

<p style="text-align: center;">Minutes Agenda item 3: Schools' Forum Meeting - 4 July 2018</p>

Venue: Strood Academy, Carnation Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 2SX

Time: 4:00pm to 7:30pm

In Attendance.

David Watkins – DW
 Maria Beaney - MB
 Rebecca Smith - RS
 Paul Clarke - PC
 Simon Harrington - SH
 Niki Smith – NS

Peter Martin – Chair - PM
 Karen White – Vice chair - KW
 Kathy Sexton - KS
 Karen Norman – Vice chair. KN
 Kim Gunn - KM
 Steve Geary – SG
 Clive Mailing - CM
 Karen joy – KJ
 Ian Chappel - IC

Clerk : Sarah Phillipson

1.	<p>Apologies: Barbara Fincham, Ian Sutherland, Anne Domeney, Fiona McCall and elected members. The meeting was Quorum</p>
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest: A declaration was withdrawn by Steve Geary. As interest no longer applies due to a change in circumstances. Vice chair Karen White – declared her interest on items 8 and 9 Charmian Peter Martin – declared a special interest declared in item 7.</p>
3.	<p>Minutes from the previous meeting:</p> <p>Members were advised by MB that there were no minutes issued from the last meeting due to declaration of interest breach – All details and decisions from this</p>

meeting have been withdrawn and will need to be agreed again. However, the rates funding figures which were agreed has been paid to the schools.

4. MB advised members as follows.

Outturn Reports:

2017-18 DSG Allocation deferred until October meeting – due to EFSA representative not being available to attend this meeting regarding the late notification of the DSG negative adjustment figures. This issue has been resolved to ensure a neutral balance, however the EFSA wished to explain this to the school forum members. MB summarised to members that the EFSA proposed to cut the high needs budget by £1.5 million, the ESFA/LA have resolved this suggestion, so that there is no long-term effect to school, LA or EFSA. This issue arose due to an incorrect assumption that all 11 resource units had zero commissioned places filled in mainstream special needs units' place.

Q – Will this affect the funding in place currently?

A – For a short term only, it would affect LA cash flow not the actual funding into the schools.

School Reserves.

2017-18 Year End Schools' Revenue and Capital Reserve Balances

Members were advised by MB that at 31 March 2018, there were **32** maintained schools with revenue reserve balances totalling £2.235m; which is a reduction of £0.464m or 17.2% from the previous year. Appendix A shows the level of school reserves for the last three years.

As at 31 March 2018, the capital reserve balances at the end of the 2017-18 financial year were £1.446m; which is an increase of £0.372m from the previous year. Again, appendix A shows the level of school reserves for the last three years.

12 schools converted to academy status during the year and transferred their surplus reserves of £0.689 million with them.

There are **2** schools in deficit, currently £25,642 and £113,900 respectively, and both schools are working closely with the Schools Finance Team to address these deficits or are in a deficit recovery plan.

Additional information is highlighted in appendix B of the reference documents

5 additional schools (excluding those above the max limit) have capital reserves in excess of £50,000.

Members Noted: **7 schools** had higher than permitted revenue reserves totalling £0.112m and **3** have higher capital reserves totalling £0.169m then permitted. These are highlighted in green on appendix A reference document and each school has provided a brief explanation of why they are above the maximum limit in section 3.

Members were advised that the Medway Scheme for Financing Schools outlines the maximum carry forward reserves for maintained schools as follows:

- Revenue - 8% of their total yearly grant income (I01, I02, I03, I05 and I08)
- Capital – a school must spend their annual Devolved Formula Capital Funding (DFC) and any brought forward balances within three years.

Q – Where does this money go if we refuse the roll over?

A – The funds will go into the figures for reallocation as part of the 2020-2021 budget build process.

The members discussed each school positions and voted on the individual school permitted revenue reserves.

The members voted on individual schools.

- School 1 – £ 9,813 - Outstanding bill for LA council risk and insurance team (failed to invoice) £11,813 Invoice will be issued 2018/2019 hence the roll over to pay for this bill. – **All Members voted and agreed the school would keep the rollover.**
 - School 2 – £518 - **All Members voted and agreed the school would keep the rollover.**
 - School 3 - £20,505 - £10k for rates overpayment which will be paid back and £10k roll over for another organisation – **All Members voted and agreed would keep the rollover.**
 - School 4 - £26,564. – Holding a 10% contribution to 35k capital project to expand the KS1 class rooms, they are proposing. As VA school they can't contribute to capital. (if they were maintained they could and would not be on this list) **All Members voted and agreed would keep the rollover.**
 - School 4 - £21,015 – 1. Refurbishment for a kitchen damage, which is outside of warranty and will need repairing. – Members questioned if this was an insurance issue. 2. Another issue raised was long term staff sickness x 2 need to continue pay them – 3. Supporting growing number of high needs children. **Members agreed they would like the school to present a stronger case than has currently been put forward at next meeting before any agreement could be made.**
 - School 4 - £16,287 – No response from the school to present their case. **Members agreed they would like the school to present a stronger case than has currently been put forward at next meeting before any agreement could be made.**
 - School 5 – £17,479 – Mini bus contract for the school delayed payment. **All Members voted and agreed would keep the rollover.**
- Capital roll over MB advised there were 3 schools over their permitted revenue. –
- School 1 - £7,138 – activity centre, currently in planning permission. - **All Members voted and agreed would keep the rollover.**

- School 2 - £56,925 – Accounting issue (figure is not correct, there is not a roll over) - **All Members voted and agreed would keep the rollover.**
- School 3 - £105,220 – Allocated to 2 projects started 2017/2018. **All Members voted and agreed would keep the rollover.**

Q - Member asked if capital reserves had been discussed before under the remit of this forum, and if so where it is documented that a maximum capital rollover cap exists?

A – The Medway scheme for Financing schools document and the Medway finance manual. MB to advised that at all previous year end outturn meetings (July) have discussed this subject.

Trade Union –

Details in the reference document attached.

NS referred to agenda Item 4c reference documents.

She explained the time spent by trade union representatives varies from month to month, but the summary below outlines the activities undertaken by trade union representatives during 2017 - 2018. It was noted that in 2017, trade unions looked to review these categories and had constructive feedback and suggestions from TU's, during consultation; but with the new guidance relating to the publishing recording of TU time pending, no changes were made. The guidance has now been published, in June 2018, which has determined the minimum data that needs to be published. There is no requirement to publish the level of detail currently recorded, however from a management perspective, the data is useful for TU's, the council and schools in determining trends and identifying areas where preventative work could be undertaken. The revised categories therefore may now be finalised, with agreement.

It was explained that the Top 3 Service activities were as follows;

47% responsibilities as local officers, including preventative work.

21% meetings with employees relating to individual or group issues with headteachers, managers, and governing bodies.

14% Interviews with or on behalf of union members on matters of discipline, dismissal, redundancy, grievance or other employee relations issues. This area has shown an increase.

Responsibilities as local officers relates to a wide range of activities such as telephone and email communications, seeking early resolution of disputes, preparation and research for casework, TUPE and school reorganisation meetings.

The members noted that the current price sits at £1.09 per pupil. - It was explained to members that as at 31 March 2018, the closing balance on the reserve stood at just under **£5,873 in deficit.**

Members were informed, charges to schools were set at £1.25 per pupil from September 2018 for both academies and maintained schools in order to reduce the possibility of an overspend and to balance the cost of significant training spent on members. The level of reserves has been reducing year on year, and it is anticipated that the budget for 2018/19 will continue to be under pressure. It is recommended that the charges to schools be increased to **£1.40 per pupil from 1 September 2019** to pre-empt budget constraints and ensure continued services to staff across Medway schools. A school with 350 pupils would be paying £490. NS explained that she felt this represents excellent value for money and is lower than neighbouring local authorities. She outlined that this decision will need to be reviewed in July 2019 when the budget out-turn for 2018/19 has been finalised as it is not yet known how many schools will buy the service.

Q – What is going to be the total income that you expect from this increase? A - That figures hasn't been formulised yet.

A member noted to the forum that schools have had to cut money to manage a balanced budget. Surely the unions should look doing the same. The member commented that 47% of time spent by representatives is spent on general roles, and that there was not enough information outlining what this was and why where members having to come out of schools to take responsibilities as local officer. The member voiced that he was not happy agree to cover this deficit without more clarity.

Union representative explained that the duties carried out by members are outlined in the NUT Burgundy book. Appendix 1.

ACTION – NS – to give details of how the additional money is spent with detailed description explaining how this figure funds particular activities undertaken by reps, by the September meeting.

Q – Will there be an ongoing increase?

A – No, we don't envisage another increase, we are looking to catch up from non-increase over the previous years.

Q – What is the % split between dealing with sickness, grievances and restructuring?

A – Different levels depending on the time of year. For example, from April the majority of time has been spent on sickness absence, prior to that it was restructuring issues. Sickness has increased due to stress.

The chair explained that the forum was being asked to note the proposed increase to £1.40 per pupil for de-delegated services from April 2019 from 1 September 2019 for academies schools. He asked if the forum members agree in principle to this increase. **Members agreed that they did.**

The members raised that the school's and academies leaders should be very clear of what they will give up if they fail to buy into this facility.

ACTION – At the primary and secondary head meeting explaining the effects of not joining this service for the next meeting. – NS.

5. **Action Research Evaluation Report –**

These items are deferred to September meeting. This item was stopped and deferred to allow members to access the full document to review value for money. **Members agreed this.**

ACTION – NS - to send link to access the full study to all members.

6. **Business Case School Improvement**

RS – presented to members two reference documents – Joint Bid from Medway school improvement team, MELA & Medway teaching schools to Medway schools forum, and Medway Leadership Development - Action Research Programme

RS outlined to the members the details as shown in the attached document.

She asked members to note this scheme is about collaboration within all services to improve performances in disadvantaged pupils and narrowing the gap at primary level achieve against national level. This gap is currently at 4 %. She explained that the aim was to put together a 2-year programme that works with the teaching schools, MELA and the school improvement team, to target initially around 25 - 27 schools at Ks2 level.

Q – Is this a something which the schools forum would need to vote upon or noted?

A – This is a request for £300k of funding. The budget sits under the school improvement projects funding and is ring fenced for the schools block and requires discussion and agreement of the schools forum.

Q - Are there are other projects we would need to consider as well for this funding? For example, the AP report recommendations?

A – When we asked for the school improvement team to work with MELA for recommended projects we did not have the outcome of the AP report, so it was not considered, but will need to have funding to achieve the recommendations.

Q – What exactly is going to happen within this project, who is going to be leading it, and who is ultimately accountable? We need more details on.

A - RS – referred to on page 4 of Joint Bid from Medway school improvement team, MELA & Medway teaching schools to Medway school's forum document to explain role of disadvantaged champions. It was explained the resource for this would come by tapping into SLE resources within those areas and teaching schools. Training, support and quality assuring these people to become the disadvantaged champions.

It was outlined that the program would be phased as outlined phase one (see page 2 of the Joint bid document) – The aim being to engage leaders in Medway to look at the support for the disadvantaged. Member noted that Medway is already looking an Inclusion project and that there are other factors not necessarily in the class room.

Members suggested that a program for supporting Mental Health Agenda and skill bases in schools to support the children with those issues, could also help. It was felt this option might not remove barriers felt by the disadvantaged. RS explained that part of this programme is to look at what is currently available to support these pupils and what impact they have.

Q - Trade union have seen an increase in restructuring of support staff in schools, can school afford an extra member of staff as described?

A – This proposal would not be charged to the schools.

Q – How much would phase one cost?

A – Approximately £2,500.

Q – Has this research not already been done?

A – A number of schools are not aware of the possible approaches, and so are not using them.

The chair asked the members if they agreed in principle the request for £300k?
The members voted that they wanted more detailed action plan along with other choices.

ACTION – RS to put together a working group to look at the details in this proposal, how it will be done, what is involved and costings, and outcomes. Medway improvement team – 4th October meeting.

ACTION - members would like to see a range of proposals to consider the £300k spend.
– 4th October meeting.

7. Verbal High Needs Funding Update –

MB updated members outlining – that LA have gone out to consult regarding special schools alternative provision top of rates. She explained that historically we have had one school getting £2k less money than an equivalent school. LA has been reviewing these rates.

She outlined to the members that one school has been considerably underfunded for many years and the LA have reviewing how to close the gap.

Special interest declared by Peter Chair of Governors of Bradfield's.

Q - How do we top this school up and where do we get this money from?

A – Initially we considered slicing money from one school, but we found that this school was getting the correct funding in comparison to other school's costings. So, we will need to look at recommissioning other services etc.

Q - Are we going to give arrears? Or just focus on getting the correct funding in place by September?

A – No we will not be backdating funding. New fees from September being considered as we will have to reallocate this funding.

Q – Are we looking to reduce the numbers of special needs places across the authority?

A – Not at the moment. We are looking at creating equal banding. There is not a national policy for special schools – banding is different across the piece and it is recognised a need to come in lined with actual costs schools spend.

MB outlined to members that this is a significant issue, which will need to be addressed as a matter of urgently as it affects the most vulnerable children in Medway.

Q - Is the £500k SB ear marked for school improvement or can we give this to the school?

A – This is not a year on year solution and the fund is a development budget.

Members agreed that work should continue on getting funding bands correct and offer a solution to this issue urgently.

8. **Place Planning Presentation.**

PC updated members referring to the School Planning document. He outlined the below points to be noted.

Focus on Medway Rochester and Chatham place planning areas, 4 years ahead for primary and 6 years ahead for secondary.

Birth rates were discussed showing trends and baselines. Net migration of children moving into Medway after birth was also discussed it was noted that. In last 3 years Rochester has had positive migration and Chatham negative. All births across Medway are generally level since 2012.

A - Where are these children coming from?

Q- Maidstone and north Kent, East London.

Members noted that this document can only include building developments approved for planning.

Q – Given the number of houses planned to be built in Medway in the 5 years, is it correct that these are not yet included?

A – Yes that is correct. Medway has been tasked with building 29k homes and if this happens then 24 forms of entry primary/ 4 secondary would be needed. (in addition to the 2 already outlined as being needed)

The aim is to inform the members of this coming growth. PC noted to the forum current Rochester and Chatham cohort growth. Shows the growth from 703 – 741 over 4 years.

PC referred to current reception spaces spare map. He explained that the current intake spare spaces waiting to be filled (reviewed every 3 weeks) are spread out between 2 – 3 schools, with popular school being full. With the only area being an exception to this trend as Rochester, with 4 schools not full. The full schools are Crest, St Peters, and Warren Wood and Delce Academy. All surrounding schools are full at reception class.

Short term solutions were highlighted as;

- Reduce PANs on a local agreement 2020 and local agreements. (proforma to be produced)
- Reduce PANs on an in-year variation.
- Schools In Financial Difficulty policy is adopted on a case by case basis.

Long term solutions were highlighted as;

- Reduce PANs permanently.
- Look at reorganisation in the area; primaries rather than separate infant and junior schools.
- Academisation.
- Local support network

Q- Is the temporary reducing of PAN too late for coming academic year 2018.

A – No you still can do a local agreement for 2018, the difficulty is if the school is already over the lower level of PAN e.g. reducing from 90 to 60 but the school is currently at 63. We also have to ensure we have spaces for casual admissions.

Chair thanked PC and SH for the presentation.

9. **Schools in Financial Difficulty Policy –**

MB advised members this policy was originally called the Falling rolls policy. She explained that the fund figures of £300k was agreed but the policy on spend needed to be agreed. There were requested changes to the policy which have been made with one exception – Funding was set at the falling rolls fund per class at £100K and not as agreed in the last meeting (not minuted etc) at £35k per class.

MB explained that schools need the certainty of a policy and not as one off agreements. KS2 can't increase class sizes above 30 (or multiples of 30) in years R, 1, 2 and 3. She outlined that Crest and Hempstead have each been awarded £35k already as a one off for one year only. The schools will present their cases for the additional sums shortly.

MB then explained that Parkwood, Luton and Gordon have similar issues coming upcoming in the 2019 funding year. However, policy agreement would support them, and set a precedent going forward.

Members raised the concern that this would be financially untenable. It was explained that the funding for this figure comes from the school block of funding – top slicing £300k to create this fund. MB updated members on a meeting with the EFSA who asked the LA why they did not have a falling rolls fund policy to support schools. Kent and Essex current policy is £100k per class.

Members discussed the details of this and the implication of this policy, discussing how the £100k figure was calculated. It was felt if the funding was given then the school must agree to keep the additional class open.

Members felt that this Policy agreement to be deferred to next meeting in 4th Oct 2018.

The members heard the Confidential Issues Business Cases from two schools.

School 1 – 2018-19 funding increased to £55,000.

School 2 - 2018-19 funding increased to £55,000.

Members agree that decisions basis should be on individual business cases.

10. Forward Plan – AOB – School forum governance adjourned to the September meeting.

11. Date, time and venue of the next meeting – 11 September 2018, 4 – 6 pm at the Strood Academy

Signed by Chair

Actions for next meeting.

Item Nol.	Action	Responsible.
4 Trade unions	To supply members with details of how the additional trade union price increase money would be spent with detailed description explaining how this figure funds particular activities undertaken by reps, by the September meeting.	NS
4 Trade unions	At the primary and secondary head meeting NS to explain the effects of not taking up this service.	NS
5. Research Evaluation Report –	These items are deferred to September meeting. This item was stopped and deferred to allow members to access the full document to review value for money. NS - to send link to access the full study to all members.	NS
6. Business Case School Improvement	RS to put together a working group to look at the details in this proposal, how it will be done, what is involved and costings, and outcomes. Medway improvement team – 4th October meeting.	RS
6.	Members would like to see a range of proposals to consider the £300k spend. – 4th October meeting.	RS

Business Case School Improvement		