

THE FORUM OF SUTTON GOVERNORS

www.forumsuttongovernors.co.uk

Chair: Andrew Theobald. 9 Connaught Road, Sutton SM1 3PJ. Tel: 020 8715 2337
Mob: 07850 528467. Email: chair@forumsuttongovernors.co.uk

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 12th October 2017 at Civic Offices

PART A

There were 10 schools represented.

1. Apologies

Angela Baughan (Spencer Nursery), Carole Cook (Hackbridge), John Hickey (St Elpheges), Dick Smith (Stanley Park Juniors), Mavis Peart (Sherwood Park), Wendy Mathys.

2. Presentation – Up-date on current developments in Sutton

Andrew introduced Kieran Holliday who, he said, is now practically the only Education officer within the Borough. Because of this, Andrew had initially asked Niall Bolger, the Chief Executive, to attend but he was said he was attending a local committee meeting.

Kieran spoke about the Key Issues:

Staffing within the People Directorate of the LA

Adrian Williams – Interim Acting Head of Education

Richard Nash – Acting Head of Children's Services

Nick English – Acting Director of Adult Services

Jan Underhill – Acting Director of Wellbeing

There are plans to recruit a new Strategic Director to replace Tolis Vouyioukas.

The National Funding Formula

There will now be a change in the way schools are funded. Nationally there had been a disparity in the per pupil (PP) funding as LAs could set their own formulas. However, from 2018 -200 there will be a transition period for LAs, the Schools Block will be ring-fenced and less discretion over other monies though up to 5% can be moved to the High Needs (SEN) funding. After 2020 there will be a 'Hard Formula' with no local discretion.

There is an expectation that Sutton needs to achieve £4600 Secondary and £3300 Primary PP funding. This will mean that some funding will have to be transferred from the Primary sector to Secondary. However, the government has said that no school can lose more than 1,5% during the transition. There will be a Sutton consultation paper about this published tomorrow.

Kieran mentioned that Sutton is a 'net gainer' for funding and that government has published national data for each school. He said the figures may not be entirely accurate as they still have to be referenced to local formulas.

SEN Review

Since 2014 Sutton has seen a 40% increase of pupils with a Statement / EHCP (Education and Health Care Plan). There has also been a 92% increase in referrals from schools. Sutton spends more than any other LA on SEN in general as well as on out of mainstream placements. There has also been a shortfall of £1M in SEN transport. This has led to a significant and unsustainable shortfall in the SEN budget.

Sutton has fewer SEN pupils in mainstream schools and Adrian Williams, who is leading on this, wants to work with schools at ways to improve this. He is also looking at outreach work, early intervention and the commissioning strategy.

Place Planning

The government has expanded from 15 to 30 hours Early Years free child care for those entitled. In Sutton 152 out of the 154 private and voluntary providers have said that they are looking at perhaps providing this so, hopefully, this should cover the need in the Borough.

Primary places – In September there were 14 pupils unplaced for various reasons but enough vacancies across the Borough. Manor Park, Westbourne and Cheam Park Farm have, or are in the process of expanding from 2 to 3 form entry and the new school at Hackbridge is being built.

Secondary places – In September there were 9 pupils unplaced. The existing schools have now expanded. Cheam High has increased its PAN (Pupil Admission Number) by 20 places. Planning permission has been granted for the new Harris sponsored school on the Sutton Hospital site. This will have 195 PAN. There will still be a need for another new Secondary school from 2019/20 and the Greenshaw Learning Trust is looking at a site on Rosehill.

There will be a new free school re-build with expansion of Carew Manor. A site has been identified by Sheen Way however, there are a number of planning issues.

Kieran mentioned that the birth rate remains high and that he believes that a new Primary school will be needed and that may possibly be built on the Secombe Centre site. Under current regulations, should a new school be built under the free school provision the costs are not down to the LA.

Q - What percentage of the school population have EHCPs?

A – Not sure of the exact stats but, as before, we have a higher proportion than nationally as well as fewer in mainstream classes.

Q – As there will be a National Funding Formula, what will happen to Schools' Forums after 2020?

A – The government have not said but it is questionable what role they would have as all monies would come direct from the DfE Personally I can't see a role.

Q – You mention Sutton a net beneficiary, what are the local factors?

A – The government looked at deprivation and prior attainment

Q – How can the implementation of the SEN Policy be fair given that some Secondary schools take a disproportionate number of pupils with additional needs and that there are in fact only 2 of them that truly comprehensive with nor form of selection?

A – It is difficult especially as we have 5 Grammar schools. Schools have a mixed bag of admission arrangements. The question is, can the school meet the needs?

Q – We were told at Chairs’ briefing that monies would go from the Primaries to the Grammar schools – is this correct? Is there not a tension given what you said about SEN funding and the need for more pupils in mainstream?

A – The data shows that there is just as much of a problem of fewer SEN pupils within the Primaries. The Secondary schools in general will gain, the Grammar schools not much more than the others.

Sutton Education Services Ltd – now Cognus

The LA set up the company as they saw that under the government’s earlier Educational Excellence Everywhere all schools would become academies and consequently there would be no role for LAs and this was an opportunity to keep services together. The company was handed a significant challenge by the LA with sizable financial savings targets and especially starting mid-year. They have to deliver the statutory services, but will have to do this in a different way and at a lower cost.

There has been staff consultations and a restructuring process. The management structure is now largely in place. It is now TEKAL compliant and so has been able to take over Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy staff from the Royal Marsden Hospital who can no longer retain them.

Kieran acknowledged that there have been a significant number of issues within the company and the scale of change needed but that Tracey Burley (the MD) has been working hard to resolve them.

Q – As the statutory services are now on a commissioned basis what measures has the LA for monitoring performance?

A – We have the commissioning agreement and the Commissioning and Governance team of the Council act as contract management. Myself and Adrian are also the LA Authorising Officers. How far should the monitoring be? Should it go down to the activity level? As the monies are mostly from the DSG there are also discussions with the Schools’ Forum. We are trying to be pragmatic and reasonable with the company. However, there is more work to be done.

Q – The company has to be financially stable. You mentioned Early Intervention and support however all the services schools would have called on eg ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) have been decimated. How can the company persuade schools if there is nothing to buy?

A – We have had to re-look at the business plan and yes, some services are no longer in the company but it is school-led – if they want it they will buy it/

Q – But if they aren’t there to buy?

A – This is a bit of a ‘chicken-and-egg’ situation but the financial pressures are there. With the National Funding Formula everyone, including schools, will need to do more for less. There will be difficult conversations.

Andrew thanked Kieran for the presentation. Kieran then left the meeting.

Andrew reported that he had asked Tracey Burley to come to the meeting however she was currently on leave and seemingly no one else could come in her place. He found it extraordinary that in a company with about 200 employees there was no one else who could come. He had also suggested to Tracey that if she was not available Ian Comfort (Chair of the Board of Directors) might come to speak but he had had no response to that request.

PART B

1. Minutes of the last AGM

The minutes of the AGM on the 6th October 2016 were agreed.

2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising that had not been covered at previous meetings.

3. Chair's Report

Andrew gave a verbal review of the past year.

There had been a number of presentations – from Kieran, 2 by NGA (National Governors' Association) speakers, from Governor Services, William Clapp, the Sutton Co-Operative Trust and Cognus.

He spoke about the disappointing lack of schools and education related items on the agenda of the Children, Family and Education Committee. Schools had always been the jewels in Sutton's crown but the majority of officers have left and the education side of the LA has practically ceased to exist. They still have an overall responsibility for delivery but where was oversight and accountability?

Andrew said that, with the exception of Governor Services, the FSG is the only independent Borough-wide organisation with knowledge of education and schools. He was delighted with those few governors who were here but attendance has been steadily diminishing. He asked how relevant as an organisation is the FSG? He was keen to continue the function but he would welcome any suggestions for the future from members.

4. Treasurer's Report

Andrew apologised that no report had been sent out but our treasurer, Dick Smith, has been quite ill.

He reported that we currently had £550 in the account. Our out-goings are the affiliation to the NGA, maintenance of the web-site and the cost of meetings He mentioned that apparently very few schools paid their subscriptions last year but as we had enough in the account, last year should be a free year and that the subscription for 2017/18 be reduced to £10.

Carried unanimously.

5. Elections to FSG Committee

Andrew said that, although he would be willing to stay on as Chair for another year, he would then stand down as he believed no one should stay for too long as a Chair. He also reported that Angela Baughan would be standing down from the committee due to health and family reasons, and Dick Smith is likewise standing down from the role of Treasurer. Sue Smith will stand down as Secretary but be willing to stay on the committee. Otherwise the other members were willing to continue. He asked whether there were any volunteers for the roles of Treasurer or Secretary? There were none.

Chair – Andrew Theobald
Treasurer – Vacancy

Vice Chair – Carole Cook
Secretary – Vacancy

Committee members –

John Hickey, Jenny Sims, Sue Smith

Agreed unanimously.

6. Report back from the Schools' Forum

Andrew reported that the next meeting had been postponed to 19 October and, given Kieran's information, there was nothing else new to report.

7. Report back from the Children's Trust Board

Neither Andrew or Carole were able to attend the last meeting. From the agenda there was an item about CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) with a consultation between CAMHS, the LA and the local Commissioning Group.

Jane Pascoe said that this has been driven by Parent Partnership and that CAMHS has met with that service. Report then go to the Health and Wellbeing Committee.

8. AOB

Andrew also wanted to mention that the agreements schools had signed to become shareholders of Cognus were apparently only drafts so now the status of schools is unclear. There is also a vacancy for a 'B' shareholder Director, Alan McIntosh having stepped down. Previously the FSG had helped organize the election but we are now unclear how things will proceed. Andre Costello asked whether Cognus should not be having an AGM?

Andrew mentioned a suggestion from the last committee meeting as to whether, given local elections next year, should we have a hustings-type meeting as previously at the penultimate General Election – what would the members like? Jane felt that these days LAs cannot influence education and none the majority party elected members know about education. Jenny Sims said that therefore this could be useful, it might influence members to realise that it does matter. Andre said that the Council should be held to account and Andrew said that if we are holding them to account people should be asking awkward questions. Sue said that as the FSG was a non-political organization it would have to be a stand-alone meeting. Jane also said that there should be an independent Chair.

Andrew asked for a vote for a meeting – **Agreed**

Andrew had had a request from Wendy Mathys to mention an event on Mental Health and Young People to be held by Thrive LDN (a city-wide movement for mental health) on Thursday 23 November 2017 at the Sutton Salvation Army centre.

The meeting finished at 9.20pm

Andrew thanked all those attending.

9. Date of next meeting – TBA

[Jane suggested that, given the numbers coming to meetings, the seating could possibly be arranged differently e.g. round a table so less formal]