

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 16th November 2017

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Southwater, Telford Town Centre

Status: Draft

In attendance:

Name	Establishment	Representing
Sue Blackburn (SB) – Chairperson	Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primaries - Newport Cluster
Claire Lamb (CL)	Redhill Primary	Maintained Primaries - North Cluster
Adam Ames (AA)	Crudgington Primary	Maintained Primaries - Small Schools
Shaun Tyas (ST)	St George’s Primary	Maintained Primaries
Jo Weichbauer (JW) *	Ladygrove Primary	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Mark Gibbons (MG) *	Windmill Primary	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Paul Roberts (PR)	Hadley Learning Community	Maintained Secondary Schools
Chay Davis (CD) *	Ercall Wood Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special	Special Schools
Ros Garner (RG)	Newport Girls’ High	Academies
Pete Rowland (PR)	Abraham Darby Academy	Academies
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Shirley Reynolds (SR)	Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Regeneration	LA Observer
Heather Loveridge (HL)	Assistant Director Education & Corporate Parenting	LA Observer
Tracey Smart (TS)	Finance Manager	LA Observer
Tim Davis (TD)	Group Accountant	LA Observer
Andy Wood (AW)	Senior Accountant - Schools	LA Observer

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Helen Osterfield – Tibberton Primary School
Louise Lowings – Madeley Nursery School
Lee Hadley – Abraham Darby Academy
Becca Butler – Dothill Primary School
Paul Broomhead – Burton Borough

2. Minutes of the 3rd October 2017 meeting and matters arising – TD.

2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record and can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6380/october_2017_-_minutes

2.2 There were no matters arising that would not be covered in this meeting's agenda.

3. School Funding Formula for Financial Year 2018/19 - TD.

3.1 TD informed the Forum that we had a modest response to the consultation concerning the 2018/19 funding formula. Of the nine responses three were in favour of remaining with the T&W funding formula with six favouring moving towards the National Funding Formula (NFF). It was explained that the LA formula model had rolled the prior year formula forward and added the additional income to the basic per pupil (AWPU) elements only.

3.2 A comparison of the NFF to the LA's formula can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6432/november_2017_-_la_funding_formula_v_nff

3.3 ST asked what the DfE's medium term plan was around moving to a NFF. TD stated that for the financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 there would be a 'soft' NFF, whereby the income to the LA would be based upon the NFF but income to schools would continue to be via a local funding formula. The DfE has stated that it intends to move to a full NFF at school level, but has not confirmed a specific year from which this will happen.

3.4 Feedback from the DfE is that they expect half of all LAs to move towards a NFF model in 2018/19, higher than they were expecting. This may make the prospect of a move to the NFF at school level from 2020/21 more likely. MG asked if we could have a compromise formula that would move more gradually towards the NFF? TD stated that if we move towards the NFF we will model the formula and review it in terms of its impact on all schools, before finalising the allocations in January 2018.

3.5 ST expressed the view that as for years we have been underfunded as an LA, it would seem odd not to embrace a NFF which funds us more fairly.

3.6 CL stated that the responses at North Cluster were for a move towards the NFF.

3.7 The general Forum view was that we should move towards the NFF in 2018/19.

4. Arrangements for funding statutory services provided by the Local Authority – Central School Services Block and De-delegation - TD.

4.1 A paper was presented detailing the funding requests for statutory services for all schools and for de-delegation for the FY1819. This paper can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6433/november_2017_-_statutory_central_school_services

4.2 The paper has two discrete parts and there were two separate votes for funding requests.

Statutory Services for all Schools including Academies (Vote 1)

- 4.3 The funding requested was from the newly created, by the DfE, Central Schools Services Block (CSSB). As this block was created specifically for central services, expenditure from it does not need to be top-sliced or de-delegated from school budgets as it is independent of the schools block.
- 4.4 TD pointed out that the the accompanying paper for this item breaks down the funds to sub-S251 line level for in some areas in order to provide more meaningful data to inform the Forum decision.
- 4.5 HL reminded the Forum that the funding being requested was for statutory services and that the LA did not have any funding to cover these costs and has no other income stream to go to. The amount asked for is less than the 2018/19 CSSB allocation for T&W (which includes a protection element) but is very similar to the 'unprotected' allocation that the DfE has published.
- 4.6 MG asked where the income for Arthog remissions was coming from? HL stated that the remissions to Arthog are being paid for from LA general funds resources (i.e. not DSG), currently.
- 4.7 CL pointed out that the £845K is less than the LA asked for last year. TD stated that this was partly due to a realignment of where monies were being requested from and partially from ongoing cost savings (e.g. restructures) at the LA in reponse to general budget pressures.
- 4.8 ST stated that it was difficult for heads to know where the local authority could make savings. Could savings be made from sharing services across LAs, in the context that T&W is a comparatively small local authority? HL stated that whilst she wouldn't dismiss the possibility, and indeed some services were already provided on a joint basis, there is still a need for local knowledge in order to provide many services, place planning being an example of this.
- 4.9 The Forum proceeded to a vote on the request for £845,000 of the CSSB to be used to fund statutory services for schools, including academies, in 2018/19. 11 members were in favour with no votes against. Funding was therefore approved.

Statutory Services for Maintained Schools Only – (Vote 2)

- 4.10 TD pointed that the amounts requested for 2018/19 were higher than 2017/18 as they covered a full year. The 'general funding' element of the Education Services Grant only ceased at the end of August 2017 and so the 2017/18 funding only covered 7 months. Thus, pro rata, the £480,000 requested was substantially lower than the amount agreed for 2017/18.
- 4.11 The funds requested were for statutory services that must be provide to maintained schools. Any maintained school convertings to an academy before 1 April 2018 would not contribute to these services.
- 4.12 HL pointed out that the amount requested, £480,000, was much less than the amount that the LA pays for legacy premature retirement costs, currently costing £1.4m per annum. Other LAs

historically charged this to DSG and will receive additional income from the DfE to cover these 'historic costs' but T&W will have to pay these costs from LA income for many years to come.

- 4.13 The Maintained school members of the Schools Forum voted on the funding request for £480,000 to be de-delegated from maintained school budgets for statutory services in 2018/19. Eight were in favour with none against. The proposal was therefore passed.

5. SEN contingency funding allocations for FY1718 - TD.

- 5.1 The Forum were presented with the final allocations of the SEN contingency fund for FY1718. This can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6435/november_2017_-_sen_contingency_trip_-_september_2017_-_march_2018

- 5.2 TD reminded the Forum that this contingency had been in place since 2013 when we moved to the then new formula. There is a risk that the methodology used (comparing the total of the first 15 hours of statements/EHCPs to school demographic factors) is becoming less suitable over time as there is no financial incentive to apply for EHCPs that are likely to identify less than £6,000 (approximately 15 hours) of additional needs.

- 5.3 CL stated that she thought the contingency should continue as it recognised that using proxy indicators to allocate SEN funding did not necessarily accurately reflect SEN needs in individual schools.

- 5.4 PR stated that £100,000 per annum was not nearly enough for the additional support that was required for SEND over T&W.

- 5.5 TD reminded the group that the high needs block budget was under intense pressure.

- 5.6 ST thought that the demographic data shown on the workings was very informative and to see other schools' was useful. He felt that many schools would be interested to examine this.

- 5.7 In response HL stated that all schools would be reminded that all Forum papers are available to all on the Schools Forum section of the T&W website.

6 Growth funding FY1718 – TD.

- 6.1 A paper detailing the growth funding for FY1718 was presented to the Forum and can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6436/november_2017_-_growth_draft_funding_september_2017_-_march_2018

- 6.2 The allocations are based upon draft numbers at this stage, although experience has shown that they are usually close to the confirmed data (provided by the DfE in December).

6.3 TD explained the workings behind the allocations and reminded the group that we had agreed last year to move back to the formulaic approach after the Growth funding being debated at five meetings last year. Overall the Forum did not wish to return to individual consideration of school cases for growth funding, although CL did think that the level of individual school balances was a relevant consideration.

7 AOB - SB.

7.1 JW asked about the Apprenticeship levy and where does monies deducted from schools budget and unspent go? TD responded that the Inland Revenue hold funds for all relevant organisations (i.e. T&W Council for community and voluntary controlled schools) and that the funds were available for two years (including a 10% Government top-up). After this period, they are lost – the LA will update schools on funds remaining in due course.

7.2 CL asked when will schools know how Arthog remissions will be funded in future? HL responded that if the LA ceased to fund remissions, with the expectation that schools would use their pupil premium funds to do this instead, then any withdrawal of funding would be managed over a period of time. Prior to any withdrawal of funding there would need to be a discussion with councillors/cabinet. ST pointed out that Arthog would be impacted by any change of policy and would need as much advance notice as possible.

7.3 SB asked if an update could be given on single status. HL stated that single status is now moving ahead and we would add an update on the project's progress to the agenda for the next meeting.

7.4 The next meeting will be held at 9.30am on Thursday 11 January, at the Walker Room, Meeting Point House. A full list of forthcoming meetings can be found at the following link:

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

7.5 The meeting closed at 11:45 am.