



Minutes

Name of meeting	SCHOOLS' FORUM
Date and time	8.30AM – Thursday 18th July 2019
Venue	Community Learning Centre, Westridge, Ryde PO33 1QS
Present	Beverley Gilbert (Chair) – Brading CE Primary Gordon Kendall – Bembridge CE Primary David Thornton – Federation of Carisbrooke and Newport CEPs Julie Stewart – Medina House School Caroline Sice – Lanesend Primary Academy Sarah Hussey – Northwood Primary Academy Mike Hayward – Island Innovation Federation Noreen Ward – Christ the King College Fidelma Washington – Isle of Wight College
Elected Member	Cllr Paul Brading – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services
Officers	Barry Downer - Senior Finance Business Partner Brian Pope – Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion Tracey Sanders – Head of Services for Young Children Chris Jones – SEN Service Manager Diane Hiscock – Clerk
Apologies	Amanda Bitchenor – Chatterbox Day Nursery Jackie Boxx – Island Learning Centre Duncan Mills – The Bay CE School Lisa Nicholson – Haylands Primary School

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Members and officers were welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made. Sarah Hussey had been elected to replace Sarah Miselbach as Academy Representative and Lisa Nicholson had been elected to the Primary Headteacher vacancy. There are no current vacancies on the IOW Schools Forum.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Questions on school balances had been received from the National Education Union (NEU) and were covered in [Paper C](#)

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED :

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [21 March 2019](#) be confirmed.

5. MATTERS ARISING

- 6.1 Item 6.1 – DT introduced Vince Ward from Future IOW. VW gave an overview of his background in the construction and building management sector, which led to the establishment of 'Future Isle of Wight' as a community interest company. The aim is to explore ways helping businesses and schools to become more energy-efficient. The company works in consultation with IW Council and other partners and is liaising with EON as a prospective partner.

In liaison with IW Council an initial exercise has been continuing, using Bembridge Primary School, to review energy use and explore ways of reducing the carbon footprint. The aim was to carry out a holistic survey and evaluate through visual inspections, including use of a drone where appropriate. The survey covered, lighting (including sensor lighting), heating (investigating under-heating and over-heating), age of building, insulation and water in order to identify ways of optimising control and making usage more efficient.

Isle of Wight people/contractors are employed where possible, but due diligence is necessary. Conclusions from the survey will be formed in September.

Action - A report will be brought to the next Schools Forum meeting on 21 November 2019.

- 6.2 (Item 6.2) Report on use of Trade Union Facilities Time – moved to November.

Action – JM to bring a report to the next Schools Forum meeting on 21 November 2019.

- 6.3 (Item 6.3) BG and JM had met with the Headteacher to further discuss the requests made to Island Free School to contribute to Trade Union Facilities time. A negative response letter was received and circulated to members of the Schools Forum. It was agreed that it is not within the Schools Forum remit to take any further action and Trade Union Representatives would have to address the issue directly with the school.

7. HIGH NEEDS BUDGET UPDATE [Paper B](#)

- 7.1 CJ gave information on the SEND Reforms that were implemented from September 2014, leading to the review of SEND provision and the High Needs Budget. Huge progress has been made so far against the agreed actions and relationships with parents have been maintained, despite the necessary cuts.

- 7.2 Included in the actions already implemented was the reduction of pre-commissioned places at the Island Learning Centre (ILC). CJ noted that additional places are still funded as and when needed. Also included was a reduction in hourly Learning Support Assistant (LSA) rate to reduce Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) top-up funding and a proposal to reduce discretionary SEN funding.

- 7.3 From January to June 2019, data shows that the IOW achieved the required 20-week timescale for completion of EHCPs in 85% of cases.

- 7.4 Hampshire Inspection Advisory Service (HIAS) provides support for inclusion in mainstream schools – which is included in the [Local Offer](#).

- 7.5 Work is ongoing to reduce the cost of out-of-county placements and officers have been commissioned to attend and provide challenge at a range of annual reviews. A reduction of 6 places is expected to achieve a saving of just over £250,000. It is hoped that block purchasing of placements will also lead to further savings.
- 7.6 A review is currently underway to ensure there are sufficient school places, including special school places. The outcome will be published later in July.
- 7.7 Officers are working in partnership with the IW College and other providers/agencies on a Post-16 strategy. The aim is to assist young people into employment or adult social care, which will have a positive impact on the High Needs Block.
- 7.8 The ILC provides support for pupils/students who are too emotionally vulnerable or medically unwell to attend mainstream school, or are at risk of permanent exclusion. It also delivers the LA responsibility to provide education for a child from the 6th day of an exclusion. Initial work is underway on a strategy for the provision of outreach support to help such children and young people remain in mainstream education.
- 7.9 The requirement to maintain the full range of specialist services has meant that the review of central SEN teams has not met the level of savings hoped for.
- 7.10 A draft model for the proposed replacement of Learning Support Assistance hours with a banding system will go out to consultation in the Autumn term, with implementation planned for April 2020. Headteachers have been kept informed as the scheme has progressed.
- 7.11 The SEN team continues to provide information and advice for parents and maintain the [Local Offer](#) with links to other agencies, including Parent Voice.

Questions

- 7.12 Members asked if information on the DfE SEND Capital Grant of £848,837 from 2017 – 2020 would be shared. This was published in the Local Offer in March 2018 and will shortly be updated.

Action – Report on SEN Capital Place Planning (specialist provision), including an update on the SEND Capital Grant to be brought to the next Schools Forum Meeting on 21 November 2019.

- 7.13 Members asked if the 59 children and young people with SEN in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) placements had increased or decreased from previous years. There was an increase between 2014 and 16 but the number is now steady. The reduction of 6 places was through a mixture of various solutions. It would be difficult to give a breakdown of such small numbers and maintain confidentiality.
- 7.14 It was confirmed that HIAS is working closely with the ILC to ensure the staffing structure is fit for purpose.
- 7.15 Members discussed the funding for commissioning officers to attend (to provide support and challenge) annual reviews. It was agreed that the annual contribution of £20,000 is good value for money. BP is currently working with 19 other Local Authorities (LAs) on collective bargaining for block purchasing placements, with a view to phasing in over time and reducing pressure on the High Needs budget.
- 7.16 Headteacher Representatives were not aware that headteachers have been involved in work on the banding system.

Action – CJ to provide a list of headteachers for BG to request feedback to the Headteacher Forum.

- 7.17 The need for additional funding for the High Needs Block is a national issue and was discussed. BP had brought the Isle of Wight position directly to the attention of government ministers and put forward the case for more funding for the Island in various meetings. The [F40 Group](#) and the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) are also lobbying for more money for SEND.

The DfE has not clarified how deficits in the High Needs Block will be expected to be cleared – officers await further information.

Pressure on the High Needs budget has increased with more young children needing support, more complex needs and the extension of EHCPs to age 25. Headteachers have discussed the option of increasing the contribution from school budgets to the High Needs budget from 0.5% to 1%.

Action – BD to include workings for an increase from 0.5% to 1% in a report to Schools Forum for the next meeting on 21 November 2019.

RESOLVED :

THAT the actions taken to address pressure on the High needs Block be noted and Schools Forum receive further updates on progress with an annual summary at the end of each financial year.

8. PRESENTATION ON OUTREACH SUPPORT

- 8.1 Outreach support is valued by schools - the headteacher forum had requested that there be no cuts to this provision. CJ gave an overview of the elements of a proposal for an outreach strategy co-produced with headteachers, outreach support staff, SEN team and LA officers. This would be a targeted offer, focused on the wellbeing and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs of the child. Training and support for mainstream school staff is already available and would be included.
- 8.2 Support needs to be 'Universal' but, increased to 'Targeted' for many and 'Specific' where required. The proposal has been co-ordinated with Medina House and St Georges School. Currently there is a triage/panel approach, which is not charged for and is offered through goodwill. This is not sustainable and a partly sold offer was introduced for 2018/19. Schools raised concerns and it was agreed to restore provision of £150,000 from the High Needs Block, for outreach support.
- 8.3 A review of the current provision identified a need for 2 x Primary Support Staff (cognition and learning) at 30 hours each, 1 x 0.4 FTC – Teacher in Charge and 15 hours admin. The overall cost, including the above, would be in the region of £153,732.
- 8.4 Next steps would be to agree the proposal, produce a formal structure and costing, discuss line management/HR process and consult, prior to implementation.

It was noted that the number of children requiring outreach support has not changed over the last year (67), but may double from September 2019.

- 8.5 A potential inreach/outreach model is under consideration for the ILC in partnership with Health Services, whereby children would receive 60% outreach support, 10% inreach support in mainstream schools and 30% home support. Over 12 months, there would be a re-focus of ILC resources, outreach provision and support from Health colleagues. This would require a joint approach with

headteachers and collective responsibility. An additional investment of £122,722 would be required, with £48,838 from Health Services.

- 8.6 Members questioned the level of management shown in the model. This includes training for staff, much of which is already ongoing. It was also felt that 1 Mental Health worker may not be sufficient to meet needs. Further adjustments may be required as the new model is established.

Further discussion took place on the need to invest in IOW people, empower staff and build capacity which is the purpose of the proposal.

Members asked for confirmation of how the strategy would be offered (i.e. an SLA). It was agreed to support the continuation of work on the proposed strategy, which it is hoped will begin implementation from April 2020.

It was confirmed that the current free service will continue in September for the time being.

Action – A further report on progress with input from officers involved, and an overview of the financial implications to be brought to the next meeting on 21 November 2019.

9. SCHOOL BALANCES 2018/19 [Paper C](#)

- 9.1 BD had produced a report on the individual maintained school balances for the financial year 2018/19. The overall balance had increased from £189,000 to £456,000. 29% of schools (12) ended the year in deficit – 3 schools had come out of deficit and 3 had gone into deficit.
- 9.2 24 schools operated with an in-year surplus and 18 with an in-year deficit and are working with the LA on recovery plans.
- 9.3 For 2017/18 the percentage of schools in deficit is high in comparison to national, particularly in the primary sector. As there are only 3 maintained secondary schools, any change of position in one school will have a great effect on the percentage shown.
- 9.4 All 42 schools submitted their Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) return on time. The LA audited a sample of the returns and concluded 'Reasonable Assurance'. The only element of medium risk was Benchmarking – School Business Managers (SBMs) will be notified when the DfE benchmarking data is released and there will be training for SBMs on the new DfE Benchmarking Dashboard.
- 9.5 Schools submitted their budget plans in May 2019. These showed a forecast reduction of schools in deficit to 10. BD noted that some SBMs tend to be pessimistic.
- 9.6 The government spending review is due soon, with grants for teachers' pay and pension being confirmed only for 2019/20.
- 9.7 The overall 2019/20 balance is forecast to improve, mostly due to the Christ the King deficit recovery plan being on track. Schools causing concern financially may be subject to intervention and proposed changes to staffing structures considered by the School Reorganisation Panel.
- 9.8 A number of schools have taken up the IW Council HR and Payroll SLA, which helps to increase visibility and links with the LA. Appointment of further Finance Officers will increase capacity to provide support and challenge where needed.

- 9.9 Members asked how IOW schools are funded in comparison to other LAs. It was confirmed that IOW schools are around the middle level in relation to funding – Hampshire schools receive lower funding in comparison.

It was confirmed that schools shown in appendix A to be in their 4th year of deficit would be expected to be out of deficit in the 5th year. They have been given the choice of a contract with IOW HR and Payroll. Ultimately the LA could take control of the budget and/or remove the governing board.

GK left the meeting.

- 9.10 Members agreed that schools showing large surpluses undermine the argument to government that more money is needed for IOW schools.

RESOLVED :

THAT the school balances position for the Isle of Wight local authority maintained schools be noted.

10. BUDGET MONITORING AND FUNDING [Paper D](#)

- 10.1 BD produced a report on the outturn for 2018/19, a monitoring report for 2019/20 and an update for 2020/21 for consideration.
- 10.2 A summary of the end of year position for 2018/19 showed a deficit of £205,000 with a full breakdown at Appendix A. With the deficit brought forward from the previous year, the overall deficit was £908,000 (0.99% of the budget). This was marginally below the DfE requirement for submission of a recovery plan where an LA has a deficit of 1%.
- 10.3 However, a recovery plan for the longer term will be necessary and this was discussed. It is likely that the IOW will exceed the 1% deficit threshold in 2019/20. The early forecast (May 2019) year end position for 2019/20 is an overspend of £520,000 although subject to change as the year progresses. The deficit is directly linked to pressure in the High Needs Block. LA officers are to seek learning from Hampshire officers, who are working on a formal recovery plan.
- 10.4 DfE operational guidance for 2020/21 funding is likely to be released shortly and consultation with schools should take place in September 2019. Members were asked to endorse working to the same principles as the last 2 years, in preparation for a move to a hard funding formula. The lump sum will remain at the same level, premises costs will be based on actual costs and the remaining funding will be distributed as close as possible to the National Funding Formula.
- 10.5 Members referred to item 7.3 of the meeting held on [17 January 2019](#) where the differences between the Income Deprivation affecting Children Index factor (IDACI) differs in primary and secondary schools. It had been agreed to review this for the calculation of the 2020/21 budget and include on the agenda for the meeting to be held on 21 November 2019.

Action – Review of

- **differences in IDACI rates for primary and secondary schools and**
- **impact of change from 0.5% to 1% contribution to High Needs budget to be included in the consultation on the funding formula and for discussion at the next meeting on 21 November 2019.**

RESOLVED :

THAT the outturn position on the 2018/19 schools budget be noted.

THAT the May 2019 forecast 2019/20 position be noted.

THAT the approach to determine the 2020/21 funding formula be on the same basis as 2019/20.

11. SEN CAP POLICY [Paper E](#)

- 11.1 A proposal had been made to amend the SEN Cap Policy and limit the spend on discretionary funding for mainstream schools with a disproportionate number of high needs pupils to £30,000. The policy provides for additional funding where the cost of meeting the first £6,000 of support for high needs pupils exceeds 5% of the school budget.
- 11.2 The proposed £30,000 fixed amount is comparative to Hampshire in relation to the number of schools within the LA. The impact on individual schools was shown in Appendix C where 5 schools would receive less funding – members were concerned that more schools would be affected over time.
- 11.3 There is a robust process or assessment for EHCPs and the threshold for EHCPs is stringently applied
- 11.4 Headteachers had voted against the change. Members were concerned and discussed how schools would be affected
- 11.5 Although Schools Forum is asked to give an opinion – this is a decision to be made by the Local Authority. Officers were asked if there were alternative options that could be considered.

JS left the meeting.

RESOLVED :

THAT the proposed change to the policy not be endorsed. 1 for – 5 against – 1 abstained

12. Members discussed whether to call an extra meeting in September, or a working party should be set up, to consider the budget position.

Action – Agreed to form a working party to discuss the High Needs budget in more depth and to call an extra-ordinary meeting if necessary.

13. IOW SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS [Paper F](#)

There is no formal requirement to review the scheme at this time and members had not identified any areas for consideration. Review may be necessary following receipt of the DfE guidance for 2020/21.

RESOLVED :

THAT the current IOW Scheme for Financing Schools be accepted.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Schools Forum has been arranged to take place on **Thursday 21 November 2019 – 8.30am at Westridge Community Learning Centre, Brading Road, Ryde PO33 1QS**

DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS – All at Westridge Community Learning Centre

Thursday 16 January 2020

Thursday 19 March 2020

8.30am start, all at

Westridge Community Learning Centre, Brading Road, Ryde PO33 1QS

The meeting closed at 11.00 am