

**Minutes of the Schools Forum – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014.**

**Held in The Chapel at Meeting Point House**

**Status: Approved**

In attendance:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Establishment</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Dave Hill	Burton Borough Secondary	North & Newport Cluster
Gill Eatough	Hadley Learning Community	North Cluster
Claire Lamb	Redhill Primary	North Cluster
Jessi Gupta	Captain Webb Primary	Central Cluster
Nick Renshaw	Charlton Learning Community	Wellington Cluster
Helen Middleton	John Randall Primary	South Cluster
Steve Wall	Sutherland Academy	Multi Academy Trust
Steve Hawke	Abraham Darby Academy	Academies
Malcolm Boulter	Hadley Learning Community	Governor's Representative
Barbara Williams	Lakeside Academy	Academies
Heather Davies	The Bridge Special School	Special Schools
Adrian Beckett	TCAT	16 – 19 Partnership
Jim Collins	Ass't Director – Education and Corporate Parenting	LA Observer
Tracey Smart	Finance Manager	LA Observer
Tim Davis	Finance Team Leader	LA Observer
Richard Peach	Finance Team Leader	LA Observer
Andy Wood	Schools' Funding Accountant	LA Observer

**1. Apologies - AW**

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Paul Watling – Cabinet Member, Children, Young People & Families

Sue Blackburn – Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary

Allyson Brown – Apley Wood Primary

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising - DH**

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013, were accepted as an accurate record. These can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6455/november\\_2013-minutes](http://www.telford.gov.uk/www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6455/november_2013-minutes)

2.2 TD stated that as requested in paragraph 2.2 of the November 2013 minutes the funding formula agreed by council was placed onto the Forum website.

2.3 TD stated that the additional modelling requested in paragraph 6.11 of the November 2013 minutes has been completed and will be presented to the group at the next meeting.

### **3. Centrally Retained Schools Block DSG – TD**

3.1 The group were advised of the differences between centrally retained funding and de-delegation funding. Voting rights were also discussed and clarified. In general terms all members with the exception of the 16-19 member can vote on centrally retained funding but only maintained mainstream schools can vote on de-delegation. The results of de-delegation votes only apply to maintained primary and secondary schools and for each proposal there are separate votes for the primary and secondary sectors.

3.2 The group were re-issued with the report from the last meeting “Optional De-delegation and Central Expenditure from the Dedicated Schools Grant for financial year 2014/15” which can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6376/november\\_2013-optional\\_dedelegation\\_and\\_central\\_expenditure](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6376/november_2013-optional_dedelegation_and_central_expenditure)

3.3 The group were presented with a paper providing additional admissions and CERA data as requested at the previous meeting, to inform the discussion regarding these two proposed central retentions. This paper can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/100005/education\\_and\\_learning/279/schools\\_forum/2](http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/100005/education_and_learning/279/schools_forum/2)

3.4 JC reminded the group of the financial pressures facing the LA given the unprecedented reductions in government funding. After several rounds of savings, further cuts will now have an impact upon front line services, something which the Council has sought to avoid to date. JC also took the opportunity to remind the group of the T&W budget consultation available on the website and at various venues around the borough.

3.5 Each request for funding was discussed individually followed by a vote on that particular area. DH reminded the Forum of the need to keep in mind the amount requested, in the context that requests for large sums would probably justify more discussion than more modest amounts.

#### **Safeguarding Training- £25,000.**

3.6 There was a short discussion on this proposal. The views expressed were that this was a valued service. The subsequent vote unanimously approved the Safeguarding retention of £25,000.

#### **Admissions - £392,356.**

3.7 Referring to the additional information provided SW thanked TD for the analysis as he felt he would now be able to vote on a more informed basis.

- 3.8 HM asked if we could top slice a different amount; did it have to be the £392K or nothing? TD stated that the £392K is the maximum that could be taken. A lesser sum could be agreed, but once reduced, DfE regulations would not allow it to be increased again in later years.
- 3.9 CL queried if the schools should be paying less because of the move to a single point of entry.
- 3.10 JC stated that the service is already under considerable pressure due to restructuring within the LA. If the retained monies were reduced then there would probably be a comparable reduction in the service provided. SW expressed his concern that there was no guarantee that restructures would not impact upon the service, even if the full sum requested was approved by the Forum
- 3.11 DH stated that we probably have two ways of looking at the funding for these services. The first would be to look at the breakdown of where the costs are and the second would be to look at how much schools can afford.
- 3.12 GE stated that a number of schools are concerned with how the admissions service is working; frustrations are predominantly with the appeals process. If schools are to pay for the service heads want a say in how the service is to be run.
- 3.13 DH commented that if we are contributing above the average we should be getting an above average service. Even if this is the cases, there could be other areas where the additional funds could be used to better effect. SW questioned if the service is value for money.
- 3.14 SH stated that there was a risk that if the Forum reduces the funding for the service and it turns out that we needed the original service, DfE regulatory restrictions would not allow us to increase the funding again in later years. Any reduction is a permanent reduction in funding. NR agreed that we would not want to reduce the service if this resulted in a lot of legal cases, resulting from appeals etc, which cost more than the savings.
- 3.15 DH asked for a vote on whether we want to maintain the funding for this year. Votes in favour were seven, against nil, with all remaining abstaining. Therefore the top slice for the admissions team was approved for the FY1415.
- 3.16 Having approved the top slice DH stated that in response to the comments made in the earlier discussion the following questions/actions should be addressed.
- GE asked that JC and the admissions team attend the PHF to explain the appeals process,
  - CL asked for Head teacher representation on appeals meetings,
  - SW asked that a commitment is made to no cuts to the service. NR queried whether this was possible as without a clear breakdown of costs which showed which part of the service the LA was paying for and which part was paid for by schools, this assurance could not be given,
  - SH asked for an analysis of the impact on individual schools of cuts to the service.

- 3.17 DMH commented that he felt that it would be very unlikely that the same level of funding would be agreed for 15/16, unless Forum received acceptable answers to the points above, and a further breakdown of the service. JC committed T&W to returning to a future meeting with the necessary information.

#### **Support for the School Forum - £17,124**

- 3.18 Following a short discussion, there was a unanimous vote to approve funding for School Forum support.

#### **Capital expenditure charged to a Revenue Account (CERA) - £594,554**

- 3.19 The paper "Additional Information on Central Expenditure from the Dedicated School Grant for Financial year 2014/15" has information relevant to this item at paragraph three. The paragraph shows the funding contributed by schools and how the funds are dispersed. Also shown is the contribution made by the local authority.
- 3.20 SW asked why the staffing employed on BSF had reduced but the cost to the DSG had remained constant. Schools are having to fund their own legal costs and effectively those of the LA.
- 3.21 JC stated that although a project manager had retired, a number of additional staff had been taken on to ensure that the project met its milestones. Regarding legal fees it could be argued that the costs arose largely as a result of academy status.
- 3.22 GE stated that primary heads thought that BSF was a disproportionate burden on the primary phase.
- 3.23 SH commented that effectively the LA is the client despite the schools being the end user. Once schools have moved into the buildings issues remain and the LA is the only entity with whom the contractors will deal. The LA needs the capacity to deal effectively with this and therefore SH felt that this not the time to cut the funding/capacity of the team.
- 3.24 DH then called for a vote on the CERA allocation. There was a unanimous vote in favour of the funding being retained.

#### **4. De-delegated Schools Block DSG - TD**

- 4.1 The group clarified who had de-delegation funding votes and who would be affected by the results of the vote.
- 4.2 There was then a lengthy discussion around the issue of secondary de-delegation as there are now only 5 maintained secondary schools, a minority of the sector, represented by two Forum members. Thus a de-delegation vote would only commit a minority of secondary schools and was not a strong basis for collective arrangements.

- 4.3 The group discussed the option to delegate the vote to the TWLP. It was acknowledged that as TWLP has no legal standing, any votes would not be binding on individual schools.
- 4.4 JC pointed out that we could just invoice all schools for the services which they received rather than having de-delegation. However, if these invoices were not paid there would be no legal grounds for compulsion.
- 4.5 GE queried the basis of the amounts quoted within the paper and this was clarified by TD. GE stated that in her opinion the secondary phase should not enter into de-delegation. GE asked that if the secondary phase do de-delegate can we ensure that academies pay an appropriate sum for the services they receive so that maintained schools are not subsidising them.

#### **Secondary phase vote.**

- 4.6 In the context of the previous conversation, DH proposed that there was no de-delegation for the secondary phase. Both NR and DH voted in favour. Therefore there will be no de-delegation for the secondary school phase for the FY1415.

#### **Primary phase votes.**

- 4.7 The group voted on the Behaviour Support de-delegation without further discussion and voted in favour of de-delegation. There were three votes in favour with none against. De-delegation for Behaviour support will therefore take place for the FY1415.
- 4.8 A brief discussion took place regarding the proposed de-delegation for the multicultural Development Team (MDT). CL stated that there are not enough languages covered which left gaps in the service provided. CL also felt that schools should pay for what they actually received. A vote then took place. One member voted for the de-delegation and three voted against. De-delegation for MDT will therefore not take place for the FY1415.
- 4.9 The group voted without further discussion on the de-delegation for Free School Meal Assessment. Four votes were in favour and nil against. De-delegation for FSM assessment will therefore take place for the FY1415.
- 4.10 There was a brief discussion on de-delegation for Union Facility Time. CL felt that union member subscriptions should cover the costs of union representation. DH pointed out that the unions position was that member subscriptions covered some union costs, e.g. regional offices, but that they were not sufficient to cover the costs of releasing local representatives. The unions' view was that there were benefits to schools of having knowledgeable representatives for their staff, when it came to the effective resolution of disputes etc.
- 4.11 The group then voted with one vote in favour and three against. There will therefore be no de-delegation for Union Facility Time in the FY1415.

4.12 SH then asked how the vote effected those schools that provided staff for union facility time. TD stated that if no funds are de-delegated then the local authority would have no funds to make payments.

4.13 JC stated that the issue of union facility time would be discussed at the next meeting of the LA with union representatives.

## **5. AOB - DH**

5.1 TD advised the group that at the next meeting the Early Years Funding block centrally retained funding would be discussed. Meetings with the Early Years finance group has recently taken place and it is likely that rates within the Early Years Single Funding Formula for 3 and 4 year olds will be frozen in in 2014/15. The context of this is the continuing freeze in Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) per pupil.

5.2 SW thanked the primary sector members for their patience during this meeting given that at times the discussions were predominantly relevant to the secondary sector.

## **6. Future Meetings – AW.**

6.1 Future meetings are as detailed on the web at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4763/forum\\_meetings](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4763/forum_meetings)