

**BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE
SCHOOLS FORUM
13 June 2019**

The meeting commenced at 8.00am and concluded at 09.00am.

Present:

Maintained – Secondary

David Newman – Director of Finance and Operations, Poole High School.

Mainstream Academies – Primary

Lauren Dean – Principle, Kings Park Academy
Dave Simpson – Headteacher, The Epiphany School
Jon Chapple – Headteacher, Twynham Primary
Kate Carter - CEO, TEACH Academy Trust

Mainstream Academies – Secondary

Phil Keen – Headteacher, Corfe Hills School
Mark Avoth – Headteacher, Bourne Academy
Jason Holbrook – Headteacher, Avonbourne College

All-Through Academies

David Todd – Headteacher, St Peter’s School, Bournemouth

AP Academy

Russell Arnold, Headteacher, The Quay School

Maintained - Special

Geoff Cherrill – Head Teacher, Winchelsea School

Academies – Special

Michael Reid - Finance Director, Ambitions Academy Trust

Early Years Representative

Linda Duly – Cuddles Day Nursery
Sue Johnson – Jack in the Box, Bournemouth

Invited Attendees

Nicola Webb – Assistant Chief Finance Officer, BCP Council
Neil Goddard - Service Director – Quality and Commissioning, BCP Council

1. INTRODUCTION

Neil Goddard, Service Director for Quality and Commissioning, BCP Council, opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Phil Keen (Head Teacher- Corfe Hills School) be elected Chairman of the BCP Schools Forum.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED that Patrick Earnshaw (Head Teacher – Highcliffe School) be elected Vice Chairman of the BCP Schools Forum (confirmed after the meeting as not present).

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Andy Baker – Headteacher, Poole Grammar School
- Jeremy Payne – Principal, St James CE School
- Judith Ramsden, Executive Director, Children’s Services
- Councillor Sandra Moore, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

5. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 March 2019, having been previously circulated, be taken as read, signed and confirmed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters arising and not included on the agenda were considered.

The number of free school bids in Dorset was queried at the previous meeting. The free school in Bovington was confirmed to be opening in September 2019, in temporary accommodation with 25 students initially. Vicky Wales followed up the query regarding a second free school and has confirmed that Dorset has been successful in a second free school bid; the location has not yet agreed.

7. TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was queried if there were any changes from the Terms of Reference considered by the BCP Shadow Schools Forum at the last meeting.

The following changes were noted:

- The ratio of primary and secondary representatives had changed as per the agreement of the BCP Shadow Schools Forum to include 6th Form numbers when calculating ratios.
- The Minutes of the meeting are to be published within 5 working days in line with DfE guidance.
- The Terms of Office have been set as 2 years; this was previously 3 years.
- The Early Years representation has been specified as per the agreement of the BCP Shadow Schools Forum.
- There have been minor grammatical improvements.

It was confirmed that the Forum has secured a governor representative; Brigid Hinks, Chair of Governors of St Joseph's Primary School.

RESOLVED that The Terms of Reference adopted by unanimous agreement.

8. DSG OUTTURN AND DEFICIT RECOVERY PLAN

Nicola Webb, Assistant Chief Finance Officer, BCP Council, presented the report.

The report provided gives the draft 2018-19 outturn position for the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole 2018-19 DSG (table 1). Bournemouth's DSG budget was broadly balanced, Poole had a £0.7m surplus and Dorset a £6m deficit. The 2018-19 outturns, brought forward DSG balances at April 2018 and Christchurch share of Dorset establishes the April 2019 opening position for BCP as a deficit of £3.6 million requiring recovery, preferably within 3 years. A deficit recovery plan was included in the report (table 4). Also included for context was a review of the financial health of schools across BCP at their latest reporting date (tables 6 and 7).

It was clarified that the remit of Schools Forum is to consider the transfer to the High Needs Block (HNB) and the deficit.

It was suggested that Central Government have listened to the issues raised during last year regarding the growing pressures in high needs and that there is a need to consider policies and funding mechanisms. There are currently 2 consultations running looking at these issues; however, it is unlikely that any changes from these will be in place for 2020-21.

Spending review announcements will not be received until immediately before Christmas 2019. Late July announcements from the DfE may set the general funding framework but no monetary values will be possible until after the Government Spending Review in late autumn.

BCP Council has provided £2.4 million as a one-off payment to the budget; this will not be repeated in 2020-21 so balancing next year and recovering any of the deficit will be challenging.

Individual school balances were provided as part of the overall financial picture. Christchurch maintained school balances are estimated as final figures are not yet available. It was noted that the main deficits are in secondary sponsored academies and that in most cases these continue to rise.

Questions were invited from Forum.

The amount of transfer from schools' budgets to recover the deficit was queried. It was confirmed that 0.5% had been built into the in-year budget plan with the deficit recovery plan requiring a further 0.5% to recover over 4 years (i.e., 1% in total).

The deficit within the HNB was discussed; in 2018-19 there was a deficit of £3.3 million which needed to be sourced from other blocks (or carried forward as further deficit in Dorset's case). The estimate for 2019-20 is that there will be a £4.8 million shortfall in high needs funding, which allows for growth in the pressure on the HNB. This is funded by the Council and transfer from schools and early years.

It was queried if there was an assumption that there would be more funding from Government. It was explained that the HNB was previously rebased by Government which resulted in a £3 million increase across BCP for 2018-19; if this was done again for 2020-21 there would be a £2.4 million increase in funding so a significant increase is not impossible. The DfE must find some solutions to the national problem.

The relevance of providing school balances in the paper was discussed; it was explained that this gives context and an overview of the funding available within the system. It was explained that Councillors could request this information to assist forming a view when considering which services need to be prioritised for funding. The balances were not taken into account when setting the funding formula.

Forum was asked to consider the DSG deficit recovery plan and whether it was agreed that a 0.5% transfer rate from schools funding was set for 4 years. It was felt by Forum that there was insufficient information on Government plans for the budget in order to make a decision. The deficit recovery plan needs to be submitted by the end of June; this does not need approval from Forum but the DfE will be advised of Forum's position.

RESOLVED that Schools Forum believes there is insufficient information to approve the proposed recovery plan at this stage, by unanimous agreement.

9. HNB FINANCIAL STRATEGY GROUP

Dave Simpson, Chair of the HNB Financial Strategy Group, presented the report.

It was explained that the Christchurch figures were not fully available yet; this made projections difficult. The number of EHCPs for Christchurch is known, but the costs have not been established yet.

The report showed a gender bias; boys have a significantly higher percentage of EHCPs; it was confirmed that it is a national issue, although BCP is on the higher end of the scale.

It was advised that the Action Plan required the inclusion of Christchurch data; once this has been received, the plan will be presented to Forum.

Mainstream Plus at St Edward's RC/CE School and Carter Community School was discussed; it was raised that both sites are localised in the west of the conurbation. It was advised that, from September 2019, the report outlines 31 additional places at local special schools across Bournemouth, along with 2 satellites in Poole and additional places at the Quay School in order to help reduce the cost of sourcing alternative provision in more expensive independent placements.

The number of EHCPs in the under 5 group was queried; it was advised that this is currently a small cohort, although growing, and mostly supported without plans. Linwood School had opened a maintained nursery. No financial input from Health is received towards this; the contribution from Health is Health Visitors.

Forum discussed the increasing number of EHCPs and how this is could be managed when EHCPs are a reflection of law. It was discussed that the aim would be to reduce the growth to bring the level of EHCPs in line with the national average. It was acknowledged that there are small gains that can be made to reduce plans; it was raised that parental expectation needed to be managed as part of this.

The aim is to meet high needs from the HNB, whilst operating within financial constraints and legal constraints. However, it must be acknowledged that a low number of high cost tribunals could prevent budgets being met.

The Chair thanked members of the HNB Financial Strategy Group for their work.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) A set of financial targets are monitored by the BCP HNB Financial Strategy Group at each of their half-termly meetings, by unanimous agreement.**
- (ii) A response to the DfE consultation is submitted by the Group by 31 July 2019, by unanimous agreement.**

10. FORWARD PLAN

The dates of future meetings and discussions arising were explained to be set by the DfE timetable.

The following Forum discussions will need to take place:

- September: National funding and considering options and the Local Authority response.
- October: Draft consultation with schools if required
- December: Result of the consultation and final recommendations. The Government must give the final settlement prior to Christmas 2019.
- January: Final funding values for the NFF and what can be afforded; budget sent to DfE.

NFF values will not be known until December. The local formula will continue for another year. Updates for schemes of financing maintained school are usually announced in March so would be dealt with later in the cycle.

Forum may decide that a further meeting is required between January and June 2020.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- Wednesday 25 September 2019
- Thursday 31 October 2019
- Wednesday 11 December 2019
- Friday 17 January 2020
- Friday 19 June 2020

It was requested that the Clerk circulates the meeting dates by separate email to Forum members, due to issues that had been noted with the system which appeared to have failed to send emails to all members of Forum.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

David Todd, Headteacher, St Peter's School, advised that it would be his final meeting with Forum and that his successor from September 2019 would be Ben Doyle. Thanks for his contribution were extended by the Chair.

Chairman