

**BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL**  
**SCHOOLS FORUM**

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 January 2023 at 10.00 am

Present:-

Geoff Cherrill – Chairman

Patrick Earnshaw – Vice-Chairman

Present: Russell Arnold, Mark Avoth, Kate Carter, Lauren Dean, Ben Doyle, Linda Duly, Phillip Gavin, Brigid Hincks, Sue Johnson, Marie Lane, Nadine Lapskas, Sian Thomas, Cllr N Greene and Cllr M White

23. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Jon Chapple, Dr Dorian Lewis, Jacqueline Page, Sean Preston, Rina Mistry and Sarah Rempel.

24. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received on this occasion.

25. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022 were agreed as a true and correct record, subject to Marie Lane being added to the attendance.

Voting: unanimous

26. Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) 2023-24

The Head of School Planning and Admissions 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.

This report set out the options for the early years single funding formula (EYSFF) for the financial year 2023/24 to enable a recommendation to be made to the Council.

Central budgets to support the council's statutory duties for early years were also set out in the report for agreement.

There was a discussion around rental price increases and the lack of available resources to fund a meaningful early years' experience and that future children may miss out on this all together. It was suggested that meaningful conversations would be needed about how Sen could be funded in early years. It was felt that the Government shortfall in funding would affect schools, as children would be below an expected level of education and experience when they started school, as was seen after Covid.

It was discussed that other sectors were paying significantly higher wages than in the education sector. For example, there were cases of teaching assistants going to work in supermarkets. There was concern that the salary rates and costs would result in significant recruitment issues in the future.

**It was RESOLVED that the Schools Forum:**

- a) Recommend to Council the 2023/24 EYSFF according to option 2 included in the consultation, as amended for the final funding rates in the December 2022 settlement as set out in Tables 3 and 4; and**
- b) Agree the central budgets supporting the early years free entitlements, set at the same level as 2021/22 and 2022/23 at £184,000, as shown in Table 4.**

Voting: unanimous

27. DSG Settlement and Draft Budget for 2023-24

The Assistant Chief Finance Officer 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.

Other papers on the agenda considered the impact of the Settlement and DSG budget in detail.

The DSG Settlement for 2023-24 was received on 16 December 2022. Compared with 2022-23 it provided a 6.4% increase in funding overall:

- a. Indicative allocations for the early years block reflecting increased unit values of 5% for 2 year olds and 5.2% for 3&4 year olds.
- b. Final allocations for the school's block based on the October 2022 schools census with the increase in funding through the schools NFF at £6 million (2.5%). Higher funding values account for £3.7 million (1.5%) as reported in November, with additional pupils at census providing a further £2.3 million (1.0%). Funding for in-year pupil growth at September 2023, has decreased by £43,000 compared with last year.
- c. A supplementary grant for mainstream schools was announced in the Autumn statement. The £8.5 million for BCP is equivalent to a further funding increase of 3.5%, bringing the mainstream schools increase to 6.0% overall.
- d. Allocations for the central school services block provide a reduction compared with last year of £12,000 for on-going LA functions with previous levels of funding not yet restored for historic commitments.
- e. Indicative allocations for the high needs block are for an increase of £5.2 million (9.7%). This includes the supplementary grant for high needs providers of £2.4 million announced in the Autumn Statement.

A draft DSG budget was provided in the Appendix to provide context for decisions on the meeting agenda. The funding gap for high needs pupils was projected to grow to £27 million in 2023/24.

Dr Lewis had submitted the following comment by email, which the Chair asked to be recorded in the minutes:

*Within the executive summary it is stated that:*

*“c. A supplementary grant for mainstream schools was announced in the Autumn statement. The £8.5 million for BCP is equivalent to a further funding increase of 3.5%, bringing the mainstream schools increase to 6.0% overall.”*

*This is, in my view, misleading. It fails to acknowledge the unfunded pay awards given to teachers and support staff, the cost of which had not been known when NFF allocations were originally determined. I would suggest that a 6.0% overall increase in funding would barely cover increased staff costs, let alone increasing energy costs and the rising cost of maintaining school infrastructure. The additional funding announced as part of the Autumn statement should be disregarded in the context of this discussion (it is not part of the DSG). I note that the 9.7% increase in funding for the HNB has not been highlighted in a similar fashion.*

It was advised, in response, that although this was not part of the dedicated schools grant it was important, as it provided the overall context of increases in school funding.

**RESOLVED that the Schools Forum noted the contents of the report.**

Voting: Nem. Con

## 28. School Funding Consultation and Budget Proposals 2023-24

The Assistant Chief Finance Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Schools Forum must be consulted on the local funding formula for mainstream schools and agree a range of central DSG budgets.

This report set out the outcome of the 2023-24 school funding consultation and considers proposals for the DSG budget.

The schools block proposals included that the mainstream schools funding formula was to continue to adopt the National Funding Formula (NFF), but with a cap introduced to limit per pupil gains, the existing growth fund policy is maintained, and the balance of funding is transferred to support the high needs budget. Also included are budget proposals for the central school services block.

Dr Lewis made the following comments and an indication to how they would have voted, which the Chair asked to be recorded in the minutes:

*I agree that the surplus schools block funding of £0.185m is transferred to the high needs budget.*

*I do not agree for there to be any transfer of NFF school block funding to high needs by reducing NFF allocations to schools. Paragraph 33 is misleading (see comments above in relation to agenda item 5)*

*Paragraph 36 states:*

*“It is accepted that any reduction in NFF funding for schools is not welcome but there is a need to balance the demands of the high needs budget with funding for individual schools.”*

*I would contend that the budgets of individual schools have been managed well over time, whereas...*

*I object to **any** reduction in MPPFL to accommodate the on-going mismanagement of the HN budget.*

*If the NFF suggests and increase in funding for a school, I can see no logical reason why this should be capped – or are we suggesting that the formula is wrong? It seems counter-intuitive to maintain the approach to MFG to mitigate the effect of the formula, and then to cap budgets to do likewise. We should use the NFF and accept the outcomes. The majority of respondents to the consultation disagree with there being a cap.*

*My responses:*

**51. Recommendations for Schools Forum to agree the following schools block proposals for 2022-23:**

**School members only:**

- 1. Recommend to Council that the local mainstream schools formula continues to adopt the school NFF unit values. Agree*
- 2. Recommend to Council that a per pupil gains cap is implemented to release funding to transfer to high needs. Disagree*
- 3. Agree the existing growth fund policy is to apply for 2023-24 with the resulting growth fund budget set at £0.467 million. Agree*

**All members:**

- 4. Agree the surplus schools block funding estimated at £0.185m (0.07%) can be transferred to the high needs and early years budgets. Agree*
- 5. Agree the funding released from the mainstream schools NFF can also be transferred to the high needs budget (the maximum within the regulations being £1.07 million). Disagree*

**61. Recommendation 6: Schools Forum members to agree the CSSB budgets in table 7 in paragraph 58. Agree**

*It was agreed that under resolution 4, surplus funding also be allocated to the Early Years Budget wording to be added.*

*It was agreed that there was a lack of overall funding.*

*Following a brief discussion, it was proposed and seconded that the surplus funding was to be allocated to the early years SEND budget not allocated against the high needs deficit. This formed new recommendation 5.*

*Following a brief discussion of recommendation six, it was agreed that although the Schools forum did not agree with a cap on per pupil gains, if*

the council override the Schools Forum recommendations and the DfE agreed, then where a transfer is made the Schools Forum would want to consider where to allocate it.

**It was RESOLVED that Schools Forum agree for 2023-24 the following:**

**School Members:**

1. Recommend to Council that the schools NFF unit values continue to be adopted as the local mainstream school formula for 2023-24.
2. Recommended to Council that a per pupil cap on gains is implemented to release funds to contribute to the transfer to the high needs budget as set out in paragraph 42.
3. Agreed the existing growth fund policy is to continue for 2023-24 with the resulting budget requirement of £0.467 million as set out in paragraph 47.

**All Members:**

4. Agreed surplus school block funding estimated at £0.185 million (0.07%) is to be transferred to support the high needs budget as set out in paragraph 31.
5. Agreed that the surplus funding was to be allocated to the early years SEND budget not allocated against the high needs deficit.
6. Agreed that although the Schools forum did not agree with a cap on per pupil gains, if the council override the Schools Forum recommendations and the DfE agreed, then where a transfer is made the Schools Forum would want to consider where to allocate it.
7. Agreed the central school services block budgets as set out in table 7 of paragraph 58.

**Voting:**

1. Unanimously agreed
2. Unanimously refused
3. Unanimously agreed
4. Unanimously agreed
5. Unanimously agreed
6. Voting 4-1 in agreement. The remainder of the membership abstained from voting.
7. Unanimously agreed

Councillor White left after consideration of this item.

29. Central Retention and De-delegation Consultation

The Head of School Places, Funding and Admissions presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Maintained School Forum members must be consulted on proposals for the central retention and de-delegated budget shares and agree these.

This report provided proposals for:

- the central retention of services where the LA retains a statutory duty to undertake activity to support maintained schools only (both mainstream and specialist);
- de-delegation of services applicable only to mainstream schools. These are services where schools retain the statutory duties, but better efficiency could be achieved through central delivery by the LA.

**RESOLVED that Maintained School members only:**

- a) agreed collectively the retention rates per pupil and budgets for LA duties supporting maintained schools as set out in paragraphs 8 -10; and**
- b) agreed separately for primary, secondary, special/PRU the de-delegation of funding for school improvement duties as set out in paragraphs 15 and 16.**

Voting:

- a) 3-0 1 abstention
- b) Primary – agreed; secondary – abstained; special/PRU – agreed.

The secondary school representative abstained as they wanted to consider the issues further with their colleagues. Any further decision would be communicated to the Service via e-mail.

30. SEND Capital Programme and Delivering Better Value (DBV)

The Head of School Places, Funding and Capital presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'E' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report provided an update on the Council's progress as part of its participation in the Department for Education's Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. The programme was designed to provide dedicated support and funding to help local authorities with substantial deficit issues in their high needs block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) to reform their high needs systems. BCP Council was one of 55 LAs participating in the first cohort of the programme. The Council is using the DBV programme to validate the direction of travel of the Council's Written Statement of Action and High Needs Block Recovery Plans and further inform the prioritisation of workstreams, their implementation and associated timelines. The programme will help BCP Council prepare and submit a grant application for transformation funding of £1m and this will be used to impact the trajectory of high needs expenditure.

In response to a question about how much the Early Years Sector has been taken into account, it was advised that it had been engaged in this activity, but this was a review across the age range. Officers were satisfied it had been included but could give a greater explanation if needed, outside of this meeting.

**Schools Forum was asked to note:**

- a) the findings and outputs identified following the Council's completion of all DVB programme modules; and
- b) the progress of the SEND programme of expansion and the estimate return on investment/savings or benefits as set out in the attached presentation at Appendix 1.

Voting: nem. con

Lauren Dean, Patrick Earnshaw, Nadine Lapskas left during the discussion of this item.

31. Looked After Children Pupil Premium Arrangements 2023-24

The Virtual School Lead for Educational Interventions and Assurance presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'F' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

This report supported the presentation of a draft policy owned by the Virtual School relating to Pupil Premium plus funding for 23-24.

**RESOLVED that Members noted the contents of this report and the attached Pupil Premium plus (pp+) policy 2023-2024.**

Voting: Unanimous

32. High Needs Consultation

The Chairman gave a verbal update following the subgroup meeting of the High Needs Board. It was advised that a scorecard had been created, which could be shared with the Forum, along with further feedback. The Forum would have greater financial information through future agenda items.

33. Forward Plan

The Chairman presented a forward plan, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'G' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

**It was RESOLVED that the forward plan was noted as printed, and the following additional items be included:**

- An extra meeting be called to discuss early years, under the SEND Capital Programme and Delivering Better Value (DBV), if required; and
- The High Needs Consultation scorecard to be included as an Agenda item at the next meeting.

Voting: nem. con

34. Dates of Future Meetings

The Schools Forum was scheduled to meet on the following dates:

Monday 26 June 2023, 10:00am

Monday 25 September 2023, 10:00am

35. Any Other Business

No items of any other business were raised.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm

CHAIRMAN