

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 13th January 2017

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre

Status: Approved

In attendance:

Name	Establishment	Representing
Sue Blackburn (SB) – Chair*	Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Paul Broomhead (PB)	Burton Borough Secondary	Governors
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primaries - Newport Cluster
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special	Maintained Special Schools
Ros Garner (RG)	Newport Girls' High	Academies
Lee Hadley (LH)	Abraham Darby Academy	Academies
Sue Harris (SH)	Short Wood Primary	Maintained Primaries -Wellington Cluster
Claire Lamb (CL)	Redhill Primary	Maintained Primaries – North Cluster
Rachel Moore (RM)	Ercall Wood Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Helen Osterfield (HO)	Tibberton Primary	Maintained Primaries - Small Schools
Paul Roberts (PR)	HLC Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Jane Siddons (JS)	Lightmoor Primary	Maintained Primaries
Shaun Tyas (ST)*	St George's Primary	Schools with nurseries
Jo Weichlbauer (JW)	Ladygrove Primary	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Gilly Reynolds (GR)*	Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Regeneration	LA Observer
Jim Collins (JC)	Assistant Director, Education and Corporate Parenting	LA Observer
Tracey Smart (TS)	Finance Manager	LA Observer
Tim Davis (TD)	Finance Team Leader	LA Observer
Andy Wood (AW)	Senior Accountant - Schools	LA Observer

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies – AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Jessie Gupta: Captain Webb – Maintained Primaries (JS Covering)

Becca Butler: Dothill – Maintained Primaries Wellington Cluster (SH Covering)

Chay Davis: Ercall Wood – Maintained Secondary Schools (RM Covering)

Denise Garner: Wrockwardine Wood Infants – Schools with nurseries (ST Covering)

2. Minutes of the 25th November 2016 meeting and matters arising – SB.

- 2.1 The minutes of the 25th November 2016 were accepted as a true and accurate record of events. The minutes can be found at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5125/november_2016_-_minutes

Matters arising: Previous matters arising – Single Status update - JE.

- 2.2 JC informed the group the JE was intending to work with schools in order to streamline Job Descriptions & Job Evaluations. JE has visited The Bridge, one of the bigger employers of NJC staff, and progress was being made.
- 2.3 CC & JW added that JE was to visit Lilleshall and Ladygrove primary schools also.

3. Growth Fund 201718 – TD.

- 3.1 The Forum were presented with a paper which can be found at the at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5177/january_2017_-_growth_fund_paper

- 3.2 At the last meeting the group agreed in principle that there should be a growth fund but wished to await the outcome of the LA's application to fund Hadley Learning Community Primary Phase (HLC(P)) & Holy Trinity Academy (HTA) on estimated numbers before deciding upon specific details of the fund. The applications were successful which removes both of these schools from the growth fund for FY2017/18.
- 3.3 The Forum was asked to determine the amount & methodology for distribution of the growth fund. £100,000 was suggested at the previous meeting if the applications to fund HLC(P) & HTA on estimated numbers were successful.
- 3.4 JC suggested that balances be taken into account when making allocations. TD pointed out that this fund applied equally to academies and obtaining comparable data could be less straightforward than for maintained schools.
- 3.5 TD asked if there were any views contrary to the methodology as described in the paper and there were none forthcoming.
- 3.6 It was proposed by CL and seconded by CC that the amount of £100,000 be top sliced from the schools block and allocations made in accordance with the paper presented. This was agreed by the Forum.
- 3.7 The Schools Finance Team will therefore calculate an estimate of growth funding that schools may receive, for use in budget setting, and will finalise allocations based upon the October 2017 census. The Forum will be advised of the allocations at the November 2017 meeting.

4. De-delegation for free school meals (FSME) eligibility checks for maintained secondary schools – TD.

4.1 The group were presented with a paper which can be found at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5193/january_2017_-_secondary_fsme_de-delegation

4.2 At the previous meeting the Primary Phase agreed de-delegation for FSME at £8.50 per FSME pupil on the October 2016 census. Secondary phase members wished to discuss the issue with their colleagues in maintained secondary schools before voting.

4.3 PR asked what the alternative was to de-delegation. TD stated that if the school wanted the service then they would be individually charged for it, as is currently the case for academies.

4.4 Maintained secondary school Forum representatives voted in favour of de-delegation of £8.50 per FSME pupil for FY1718.

5. 2017/18 Early Years funding Formula - TD.

5.1 The group were presented with a paper which can be found at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5176/january_2017_-_early_years_paper

5.2 TD stated that the Early Years finance group had met earlier in the month and that the annex to the paper had been discussed with the group.

5.3 Part of the discussions with the Early Years group were around the difficulty of persuading some parents to record their child's potential eligibility for the Early Years Pupil Premium grant and the time that this process could take.

5.4 The Early Years group had discussed the method that would be used to reduce supplements to the required 10% maximum and were agreed that the deprivation rate and the flexibility rate should be reduced by an equal proportion.

5.5 TD highlighted the requirement to now have a SEN inclusion fund. It is proposed to transfer additional funds from the Early Years block to the High Needs block to support this, with part coming from two year old funding for the first time.

5.6 The EY group had discussed the potential problems of delivering the 30 hours entitlement and that in some areas there may be a capacity problem. Settings may fill up with pupils taking the full 30 hours entitlement and therefore children becoming entitled to care later in the year or only taking 15 hours may have difficulty finding a suitable provider.

- 5.7 The Forum was asked to agree to top slice £50,000 to support the building of capacity where required. The paper also proposed to top slice £3,644 to support the team completing the FSME checks; the amount being based on £8.50 per estimated eligible pupil, in line with the amounts charged to mainstream schools through de-delegation. The Early Years group had indicated that they supported both proposals.
- 5.8 SB proposed that the Forum vote on the proposals within the EY paper and this was seconded by HD. The group voted in favour of both top slices.

6. High Needs Block national funding formula consultation – TD.

- 6.1 A paper was presented to the group which summarised the DfE High Need funding consultation. The paper summarised the proposed methodology that the DfE will use to distribute funding to local authorities. Annex A to the paper lists the consultation questions. The paper can be found at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5194/january_2017 - high needs block national funding formula consultation](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5194/january_2017_-_high_needs_block_national_funding_formula_consultation)

- 6.2 The paper highlighted that unlike the schools block, national formula allocations will be at local authority level. The new formula will use a number of drivers aimed at reflecting the needs of the pupils in the local authority area.
- 6.3 TD pointed out to the group that despite the recent funding transferred into the HN block in T&W, the indicative national funding formula allocations would allocate additional funding of £474,000, a higher percentage increase than the national average
- 6.4 The DfE have acknowledged that there is national pressure on High Needs and have taken a number of steps to mitigate this, none of which, however, are likely to fully compensate for the reduction in local authority flexibility to utilise DSG.
- 6.5 The LA will be submitting a response to the consultation and will reflect any strong opinions that are received from settings.

7. Schools Block national funding formula consultation - TD.

- 7.1 The group were presented with a paper for the second phase of the schools national funding formula. The paper included the likely changes to schools funding for the FY1819 and the consultation questions were included at Appendix D. The paper can be found at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5195/january_2017- schools_block_national_funding_formula

The other papers referred to can also be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/1016/schools_and_learning/3253/schools_forum_meeting_papers - 2017](http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/1016/schools_and_learning/3253/schools_forum_meeting_papers_-_2017)

- 7.2 For the FY1819 it is proposed that school budgets are calculated at an individual school level by the DfE using their national formula, but the sum of these allocations would then be passed to the LA to allocate using a local funding formula. For FY1920 it is proposed that the allocations at an individual school level will be determined by the DfE and passported to schools intact.
- 7.3 Indicative allocations for T&W schools show an overall increase of 4.3%, once the formula is fully implemented, a larger increase than the national average. There was a discussion around the funding formula for FY1819 and the Forum and LA agreed that it would be sensible to move towards the DfE drivers and rates, as this will help to provide schools with a smooth transition to the national formula.
- 7.4 CL asked how we compare to other LAs with regard of the Secondary to Primary funding ratio. TD stated that we have moved nearer to the average having had one of the highest ratios a few years ago.
- 7.5 The LA will submit a response to the consultation and will reflect any strong views submitted by schools if appropriate.

8. Education Services Grant (ESG) – TD.

- 8.1 The Forum was presented with several papers for this agenda item. The main paper referenced the statutory basis for the services where appropriate, described the services provided by T&W and showed estimated costs for retained and general duties. A separate paper showed the resulting contribution by each school to ESG services (subsequently revised to reflect the Forum's final decision). Papers can be found at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:
- http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/1016/schools_and_learning/3253/schools_forum_meeting_papers_-_2017
- 8.2 The Forum felt that the issue of information and consultation process around this agenda item had been rushed. However, there was a recognition that the LA had been squeezed between the extremely late issue of information by the DfE (i.e. final details released on 21 December) and the deadline for submitting 2017/18 budget information to the DfE (20 January). They also appreciated that the LA had produced papers as soon as possible, including details of the impact at individual school level.
- 8.3 TD explained the basis for asking the Forum to agree funding to support duties formerly funded by ESG and the context of the requests.
- 8.4 As the local authority (like most others) did not account for ESG separately from other sources of income, as it was a non ring-fenced grant, there were no specific ESG expenditure budgets to use, apart from estimates at a very summarised level that had been compiled for the annual Section 251 budget returns to the DfE. The amounts provided for each service area were therefore on a 'best estimate' basis.

- 8.5 HD stated that the special schools were not happy about the pupil weighting of 4.25 for charges to their schools. TD stated that he understood the special schools point of view, but in the absence of specific details of expenditure by sector, the local authority had taken the DfE's weighting (4.25) as the default. This had probably been based upon average funding levels per pupil in special compared to mainstream schools.
- 8.6 LH asked if academies were being asked to increase their contribution per pupil to services by over 50%, i.e. from £15 to £23.29. TD confirmed that this is the case [N.B. this refers to the originally proposed contribution, not the sum subsequently approved for 2017/18]. TD went on to say that the DfE's original basis for taking £15 as the figure representing these costs was not based on any detailed analysis of costs. Another LA has passed to T&W the Education Funding Agency's confirmation that local authorities were not limited to £15 as the amount that they could request for the retained duties element of services formerly funded by ESG.
- 8.7 RG stated that she was unhappy with the potential charge as she felt that NGHS did not use the services that the charges would support.
- 8.8 PR felt that the amount of funding requested for areas already generating income through SLAs was huge to run back office services.
- 8.9 CL stated that some of the service areas also provide support to other areas than schools. Is there a danger that schools may be subsidising these other areas of the LA? TS stated that reviews of service areas have been undertaken to ensure that schools are not charged with costs not relevant to them.
- 8.10 ST asked where the remissions costs for Music and Arthog come from and what is in the base budgets for these services? TD answered that the LA pays for remissions but that Arthog trades with schools regarding pupils not eligible for remissions and has a small base budget.
- 8.11 CL asked why schools could not pay for Arthog remission from their Pupil Premium Grant (PPG)? JC stated that there had been a consultation about remissions and schools stated that they did not want to pay for them from their PPG allocations. CC & PT both stated that they were happy to use PPG to support their pupils eligible for remissions to attend Arthog.
- 8.12 SH commented that the SLAs should be reflecting the full cost of the services and CL stated that it looked like schools were paying for some service twice. TD stated that in most services the visible elements tended to be those that were traded leaving the less visible elements to be funded centrally. TD went on to point out that of the £138M DSG funding for T&W in 2017/18, the local authorities request for £1.2M for central services represented less than one percent.
- 8.13 HO asked what would happen if the Forum did not approve the funding request? TD stated that as these are mainly statutory duties the Council cannot cease to undertake them. The ultimate option is to ask the Secretary of State for Education to approve the funding.
- 8.14 ST suggested that as the outcomes from education ultimately benefited the LA then the LA should absorb the costs of these service from other areas within the LA. TD pointed out that ESG had

been allocated to provide services to schools and that to fund these services from elsewhere would increase the pressure on Council services already subject to very large funding cuts.

- 8.15 CL stated that the costs of PFI are something that schools were not consulted on in the first place and it was unfair to expect schools to pick up this charge. HD stated that monitoring the contract is necessary to ensure that costs do not escalate and that a reduction in monitoring could lead to higher net PFI costs.
- 8.16 JC asked if it would help to remove the costs for the Music service and Arthog as these are the only non-statutory costs. ST expressed his unease at this, as schools would then have to pick up large costs for these services individually.
- 8.17 HD asked if the Forum voted on the amounts as requested, whether greater detail could be provided in-year regarding the delivery costs? TD/TS stated that they would obtain more information for the September 2017 Forum meeting.
- 8.18 ST commented that with the DfE agenda to convert all schools to academies and the formation of MATs the role of the LA would reduce so some costs seem too high. JC agreed that in future the role of the LA may change but that funds were being requested for FY1718 and at present the large majority of schools in T&W remained maintained schools.
- 8.19 PR asked if we should have a working group to determine how services are provided to schools. JC thought this suggestion had considerable merit and the LA would consider how to facilitate such a group.
- 8.20 The Forum consensus was that the overall amount requested was too high and invited the LA to propose a lower figure so that the LA would share more of the cost burden. After a short discussion, the LA proposed that:
- The request for funds for non-statutory services, music and Arthog, which the majority of the Forum clearly did not support, would be withdrawn.
 - A further £200,000 reduction would be made to the remaining sum, producing a new total of £860,000, divided between £510,000 for retained duties (all schools including academies) and £350,000 for general funding (maintained schools only).
- 8.21 CL proposed that the amount of £510,000 be top sliced for retained duties. This was seconded by PB. The vote was nine in favour with four against. Carried.
- 8.22 CL proposed that the amount of £350,000 be de-delegated for general duties. This was seconded by PB. The vote was ten in favour and two against. Carried.

9. Any Other Business – SB.

Apprenticeship Levy

- 9.1 TD outlined the Government's apprenticeship levy, commencing in April 2017, which will charge employers half of one percent of their paybills, if this exceeds £3m. As the local authority is legally the employer of staff in community and voluntary controlled schools, all such schools will be subject to the levy. If schools have foundation status or are voluntary aided then they will be exempt from the charge if their paybill is less than £3m, but also will not be able to access the centrally held funds to pay for their apprentices' training and assessment.
- 9.2 Academies will have to pay the levy if their paybill is over £3M or if they are in a multi-academy trust (MAT) and the MAT's collective paybill is over £3M.
- 9.3 More information will be provided to schools in the near future, as further details are published by the Government.

De-delegation – Union Facility Time (UFT).

- 9.4 TD asked the Forum their views on this topic – as there was no-delegation in 2016/17 the default position for 2017/18 has been that there will be no de-delegation but he wished to confirm that this was the Forum's preferred position. The Forum confirmed that this was the case and that they did not wish to consider de-delegation for UFT in 2017/18.

10. Future Meetings – AW.

- 10.1 The next meeting of the Forum will be at Walker Room, Meeting Point House 09:30 Friday 24th March 2017.

- 10.2 The full listing of meetings can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/507/forum_meetings