

Meeting of the Schools Forum

Wednesday 20th January 2010

(5.00 pm, Sapphire Room, Emerald Suite at NLBP)

Attended

- Members:
- John Marincowitz (Head, QE Boys)
 - Tim Bowden (Head, Holy Trinity)
 - Elizabeth Pearson (Governor, Livingstone)
 - Johnathan Hewlings (Governor, East Barnet)
 - Mick Quigley (Principal Inspector, Children's Service)
 - Lisa Clarke (Head, Brookhill Nursery)
 - Helen Schmitz (Head, Cromer Road)
 - Dee Oelman (Head, St Mary's & St John's)
 - Jo Djora (Head, Coppetts Wood)
 - Gilbert Knight (Governor, Oakleigh)
 - Derrick Brown (Governor, Ashmole)
 - Jeanette Adak (Head, Monkfrith)
 - Angela Murphy (Head, Bishop Douglass)
 - Stephen Parkin (Governor, St Mary's High)
 - Jenny Gridley (Head, Oakleigh)
- LA Officers:
- Robert McCulloch Graham (Director of Children's Service)
 - Carol Beckman (School Funding Manager)
 - Graham Potts (Income Manager)
 - Linda Parker (Strategic Finance Manager)
 - Val White (Assistant Director, PPP)
 - Graham Durham (Assistant Director, Inclusion)
- Observers:
- Lucy Salaman (LSC Partnership Manager)
- Clerk:
- Sarrosch Malik (School Resources and Support Officer)

Not Present

- Members:
- Gary Tucker (Head, Christ's College Finchley)
 - Hazel Godfrey (Governor, Broadfields)
 - Sarah Vipond (Early Years Working Group)
 - Kate Webster (Head, QE Girls)
 - Anthony Vourou (Governor, St John's N11)
 - Kevin Hoare (Head, Finchley Catholic)
 - Anthea Aberly (Head, Rosh Pinah)
 - Alan Homes (NASUWT)
 - Jayne Franklin (Head, Childs Hill)
 - Ken Huggins (Governor, The Compton)
 - Keith Murdoch (Principal, Woodhouse College)
- Others:
- Cllr Andrew Harper
 - Angela Trigg (London Academy)
 - Geoff Boyd (Consultant)
 - Denise Murray (Strategic Finance Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1** Apologies were received from Ken Huggins, Gary Tucker, Alan Homes, and Councillor Harper.

2. Minutes of previous meeting (24th November 2009)

JH – Minute 6.3 finishes unexpectedly. CB will look in to this.

Minute 6.3 – Funding formula for under 5s starts April 2011 for maintained and September 2010 for PVI's.

3. Matters Arising

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Minute 6.3 – Funding formula for under 5s starts April 2011 for maintained and September 2010 for PVI's.

4. Items for Information

4.1 Barnet Council Budget 2010/11

RMG gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the Council Budget 2010/11. He told the Schools Forum that Safeguarding Child Protection has seen increased children in care and an increase in referrals. This has resulted in a budget overspend in 2009/10. RMG explained that it cost approx £48k per child, there were 10 extra children taken in, which totals approx £0.5m. He said there is a white paper looking at new relationship with schools.

RMG went on to give details of the current economic climate. He said the size of the deficit around the country is the biggest ever and that the debt is larger than the whole education budget in the UK. The two options to recover is to either to tax more or spend less. He added that 2010/11 will be a bad year, however 2011/12 will be huge. Health will be the major priority and education will be cushioned to some extent.

RMG said that there would be zero increase in council tax. He explained that the preventative approach is always preferred but now becomes essential in the current economic climate. He told the Schools Forum that 25% (£45m) of Children's Service money is not spent in schools rather it is spent on 2% of the population.

RMG gave details of various budget reductions. There will be a reduction of £100k in Corporate Services mainly for cash collections. There will also be reductions in support to schools in the Children's Service, including schools causing concern, CIS, Ed Psychology, Youth & Connexions, Transport and general support functions. He explained that schools would feel these cuts as people won't be so easy to contact. RMG mentioned there may be higher charged for Governors, Accountancy, ICT, Music, Catering, EBP, Cash Collections etc.

RMG explained that an additional CIN team would be needed as children must have a social worker. He said that there is competition for social workers from neighbouring boroughs and agencies. Social workers are paid up to 20% more working through an agency. RMG added that Barnet's recruitment and retention is very good as Social Workers feel safe and have

good supervision, however do not pay as much as some other authorities. He said that Barnet had to pay more to stop the Social Workers from moving. He mentioned that £90,000 will be spent on Contact Point which is a great preventative tool.

RMG told the Schools Forum that Barnet would be receiving £80m capital funding for the BSF project. However contracts with lawyers, engineers, surveyors and architects are not covered so need to come from revenue. Barnet need a total of £4m to see the program through and currently need to find an additional £250k.

RMG reported to the Schools Forum that Barnet would be reducing 27 posts in the Children's Service, including 18 redundancies. He said that fundamental shift would be need in six months to stop more children coming into care and using the acute services. He mentioned that Barnet have saved £2m per year up till now, so now would need a much closer partnership.

RMG explained that schools are at the heart of the community and that in the past schools have received more funding than any other service. There has been investment in buildings and strategic management. RMG said he wants to work with schools to provide preventative services and that they would be much more centrally placed for LA, Health Service and Police.

JM advised the Schools Forum that they are responsible to ensure that money to schools is distributed fairly through the formula and the CEL is not breached. He asked the Schools Forum members if they had any questions for RMG.

SP asked whether the redundancies would be voluntary or forced. RMG replied that there would be a mixture but will have to be strategic as they can't rely on voluntary redundancies. He added that it mustn't effect the quality of service.

AM wanted to know what the £100k reduction would be for cash collection. Graham Potts (income manager) explained that it was for the cash in transit service which schools are a major user of. AM added that dinner money is for the catering service, so why is this not part of the catering service. RMG informed members that cash in transit is down to the schools but council does provide a safe service. GP said that they will either stop the service or schools have an option to opt out. DB added that this is unfair if some are charged but not all. RMG agreed. LP explained that RMG's presentation was an item for information about the Council Budget 2010/11 and not the schools budget.

RMG explained that schools would have to be charged at least at cost for all services. The service would only be stopped if there is a better way to do it. He said schools have to make a decision on providing services where money is being given for them. He said that if they are to stop spending 25% of money then they need to exploit partnership with schools. He explained that schools know the families and can often intervene before things become critical.

JH said that the Schools Forum are being givens hard numbers on some

lines and intent with working together without numbers. RMG said that this was very urgent because if this is not done then cuts would have to be made in funding to schools. So alerting the Schools Forum where the cuts are coming from. DB wanted to know what the members are being asked to approve. RMG explained that the Council Budget has been agreed by cabinet and will be signed off at the end of March by the whole council. It has not been called in by Scrutiny. JH said that the Schools Forum's responsibility is on the CEL, so what confidence do members have that these cuts will go ahead. RMG explained that he brought the Council Budget early in order to warn the Schools Forum. He added that the schools would need to deal with some social issues from which everyone will benefit.

DB said that if the cash collection service is supporting some schools it should support all. He explained that it wouldn't be a problem to cut the service for secondaries but primaries are in a different position. LC added that her nursery take cash for services so to take as a traded service would have a big impact on the nursery. LP informed the members that at present the service is free to schools which is met by the central resources budget. However resources are looking at their own costs and therefore proposing to charge all schools.

SP asked about the changes in Governors clerking. MQ answered that Governors services would be increased to the true cost of service. He added that some schools buy in and some use another service.

AM questioned the level of subsidy for traded services. RMG explained that it's not been operated as a business before. He added that the council would provide services where it can. If schools find a better or cheaper provider then they can opt for that. He said that these services would stop altogether if there is a better alternative. AM said other schools need to be told why everything is going up so much.

SP mentioned that Schools Accountancy is also affected. He asked whether redundancy costs in Governors clerking had also been taken into account. RMG replied that there may need to be redundancies if schools buy out of service. He added that schools need to start sharing between them. Starting with School Improvement service. LA currently working with heads on a new model. JH said that future shape agenda cannot be addressed at the Schools Forum as we can have no influence. RMG explained that it can as School Improvement and Future Shape go hand in hand. He added that the Schools Forum have a strong voice and influence over a large part of the budget of the council.

JD explained to the Schools Forum that integrated working does work as she currently runs a Children's Centre and Resourced Provision as part of her Primary School. AM agreed to an integrated service. AM asked if there could be an interim arrangement for traded services. RMG explained that if spread across 120 schools it will not be a significant amount.

JM thanked RMG for his presentation and for possible ways forward to challenges ahead. There is considerable anxiety among heads and people are on tenterhooks about the schools budget. There is fear of the proposed shift of resources from schools to the centre. He added that accessible figures and transparency will maintain the position of trust built up over many

years but becomes fragile at these times.

JM thanked all members for attending the meeting.

7 Any Other Business

- 7.1** SP asked if Geoff Boyd can put together a document to outline the role and responsibility of the Schools Forum. He also asked if the two year term of office could be changed to four years, as it takes two years to understand things. JM will ask Geoff to look at this. **GB**
- 7.2** JH requested for the budget papers to be distributed before the next meeting. CB explained that they need pupil numbers from the census to calculate the DSG. JM asked the LA officers to provide as many papers before the meeting. CB added that the next meeting will start at 4pm.

8. Dates of future meetings

8.1

Tues 2 nd February 2010	4.00pm
Tues 18 th May 2010	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)
Tues 13 th July 2010	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)