

## **PRESENT**

### **Schools:**

**Governors** – Peter Bassett (Avondale Park Primary); Simon Blanchflower (**Chairman** and Thomas Jones Primary);

**Head Teachers/Senior Staff** – Sarah Bouette (St Thomas CE Primary); Sue Hussey (St Clement & St James CE Primary); Kevin Jackson (St Thomas More Language College); David Sellens (Thomas Jones Primary);

**Other Schools** – Maria Elena Arana (Chelsea Open Air Nursery & CC); Nick White (Parkwood Hall Academy);

**Academies** – Andrew Bell (representing Cardinal Vaughan); Lucian Boyd Harte (representing Chelsea Academy); Mark Harris (representing Kensington Aldridge);

**PVI Forum:** Kitty Mason (Holland Park Day Nursery);

**Non-Schools:** Cllr Robert Atkinson (RBKC)

**Officers in attendance:** Steve Comber (Head of Commissioning), Lize Ferreira (Tri-borough Finance); Nick Grey (Assistant Finance Manager – Education & Capital); Fiona Phelps (Head of SEN Casework & Commissioning), Deborah Robinson (Governance Services); Richard Stanley (Tri-borough Assistant Director, School Standards); Andrew Tagg (Head of Resources).

### **A1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from David Benson (Kensington Aldridge Academy), Ian Heggs (Director, Schools Quality & Standards), Steven Keogh (Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School), Cllr David Lindsay, and Matt Williams (Chelsea Academy).

### **A2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **A3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2017 AND MATTERS ARISING**

#### **Minutes A6 – School Organisation and Investment Strategy 2017:**

Agreed that Ms Hussey be consulted on her letter about Colville Primary School.

**Minute A7 – High Needs Funding Review:** Mr White asked that corrections be made as follows:

Third paragraph '*... particularly as he had not visited or even contacted Parkwood Hall ...*', and '*... the subject of providing a day special school in RBKC had often been discussed but, so far, not achieved.*'

Sixth paragraph '*... changes to SEN administration in RBKC which showed a lack of strategic direction at director/assistant director level.*'

**Minute A13 – Schools’ Forum Association (SFA):** The Chairman had not yet received a response from the SFA.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2017 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the changes to Minute A7 noted above, to be signed by the Chairman.

#### **A4. HIGH NEEDS FUNDING REVIEW – UPDATE AND ACTION PLAN**

Fiona Phelps attended the meeting and gave a verbal update to the Forum. There was a combined overspend of £100m across all 32 London boroughs. Funding for High Needs had been based on historical spending and did not recognise the work of all LAs or the expansion of needs up to age 25. Any underspend in previous years had been passed back to schools. Peter Grey had produced a report, and the Forum had wanted more consultation, but Joe Battie was writing a new SEN strategy, for submission to the Forum’s meeting in January, which will present a different way to deliver High Needs funding over the next two years, to 2020.

Mr White asked about the actions agreed in September, for Mr Grey to discuss his report with head teachers and for a draft action plan to be presented to this meeting. Mr Tagg said he would check when the draft action plan would be available. Mr White asked that head teachers be more involved.

Ms Phelps said, in terms of EHCPs and transfers, there had been issues with tri-borough SEN services. With effect from September 2016, individual borough SEN structures and systems had been re-organised to keep a tri-borough perspective and develop new ways of working; significant changes had been made to team functions and an in-house case management system had been developed, using phases. Disaggregation of tri-borough funding had made budgets more flexible and handover of records was continuing. The number of initial assessments completed within 20 weeks had increased to 69%. There were 300 RBKC transfer reviews (technically 18-week re-assessments) still to be completed by the end of March 2018. Although there was no extra money to do this, or extra staff, plan writers had been commissioned to do this work. There was very little support available for children before they had an EHC Plan as resources did not necessarily support a child under-going assessment, and support was needed for families and parents as much as for children.

Ms Phelps said new EHCP assessments were for children/people of any age, from younger ages up to 25 years old. Anyone with a Statement had to go through an 18-week transfer process. The number of new requests for assessment had increased significantly, along with increased expectations of the support provided and increased funding implications.

Ms Hussey asked if the March deadline would be met, and whether there would be any penalties if not. Ms Phelps felt the remaining transfers would be completed in time, but did not know about any possible penalties. She had spoken to the DfE but transfers were a London-wide issue.

Mr Stanley said the focus for SEN support was about sharing best practice, with support from SENCos and an SEN toolkit. Advice and information was available to use contingency funding more effectively and meetings with head teachers would ease pressure on this.

Ms Bouette asked what level of review was carried out, on a school by school basis, in terms of the LA providing SEN support as a school-based offer. Mr Stanley said where there were issues he had gone back to schools to discuss these, and he emphasised the point about best practice and monitoring what schools were doing.

Ms Mason said some 2 year olds had health visitors but Early Years was struggling because of the lack of joined up services, and some needs were likely to be missed. She said many schools were not as effective if a child had additional needs because of the shortage of staff in London. Mr Stanley said he was aware of the issues about support and advice and his colleagues would lead on training. Ms Phelps agreed that SEN issues needed to be joined up between health, social work and education, not just education, and include families and parents. Schools should ask their designated officers about this.

Ms Mason said that if children did not get support until they started school, it was too late; that was the value of Early Years, at 2-3 years old, but usually children were not seen until the next stage. Ms Hussey said it was not just schools but parents also needed to be clear about SEN assessment and support. Ms Phelps agreed and said it was not always about EHCPs but about getting the right support at the right time.

Ms Hussey said schools were using good practice for SEN support and only applied for EHCPs when needed. Mr Stanley agreed and said SEN provision in schools was building from a strong place in RBKC, and that sharing good practice would ensure that every school had the same approach.

Ms Bouette expressed doubt at the suggestion that SEN funding and support was not going to the right place, as applications for EHCPs had increased in recent years. Ms Phelps said SEN support should be available quickly and easily and an EHCP was not always needed; if support was in place and a child still needed an EHCP then an application could be made, but support should not wait until an EHCP had been made.

Ms Mason said there was no more funding for two year olds, or sometimes support was needed from six months old. Ms Arana agreed and said it could take a whole year to get children ready for the move from nursery to primary school, but now there was less money available. Mr White said the value of Early Years intervention had highlighted the increase in diverse and complex needs, but the loss of agencies and lack of special school places led back to the lack of strategic direction he had raised before.

Ms Bouette asked if the new SEN strategy would pick up on the issues discussed at this meeting, particularly on Early Years provision and the transition period. Mr Tagg confirmed that it would and that a workshop would be arranged to consider the draft strategy in detail. Ms Bouette asked that members of the Forum be involved in developing the strategy to

provide greater clarification between key stakeholders, as well as effective use of High Needs funding.

The Chairman said there was much potential for SEN services and drew the discussion to a conclusion at this point.

#### **A5. SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY – FUTURE MODELS**

Steve Comber attended the meeting for discussion of this item. The report explained that Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) funded pre-school Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) services, with school-side funding provided by LAs. Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) delivered SaLT services across the tri-borough.

A joint LA/CCG/CLCH review of SaLT services had highlighted that, although the quality of SaLT was high, there were some issues such as a lack of flexibility to meet increasing demand, long waiting times for assessment, having to apply for EHCPs and no standard model of SaLT support within schools.

To improve SaLT services, the report proposed a two-phased programme; Phase 1 would focus on improving efficiency and flexibility within the CLCH and Phase 2 would develop a more standardised, graduated approach to provide the right level of support at the right time, as well as stepping down when support was no longer needed.

It was recommended that communications champions and communications leaders would be trained to target support within schools for children with low to moderate needs. The cost of training would be £38,636 and each school would receive either a half day support per week at a cost of £3,500 per year, or one day per week at £7,000 per year.

In reply to questions, Mr Comber acknowledged that some schools were already providing SaLT in a flexible way but that this should be the way it worked for each school. A senior leader in each school and a second member of staff, not necessarily a teacher, would be trained to implement a high quality environment on a whole school basis. He clarified that speech language was about treating problems with speech, irrespective of a child's first/home language.

The Chairman said the challenge was to provide training, at £38,000, when there was already an overspend on SEN needs. Mr Tagg said it was a difficult decision but, in the longer term, it was likely that savings would be made in the Early Years block. The cost would have to be agreed by April, and the overspend could be repaid over the next two years.

The training programme would begin in schools from January 2018 so that the new model started from September. Mr Comber confirmed that funding would be based on this financial year to secure training by 31 March.

The Chair suggested that a decision be made following consideration of the next agenda item.

#### **A6. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MONITORING 2017/18**

Ms Ferriera reported a projected overspend of £624,000 and Mr Tagg said there were some areas with a slight underspend, eg for Early Years, and some contingency for High Needs.

Mr White asked about the projected underspends of £57,000 and £157,000 in Table 2, page 4 of the report and Mr Tagg said he would check the initial budget forecasts. The budget reflected actual spend although it depended on the codes used by each school, eg for support staff or teaching staff. The Forum would need to put plans in place to pay back the overspend over the next two financial years.

Mr White advised the meeting that Parkwood Hall owed RBKC £36,000, which would be refunded to the budget. Mr Tagg added that there were other amounts available for the administration costs of the Schools' Forum and also a £10,000 budget for training.

The funds identified were sufficient to support the costs of the proposed Communications Champions programme for SaLT. It was therefore:

AGREED: (a) that the Communications Champion training programme be rolled out to all primary schools;

(b) that the DSG would provide £38,636 pump-priming, as identified above, to cover the cost of training.

#### **A7. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA 2018/19**

An amended version of the report at agenda item A7 was tabled at the meeting, along with an amended version of Appendix C. Copies would be added to the minute book.

Mr Tagg explained that a request could be made to the DfE to transfer 0.5% of any excess in primary and secondary levels of funding to the High Needs block. The Forum could decide to continue with the current formula and move to the new formula in two years' time. A move to the NFF now would see a bigger transfer of funding from the primary to secondary sector.

Final calculations would depend on the October pupil census and the impact of Grenfell Tower on school rolls. Mr Tagg was working with the DfE and Kensington Aldridge to guarantee pupil levels but if other schools were affected by falling rolls then further applications would be made to the DfE.

The report set out four options: Version 1 with or without disapplication and Version 2 with or without disapplication. It was recommended that application be made by the 30 November deadline to transfer 0.5% because of the High Needs block. Mr Tagg advised that, if an application was not made by 30 November then this option would be lost; however, the Forum could decide to withdraw the transfer at a later stage.

The Forum discussed in detail the options presented and compared the differences between disapplication and no disapplication requests.

- AGREED: (a) that a request be made to transfer 0.5% from the schools block to the High Needs block, on the understanding that this request could be withdrawn at a later stage;
- (b) that Version 1 with disapplication be applied; and
- (c) that a third budget model be considered for the lump sum, down to £110,000 from £150,000 and that calculations include 1-form entry schools.

**A8. EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2018/19**

Mr Tagg requested that a working group be set up to review the move from 15 to 30 free hours, and that this be done urgently to take account of the NFF that would come into effect in April 2019. The working group would report back to the Forum's January meeting.

AGREED: That a working group be set up and the names of three representatives were to be sent to Mr Tagg, to include the PVI Forum, nursery schools and primary schools with nurseries.

**A9. GRENFELL EDUCATION FUND AND DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Mr Stanley reported that £8,000 had been allocated to schools to date and every bid received had been approved. Schools were not limited to making only one bid if further support was identified and there was no cut-off period for applications.

The Director had met with head teachers at the beginning of October to discuss how to access funds and it had been agreed to set up a steering group to oversee the allocation of funds in future, and to define the parameters for funding requests. This would be by an arms' length trust, from Council money (not from charitable donations).

The bi-borough staff consultation had ended last week with the transfer of services back to Hammersmith & Fulham to be completed by April 2018. Proposals would be ready by 15 November. There was obvious uncertainty for staff and employment contracts but continuity of service to schools would be maintained.

**Next meeting Tuesday 30 January 2018**

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm.

Chairman