**LB TOWER HAMLETS SCHOOLS FORUM**

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| Date of Meeting | 28 April 2021 |
| Venue | Virtually, via Zoom |
| Chair | Fanoula Smith |
| Vice-Chair | Monica Forty/Brenda Landers |

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| TYPE | MEMBERSHIP |
| GOVERNORS | Alan Morton (AM)\*; Bridget Cass (BC)\*; Pip Pinhorn (PP)\* and Dave Lake (DL); Gwen Wright (GW). |
| HEADTEACHERS | Fanoula Smith (Chair)\*, Monica Forty (MF)\*; Brenda Landers (BL)\*, Stewart Harris (SHa)\*; Liz Figuerelo (LF)\*; Belinda King (BK)\*; Paul Woods (PW), Maria Lewington (ML)\*, Astrid Schon (AS)\*, Kevin Jones (KJ)\*, Becky Dolamore (BD)\*, and Danny Lye (DL) |
| Non-School Members | Kim Arrowsmith (PVI EYs Providers)\*; Alex Kenny (NEU Trade Union Rep); and Tracy Smith (TS)\* |
| OBSERVERS | Jill Baker (JB)\*, |
| Officers in Attendance | Pauline Maddison (PM)\*; James Thomas (JT)\*; Kay Goodacre (KG)\*(Strategic Finance Children and Culture), Nikki Parsons (NP)\* (Senior Accountant); Runa Basit (RB)\* (Head of Governance & Information); John O’Shea (JO)\* (Head of SEND) |

**\*denotes attendance**

[The meeting commenced at 08:32 hours]

## Agenda Item 1: Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.

## Agenda Item 2: Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 13 January and Matters Arising.

## Presenting: Chair

**2.1 Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 March 2021 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

**2.2 Action points and Matters Arising**

Any Action points will be discussed at the next meeting.

## Agenda Item 3: Update from Schools Finance

## Presenting: Kay Goodacre

Kay Goodacre gave an update on the Year-end returns. Returns have been received from all schools; the team are finding a few issues on which they are having to revert to schools, particularly around accruals and accruals backup. For all estimated figures schools have been requested to show how estimates were made.

*Astrid Schon joined at 8:41.*

Nikki Parsons added that Headteachers can sign the checklist electronically, or an email approval embedded into the scanned documents would be sufficient. NP added that there should be no unreconciled cash items beyond 6 months; this is something that the auditors have picked up on. The Chair suggested that it might be easier for schools to use BACs instead of cheques and commented that the year-end form was much easier to understand and complete.

Kay Goodacre added that the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 accounts are still being audited. NK and KG are working with the auditors to address queries. Over the coming weeks auditors will look at external payroll and contracts for staff who are not on the Tower Hamlets payroll.

Accounting for schools will be changing from 2021/22. Cash advances will be given on a monthly basis and other funding streams will come in with quarterly payments. Payroll system will be changing to reduce Treasury Management Fees. The previous method charged a total of £300,000 to schools across Tower Hamlets. Changing the payments to accounts payable will give some savings.

The Chair added that because the accruals are included in the carry forward, the carry forward can seem significantly greater than it is. KG replied that the accruals would be recognising money which should have been spent this year and would be deducted from the overall balance which is carried forward. Belinda King added that delayed works has resulted in more money being carried forward and previously this would have been included in planned revenue expenditure rather than accruals. The concern was that the LA may perceive that schools have more money in their carry forward balance than they actually do. The Chair clarified that the published carry forward will be after the accruals have been deducted. Members agreed that the year-end procedure this year was much easier to understand and complete.

KG said the next step will be to do a balance review with schools which would clarify any issues around accruals and carry forwards. The Finance Team will be happy to support schools who want to change to using BACs.

The Chair asked if there has been any clarity over EYFS funding? KG said that calculations around the census is now complete. The DfE will underwrite the census to 85% of previous year figures. Tower Hamlets figures are just under 87% and therefore not eligible for more funding. Overall, the LA funding will be reduced by approximately £1,000,000 in relation to lower uptake. Some schools will have large clawbacks.

## Agenda Item 4: Any Other Business

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Draft meeting dates for 2021/22 will be circulated to all members.

## Agenda Item 5: Next Meeting

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The next meeting is Wednesday 23rd June 2021

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation.

**[The Chair drew the meeting to a close at 9:05 hours]**

**Chair’s signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Fanoula Smith**