 6 meetings which would take place after hours plus the possible attendance at the DCSF Conference.

The following members offered to form part of the Schools Forum Working Group – Mrs. T. Black (Special Schools), Mr. R. Lobatto and Mr. A. Wilcock (Secondary Schools), Dr. P. Rutter (Primary Schools), Mr. Jim Edgecombe, Mr. Peter Ryerson and Mr. Phil Haigh (Governors). It was agreed Ms. Alison Booth could attend as an observer to represent CEYS.

10. SCHOOL DEFICITS (Agenda item 9)

The Schools Deficits – Status Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Four schools report a year end deficit.

Abbotsfield – The deficit was projected to increase but with the reimbursement of £25k from previous year's BCM funds together with a repayment of deficit of £110k, a deficit licence had been granted for £846,200. Schools Forum was keen to see a continuing reduction in the deficit.

Northwood - The projected school deficit had increased since last year by 45%, but the federated school is committed to reducing this deficit. The deficit projected in 2009/10 was £602,676 and a licence had been granted for that amount. Various cost cutting strategies were now in place which should reduce the school's deficit going forward. This is evidenced in their recovery plan. Schools Forum would welcome more detail as to what measures were being put in place and the situation regarding the £750k promised from the DCSF. Close monitoring of the school's finances would continue.

Ruislip High – The latest deficit recovery plan showed an increase compared to the initial budget plan. The reasons for the increase were set out in a letter from the Headteacher (copy to be circulated to members of Schools Forum). The budget plan showed a reduced deficit in 2010/11 and a credit balance the following year. **KJ to circulate copy of letter**

In addition to the status report presented at each meeting, the Schools Finance Team was also asked to provide a graph showing trends. **Schools Finance Team to produce graph**

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Schools Forum is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 3 March 2010 commencing at 5.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 7.00 p.m.

If you have any issues to refer to the Schools Forum you should contact one of the representatives. You may contact the Chair and Vice-Chair as follows :

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