# MINUTES OF THE TOWER HAMLETS SCHOOLS FORUM

# WEDNESDAY 10 June 2018

**School Members**

Governors: Jill Cochrane, Conor Magill\*, Gwen Wright\*, Alan Morton\*, Bridget Cass\*, Dave Lake\*, and Pip Pinhorn\*

Headteachers: Lorraine Flanagan\* (Chair), Esther Holland\* (Vice-Chair), Sarah Helm\*, Jemima Reilly\*, Matthew Rayner\*, Jill Baker\*, John Bradshaw\*, Joanna Clensy\*, Sheila Mouna\* Avril Newman\*, Belinda King, Monica Forty\* and Martin Nirsimloo.

**Non School Members:**

Terry Bennett (CE Diocese), Alison Arnaud (Tower Hamlets College), Kim Arrowsmith (PVI EYs Providers), Alex Kenny (Trade Union Rep) and Mahmudul Choudhury (Council of Mosques)

**Observers**:

Tracy Smith (THEP)\*

*\*indicates attendance*

**Officers in attendance**

Debbie Jones (Director of Children’s Services Partnership), Christine McInnes\*, John O’Shea (Head of SEN)\*, Steve Worth (Schools Finance Advisor), Suzanna Jones (Supporting Divisional Director Finance) Runa Basit (Clerk to the Schools Forum)\* and Rochelle Clarke (Supporting Clerk)\*

**Action:**

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| 1. **Welcome and apologies for absence**   The Clerk updated the Forum on the membership and new members were welcomed to the meeting.    Introductions took place.  Apologies were noted from Belinda King and Alex Kenny. |  |
| 1. **Election of Chair and Vice-chair**   The Clerk invited nominations for the role of Chair and Vice-Chair. Lorraine Flanagan was elected as Chair and Esther Holland was elected as Vice-Chair. |  |
| 1. **Minutes of the meeting on 13th June 2018 and matters arising**   **Resolved –** The minutes were agreed as a correct record.  Matters Arising:  [Item 5, page 3] Schools Surplus Balances – it was requested the paper on schools surplus balances should also include the school’s commitment. Sailesh clarified the commitment information was not previously available. The paper will be re-presented and commitment information will be included.  [Item 6, page 3] Christine McInnes said the SEMH review was underway.  [Item 9, page 7] Debbie Jones updated the Forum that the decision on LA Day Nurseries (LADN) had been called in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). This meant the decision cannot be made until OSC have reviewed the decision. Debbie explained the process and said the Mayor will make the final decision.    Christine added that a formal response from the Forum on its position in relation to the LADN will be referred to. It will also review the information that was available to the Forum when it reached its decision.  There were comments made that inaccurate information was shared with parents. This made it difficult for parents to reach an informed decision.  The Clerk clarified the Forum had previously decided to hold back £270k of the allocated funds for LADN. At the last meeting the Forum had requested further information before the next steps are decided.  Debbie said they were unable to provide any information at this meeting given the decision has been called in. Further information will be shared at the next meeting. | **Action**: Debbie Jones/ Christine McInnes |
| 1. **DSG 2018-20 and 2019-20**   The paper on DSG was circulated for prior reading.  Sailesh Patel went through the paper and highlighted the key points.  The report sets out the original and revised DSG for 2018-19 and the monitoring position for the centrally managed elements.  The report also sets out the indicative DSG for 2019-20 and the initial proposals for its use.  The Schools Forum is invited to note the current projections for 2018-19 centrally retained budgets and comment on the initial proposals for the 2019/20 centrally retained elements.  Members noted the grant was split into four blocks:   * The Schools Block * Central Schools Services Block * High Needs Block * Early Years Block   The Forum was informed that the High Needs Block was under significant pressure. Last year the overall block had an in-year overspend of £1.42m which was supported by the DSG carry forward reserves. The current year forecast had increased to £2.6m.  Members requested further information on the overspend in the High Needs Block.  Sailesh explained there were overspends in elements within the High Needs Block and further details were included in the report.  Members noted the LA’s statutory duty in relation to High Needs and the significant increase in EHCPs and in the complexity and cost of SEN provision across the age range.  Christine added the LA was asked to carry out a research into this to ascertain whether this was a real growth or whether there were other factors contributing to this increase. Christine guessed that it would be a combination of both.  In relation to the overspend discussion was also taking place with the funding agencies. A review of the allocation of funding and top-up funding needs to be take place. This would be alongside the review of SEMH.  Sailesh highlighted the key message was how savings will be achieved. There will be some elements of savings in the school allocation.  Christine said there will also be financial impact for the Support for Learning Service. The LA was looking at taking a significant reduction in the funding – this was in the region of £1m.  The Chair requested information on the de-delegation ahead of the next meeting.  Debbie highlighted that a tremendous amount of work was taking place. The report differentiates between the Schools Forum decisions and other decisions. It was noted the financial pressure was the same nationally.  The Chair requested more information on the High Needs block to be brought to the Forum.  Christine said with the reviews taking place, the Authority was looking at changes coming into place for September 2019. The LA was currently looking at other LA models and exploring all avenues. Members raised concerns about the banding and were informed that this too will be looked at.  Sailesh Patel highlighted the areas for de-delegation and retained budget included:   * Trade Union facilities time/Supply Staff costs * Licenses and subscriptions * Support for Learning * Behaviour Support and Anti-bullying     The Forum was asked to note the initial proposals for the funding blocks. The report proposed the following:   * The one-off funding of £0.92m released by the reductions in National Non-Domestic Rates in 2019-20 is transferred to the High Needs Block. * The level and purposes of de-delegation remain at the 2018-19 level. * The Growth fund remains at the 2018-19 level. * The reduction in funding of £0.53m to be contained within the block.   Sailesh will share information ahead of the next meeting.  Members enquired about the inequalities in funding in schools. Sailesh confirmed the same formula was used to allocate funding. However if schools get additional funding it is outside of the Schools Forum/DSG and is locked in.  John Bradshaw highlighted the SEMH is under review and invited all Headteachers to comment / get involved in the review. A Presentation will take place on 1st November.  The Chair said that Tower Hamlets has a shared inclusivity and extended the Forum’s support for the SEMH review. Members agreed the High Needs Block was a complex area.  The Forum noted the centrally retained budget. | **Action**: Sailesh Patel |
| 1. **Schools Funding 2019-20 – National Funding Formula (NFF).**   Steve Worth presented the report on the Schools Funding Formula 2019-20.  The report sets outs the following:   * the background to the school funding formula for the period 2018-19 to 2020-21; * the current TH Funding Formula; * the resources for 2019-20; * options for the funding formula for 2019-20; * makes recommendation on the formula to be used for 2019-20, and * Sets out the proposed document for consultation with schools.   Schools Forum is invited to comment of the proposed funding formula for 2019/20 and the document for consulting with schools.  Steve highlighted the background and recent changes as outlined on in the report. The key points to noted are:  The increase in the indicative Schools Block is £1.017m and is made up of: a) an increase in the pupil units of funding to incorporate the 0.5% uplift, and b) adjustments to the allocation of premises will see a reduction of £0.429m.  Steve explained the DfE had announced the ‘soft’ NFF arrangements will be extended to 2020-21. TH approach in 2018-19 was to maintain its formula as closely as possible to the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of -1.5%.  It was noted the ‘hard’ NFF is likely to come in to effect for 2021/22 financial year.  The Chair stated that schools and parents were campaigning against the funding cuts and putting pressure on the government. Schools were encouraged to get involved in the campaign.  Steve advised the NFF Working Group had met and reviewed comparative data and considered the following options:   * To move as closely as possible to the NFF * To more part way towards the NFF * To retain the current factor values but vary the MFG and capping and scaling arrangements.   The Group looked at four separate models (listed as 6.1 in the report). Steve explained the options and informed members the Working Group identified two options – Model 1 (which is the current model in use) or Model 3 (using the NFF funding factor).  It was explained the NFF Working Group had looked at results (shared as Appendix 3) of the various models and identified where schools are at present and where they need to go. It was noted that for each models some school gained and others did not.  Members commented the information in the report was complex. It was **AGREED** that going forward Steve will expand the executive summary. **Action:**  A discussion ensued on the level of complexity within the reports and information at Schools Forum. Steve Worth informed members the induction session could be used as a refresher session too. All members will be sent an invitation to the induction session. **Action:**  The Forum noted the conclusions under item 7 and the Recommendation that Model 3 is adopted as the Tower Hamlets Schools Funding Formula for 2019-20.  In reply to a question, Steve said that as part of the consultation schools will be able to comment on the other Models.  It was clarified the consultation with schools will be on the Working Group’s recommendation.  The Forum reviewed the consultation documents and suggested the following:   * To include calculations on who gains and the loss for each Model * To include explanation on why schools have gained/losses. * Where possible the consultation document to be simplified. * To include that the recommendation is from the NFF Working Group.   Members commented the information needs to be less technical.  Steve advised that although some information is technical it is necessary to include for the purpose of transparency. However going forward Steve will ensure the executive summary is more detailed and in plain terminology and clearly outlining the position.  *[Pip Pinhorn left 10:10am]*  Steve will bring the results from the consultation to the next meeting.  *[It was also suggested that when papers are circulated members should be alerted to which papers need to be printed in A3]* | **Action:**  Steve Worth  **Action:**  Steve Worth |
| 1. **New members induction**   Steve Worth advised the report introduces new members to the Schools Forum and provides them with the Constitution. It was noted the constitution was reviewed last June.  The Constitution and guidance on the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities were noted.    Steve Worth will contact members via email with dates and times for the induction session. | **Action:**  Steve Worth |
| 1. **Teachers Pay Grant**   Sailesh Patel shared the announcement of the teachers’ pay award for September 2018 including the arrangements for the element of the award that is to be funded from Government grant.  The Schools Forum is asked to note the arrangement for grant funding the teachers’ pay award.  Exemplar allocations were included in the report. Sailesh clarified the actual allocation will be established when further information is received. |  |
| 1. **AOB**   The Forum was informed that Headteachers were continuing with their campaign against the funding cuts and took part in a recent demonstration to Downing Street. Further demonstration was planned. |  |
| **9 Date of next meeting**   * 5 December 2018 at 8:30am |  |