

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 24th March 2017

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre

Status: Agreed

In attendance:

Name	Establishment	Representing
Sue Blackburn (SB) – Chair	Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Paul Broomhead (PB)	Burton Borough Secondary	Governors
Becca Butler (BB)	Dothill Primary	Maintained Primaries
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primaries - Newport Cluster
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special	Maintained Special Schools
Chay Davis (CD)	Ercall Wood Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Ros Garner (RG)	Newport Girls' High	Academies
Penny Hustwick (HW)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Helen Osterfield (HO)	Tibberton Primary	Maintained Primaries - Small Schools
Paul Roberts (PR)	HLC Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Jane Siddons (JS)	Lightmoor Primary	Maintained Primaries
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
Caroline Elliott (CE)	Senior Finance Officer - Schools	LA Observer

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Claire Lamb – Redhill Primary – Maintained Primaries North Cluster
Andy Wood – Senior Accountant - Schools

2. Minutes of the 13th January 2017 meeting and matters arising – SB.

2.1 The minutes of the 13th January 2017 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/5482/january_2017_-_minutes

There were no matters arising that were not covered in the agenda for this meeting.

3. Statutory duties previously funded by the Education Services Grant – plans for 2018/19 – TD.

3.1 The Forum 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/5483/march_2017_-_esg_paper

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5484/march_2017_-_esg_annex

3.2 At the last meeting of the Forum central top-slices (from all schools including academies) and de-delegation (from maintained schools only) were approved for 2017/18 for services previously funded by ESG. It was agreed with the Forum that whereas the DfE imposed timescale was very tight for 2017/18 arrangements, leading to a limited amount of time for Forum members to consider the proposals, we would consult with the Forum during 2017 in order for the Forum to make informed decisions for 2018/19.

3.3 The arrangements for ESG services for 2018/19 form part of the DfE's stage 2 consultation on the school funding system are not yet confirmed. However the details of the consultation indicate that the likely arrangements will be as follows:

Duties for all schools including academies:-

The DfE is proposing to create a new non ring-fenced 'central services' DSG block which will fund both these former ESG duties and also the statutory duties formerly funded by central top slices voted by the Forum.

Duties for maintained schools only:-

Forum votes in 2018/19 will therefore be confined to the de-delegated (maintained schools only) ESG duties. The three main areas are Assessment Management, Human Resources and Finance (including Audit).

3.4 Further information/details will be provided for the May Forum meeting. There will still be time to revisit the proposals, with two further meetings in the Autumn term before the January deadline for a vote to be taken.

3.5 The forum agreed with this approach.

4. LA responses to school funding consultations – TD.

4.1 The group were presented with the LA's response to the two recent consultations on DfE proposals for school funding. Papers can be found at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5485/march_2017_-_la_consultation_response_to_schools_formula_phase_2

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5486/march_2017_-_la_consultation_response_to_hn_phase_2

- 4.2 The first consultation related to the proposed national funding formula for mainstream schools, with a closing date of Wednesday 22nd March 2017.
- 4.3 TD summarised T&W's response, highlighting key areas such as:
- Disagreement with the proposal to have a funding floor of 3%;
 - A more pupil led system being an odd accompaniment to to an increased lag in the funding for academies;
 - The rhetoric of a national funding formula at school level being contradicted by the reality of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) moving money within the MAT;
 - An incoherent approach to deprivation funding, whereby in the DfE's proposed formula such funding is weighted towards secondary schools whereas the DfE's Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) is weighted towards primaries;
 - No apparent needs based rationale behind the proposed funding amounts;
 - Maintained schools budgets being top-sliced for LA services but the DfE (and its agencies) providing free equivalent services to academies.
- 4.4 JC mentioned that he'd seen an article on PPG funding suggesting it could be removed, although staying in place to the end of the current parliament.
- 4.5 TD commented that at a recent conference, a DfE speaker had emphasised the need to show impact to justify the £billions invested in PPG, with the clear implication that current evidence was not necessarily strong enough to prevent a future government reducing PPG or combining it with the main school funding formula.
- 4.6 The second consultation paper related to stage 2 of High Needs Funding change.
- 4.7 TD summarised T&W's response, which agreed that it is right to have a national formula for High Needs and that the overall design of the formula seems fair.
- 4.8 However, in the proposed system the funding for mainstream schools would be ring-fenced, unless all schools vote to voluntarily allocate some of their school's funding for High Needs. 'Other sources' of funding for high needs are limited and/or unrealistic to access leading to a situation in which
- there has been no apparent attempt made by the DfE to predict trends or future demand on High Needs;
 - the tribunal system overrides LA placement decisions whilst ignoring financial or building capacity constraints;
 - demand is rising due to factors such as medical advances (more children survive previously life threatening circumstances) and the extension of the entitlement to provision to age 25 in some circumstances.
- 4.9 Each Local Authority has been given money to carry out a strategic review of high needs provision in 2017/18. The Schools Forum and schools generally will be kept informed and involved in this review's progress.

4.10 There were no further comments about the consultation report.

5. Update on apprentice levy - TD.

5.1 The group were presented with a report entitled: Apprenticeship Levy in 2017/18: Update 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/5487/march_2017_-_apprenticeship_levy

5.2 TD covered the main points of the paper:

- the official employer of staff in community and voluntary controlled schools is the local authority and so all these schools are included in the scheme as the total LA pay bill exceeds the £3m threshold;
- the intention is to widen apprenticeships to cover a wider variety of jobs, including all main types of staff in a school;
- apprentices need to spend a minimum of 20% of their time in training;
- funding can only be used for training, and not salary costs;
- the government will contribute an additional 10%;
- The fund needs to be spent in 2 years or lost;
- There is a new co-investment rate for non-levy paying employers whereby government will pay 90% of the cost of training and assessment, up to a cap.

5.3 TD commented that the levy is being introduced with little time for preparation, and with key aspects of the change still being in the process of being developed by the government. As a result, the Local Authority are in the process of working out the details of how this will be operated.

5.4 SB had received a telephone call from DfE asking about apprentices, and how they were being trained at the school. It was a garbled call and SB pointed out that the school didn't employ any apprentices.

5.5 CC had a similar call from the DfE asking if she would consider employing an apprentice. CC had responded she didn't have any spare budget to pay the salary of an apprentice.

5.6 There was a general consensus that detail was lacking for the policy change, particular as it came into force in a couple of weeks.

5.7 JC commented that some schools won't be able to afford to employ apprentices by themselves and suggested there may be a mechanism whereby people already employed by schools, not classified as apprentices, may be able to be trained using the levy or that schools could perhaps work to share apprentices going forwards.

5.8 JW suggested that schools might have been able to afford to pay an apprentice's wages had the government not introduced the levy and thus taken funds out of school budgets.

6 High Needs Update – TD.

6.1 A paper was presented entitled High Needs Budget Update. 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/5488/march_2017 - high_needs_budget_update](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5488/march_2017_-_high_needs_budget_update)

6.2 In recent years the number of statements / EHCP's above the 15 hour threshold has increased dramatically and the number of pupils in special schools has also significantly increased. Classes in several T&W special schools are large, partly because tribunal referrals are leading to pupils entering special schools that are already full.

6.3 JC mentioned benchmarking results showing that Telford & Wrekin has more special school places than most Local Authorities but despite this, demand is increasing.

6.4 HD stated that nationally there are 35% more complex needs pupils, and that special schools are under intense pressure, particularly in the primary sector.

6.5 JC commented that a concern was that on occasion secondary schools refer children who have been in mainstream primary schools, but with additional support, to special schools. Additional classrooms at special schools may be needed.

6.6 HD mentioned how numbers had increased dramatically at The Bridge over recent years, with projected numbers being significantly higher than places available. Unless capacity is increased, the risk is that children have to use very expensive out of area provision.

6.7 PR asked if children are getting the right funding from the right places? JC answered that high cost out of county placements are funded in part or in whole by social care. With regard to health funding HD advised that a small amount of funding is received for nurses.

6.8 CC commented that in her mainstream school she has a child needing a nurse but this has to be funded by the school.

6.9 JW said that when emotional and behavioural problems cause issues in mainstream schools, sometimes the only option is to exclude the pupil as it's hard to get an EHCP for them.

6.10 HD referred to pupils who have significant difficulties and thus spend little time in school but are still on the school's data for results etc.

7 SEN contingency workings for FY1718 - TD.

7.1 The group were presented with a spreadsheet showing SEN contingency fund calculations for the summer term. The spreadsheet can be found at the Schools Forum section of T&W's website at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5489/march_2017 - sen_contingency_summer_term](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/5489/march_2017_-_sen_contingency_summer_term)

7.2 TD advised that there are two tranches of SEN contingency funding. The first tranche is based on a 5/12ths calculation from spring term data, and the second will be updated in the autumn term, using a 7/12ths calculation.

7.3 The funds are allocated as follows:

- All schools are ranked according to the amount of EHCP / statements per pupil that is not directly funded (i.e. the first 15 hours).
- This is then compared to the school's ranking for a combination of deprivation and low prior attainment.
- Funding is then allocated to schools with a significant difference in ranking between the two measures.

The summer term calculation shows that one secondary and eight primary schools will receive this funding.

7.4 The trend in recent years has been that the number of lower value statements, which do not lead to additional resources being allocated to schools, has decreased. In contrast, higher value statements have increased. Besides the budget pressure this creates for the high needs budget, it may also mean that 'unfunded' statement/EHCP hours are becoming a less reliable measure of high needs in a school.

7.5 CC thought that parents of children with high needs are sometimes attracted to smaller rural schools, believing that a smaller, quieter school will be better for their child.

8 Any Other Business – SB.

8.1 There was no other business and the meeting closed at 10.33 am.

9 Future Meetings.

9.1 The next meeting of the Forum will be at Walker Room, Meeting Point House 9:30 am, Friday 26th May 2017.

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

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