

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 June 2023 at 10.00 am

Present:-

Geoff Cherrill – Chairman

Present: Mark Avoth, Kate Carter, Ben Doyle, Phillip Gavin, Brigid Hincks,
Sue Johnson, Marie Lane, Nadine Lapskas, Dorian Lewis,
Sian Thomas, Angela Booth and Gordon Staines

Officers present: Cathi Hadley - Director of Children's Services
Nicola Webb - Assistant Chief Finance Officer
Tanya Smith - Head of School Place Planning, Admissions and Capital
Steve Ellis - Management Accountant Children's Services
Helen Becker - SEND Service Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:
Cllr Richard Burton
Jacqueline Page
Linda Duly
Sarah Rempel

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 were approved as a correct record.

4. Exceptional Funding Proposal

The SEND Service Manager presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these minutes in the minute Book. The report provided information on the review of the methodology for Exceptional Circumstances which had not been updated since LGR and was no longer 'exceptional' with 20% of schools qualifying for support in the financial year 22-23.

There had been a lot of feedback from schools around what a notional £6000 budget looked like, how it should be used. The Forum was asked for

feedback on what would be appropriate. It was proposed that a working group be established to bring a revised methodology to the Forum in September.

The forum discussed the report and proposal, the points raised in discussion included:

- Clarification of the notional budget and that this wasn't based on the number of pupils with SEND from the school census. It was confirmed that identifying children as needing school support did not generate any additional funding for the school.
- Whether the methodology provided an incentive to overidentify SEND. Children did not receive any additional funding but there was a greater amount of responsibility when identified.
- That 20 percent of schools had already reached the threshold but there were probably many more schools who were currently under this threshold but who were waiting for a number of outstanding assessments who would have reached 3 percent if these were completed within a statutory timeframe.
- The Forum needed to liaise better with SEND Improvement Board as there were a number of issues coming through the Board and it was important that a working group liaises effectively.
- That the data was already very old and January Census data would shift some of the data and if the working group was going to be effective it needed to have up to date data.
- It was important that the results from the working party be reported back to members of the forum prior to the final report being produced in order to allow time for it to be considered and allow for an opportunity to liaise with others.
- Anyone participating in the working group also needed to be well informed on the issues and implications.
- The timeframes for the proposed group and the impact this would have on the methodology. It was noted that it was hoped to bring a paper to the forum in September with the new funding methodology to begin from the start of the new academic year.
- The effect on post-16 and if this was taken into account as the percentage of EHCPs going into post 16 was significantly lower.
- Concern that there were difficult conversations going on because there were many schools with extremely tight budgets and that support needed to be in place as soon as possible. It was also noted that the purchasing power of £6000 had been significantly reduced.

RESOLVED that Schools Forum acknowledges that BCP has committed to reviewing the methodology of the funding from September 2023 and proposes to set up a working group to bring a revised methodology to school's forum for consideration in September.

Voting: Nem con

5. DSG Outturn Report 2022-23

The Accountant for Education presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report considers the end of year position for the DSG budget 2022-23 at a net in-year deficit of £15.5 million. This is against a budgeted deficit of £16.7 million.

The £1.2 million underspend relates to high needs expenditure. Whilst there are some signs that trends in high-cost placements have slowed and mainstream schools taking more EHCPs, the delays in assessments have impacted with the number of plans funded 158 FTE less than budgeted.

The accumulated deficit had grown as a result from £20.3 million to £35.8 million at March 2023, with this required to be carried forward and recovered from future DSG allocations.

RESOLVED that the current DSG financial position be noted.

Voting: Nem Con

6. Dingley's Promise

This item was withdrawn from the agenda after publication.

7. Role of the Schools Forum

The Chairman introduced this item, and the Forum considered a presentation which was shared with all Forum members and a copy of which appears as Appendix C to these minutes in the minute book. The Forum was advised that there was a need to consider the wider role of the Schools Forum and how it functioned. It was noted that the discussions would need to take place outside of the meeting. The format and timing of information provided to the Forum needed to be evaluated to ensure that the information could be digested by Forum members.

It was acknowledged that there was a need to make sure reports were received in plenty of time and that the right officers were present at Forum meetings. The Review of the Forum should address any attendance and membership issues.

The Chair suggested that it would be a good idea for the forum to complete a self-assessment checklist to begin the new year as it was not something the Forum had done before. It was also suggested that the link between the Forum and the SEND Improvement Board should be strengthened, and that the Forum membership should be renewed.

An Early Years Representative commented that the Schools Forum provided a useful conduit for early years to link into the system but that it was important that people be able to attend the Forum meetings and this often meant incurring a cost for early years for supply cover.

It was suggested that it did not feel that the Forum always received the full range of options in terms of budget being proposed.

The Director for Children's Services acknowledged that BCP officers needed to be held accountable and that the overall management of the Forum needed to be looked at along with the governance issues. It was suggested it would be good for officers to set out the work in performance plans behind the scenes.

Comments were also raised regarding the opportunity for a pre-meeting ahead of the Forum meeting and the training needs of members of the Forum.

RESOLVED: That a review of the BCP Schools Forum be undertaken.

It was agreed that the Chair would work with the Head of Service for School Planning and Admissions and would then follow up with members to reach agreement prior to the September meeting of the Forum. Feedback would then be provided at the September meeting.

Voting: Nem Con

8. Forward Work Plan

The Work Plan was noted.

9. Exclusion of the Public and Press

It was confirmed that there were no non-public issues to discuss on this occasion.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The date for the next meeting was noted.

There was some discussion regarding how meetings were conducted, whether through in person, remotely or hybrid. It was noted that in-person may be difficult for some but options around this could be considered.

11. Any Other Business

There was none raised on this occasion.

The meeting ended at 11.10 am

CHAIRMAN