

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 23rd May 2019

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

Status: Draft

| Name | Establishment | Representing |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Sue Blackburn (SB) Chairperson | Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary | Maintained Primaries – South Cluster |
| Shaun Tyas (ST) | St George’s Primary School | Maintained Primaries – North Cluster |
| Claire Lamb (CL) | Redhill Academy | Academies |
| Christobel Cousins (CC) | Lilleshall Primary School | Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster |
| Mark Davis (MD) | St Peter’s Bratton Primary | Maintained Primaries – Wellington Cluster |
| Heather Davies (HD) | The Bridge Special School | Maintained Special Schools |
| Jo Weichelbauer (JW)* | Ladygrove Primary | Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster |
| Gill Eatough (GE) | Learning Community Trust | Academies (Special Schools) |
| Penny Hustwick (PH) | ABC Nursery | PVI Representative |
| Shirley Reynolds (SR) | Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Education. | Telford & Wrekin Council |
| Heather Loveridge (HL) | T&W Assistant Director Education & Corporate Parenting | Representative of the Director of Children’s Services |
| Tim Davis (TD) | T&W Group Accountant | Representative of the Director of Finance |
| Andy Wood (AW) | T&W Senior Accountant - Schools | Representative of the Director of Finance |
| Shelley East (SE) | Regional Officer | National Education Union |

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Michael Scott – Newport Girls High School.
Helen Osterfield – Tibberton Primary School.
Paul Broomhead – Burton Borough Secondary School.
Tracey Smart - T&W Finance Manager.

2. Minutes of the 14th March 2019 meeting and matters arising.

2.1 The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record. The minutes can be found at the link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/8872/march_-_minutes

2.2 SB advised of the letter that will be sent to Government by the NAHT union on behalf of schools.

3. Distribution from 2019/20 Falling Rolls Fund - TD.

3.1 The Forum were presented with an updated paper which can be viewed at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/9004/may_2019_-_falling_rolls_data

3.2 ST voiced concerns that we should not be allocating additional funding to those schools that have, in some cases, quite significant balances brought forward as these balances could be used to manage the funding decrease caused by the fall in numbers. Such allocations could give the impression that there is 'spare' money in the system and thus undermine the case for an increase in funding for schools.

3.3 CC agreed that balances held were for situations like falling rolls and should be used in the first instance. CC also stated that it would be difficult to persuade Government that we don't have enough funding when we are giving additional funds to schools that already have significant balances.

3.4 ST asked if the admissions policies of church schools are in some cases contributing to falling rolls. This was not deemed to be a significant factor.

3.5 CC stated that the £50K could be better used in the high needs area.

3.6 SB proposed that the Forum vote on not distributing the monies for falling rolls and use the monies instead in the high needs area for FY1920. The Forum voted in favour of using the monies for high needs.

4. Funding & Representation for Trade Unions – SE.

4.1 SE introduced herself to the Forum and stated that she was looking for the Forum to support the principle of funding union facility time at a rate of £1.60 per pupil. This was a much lower rate than in other local authorities. SE outlined the work carried out by local union representatives and their role in maintaining good industrial relations.

4.2 CL stated that historically it has been felt by T&W schools that UFT should be covered by the contributions paid to the unions rather than from schools' education funding. When de-delegation was in place it was intended to cover the cost of back filling for teaching staff released during teaching time. However, this did not prove to be what the funding was used for as the work done was outside of teaching time and therefore required no back filling of staff.

4.3 CC stated that when data was requested to support the de-delegation little had been provided and so without the ability to scrutinise the use of resources, schools had decided not to de-delegate for the last four years.

- 4.4 HL stated that there are regular meetings with unions which includes Directors, Finance and HR representatives from the LA.
- 4.5 ST pointed out that parents would want monies allocated for children's education to be spent on education, not on paying for UFT, and would expect union member subscriptions to fund union activities.
- 4.6 SE responded that employers have a statutory obligation to provide facility time for union representatives and that enabling this statutory duty to be delivered was the basis for the request for funding.
- 4.7 CL advised that most schools will have their own procedures for ensuring union facility time duties are covered. If there needs to be funding for unions, then it should be on a buy in basis.
- 4.8 TD stated that we currently have a buy in service but only a minority of schools contribute.
- 4.9 Several Heads stated that they very rarely used union representation. However, GE had used the unions on a number of occasions and SB agreed, stating that schools will never know when they need the unions until they do.
- 4.10 CL requested a paper from the unions to take back to clusters to discuss before making any decisions on funding.
- 4.11 SB supported this, saying that schools needed to know in detail what any monies would be used for.
- 4.12 SE agreed to produce a paper that schools could then discuss with their cluster groups prior to returning to this issue at the September 2019 Forum meeting.

5. 2018/19 DSG Budget Outturn – TD.

- 5.1 TD presented a paper which can be found at the link:
[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/9005/may_2019 - dsg_outturn_fy1819](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/9005/may_2019_-_dsg_outturn_fy1819)
- 5.2 TD reminded the Forum that in the FY1718 T&W started with a DSG surplus of £271K but ended with a deficit of £544K; an in-year overspend of £815K.
- 5.3 In FY1819 the deficit was cleared, leaving a small surplus of £20K to carry forward to FY1920. Significant contributors to this improved position were the additional in-year funding received from the DfE, underspends on Early Years and keeping tight control of the high needs budget.
- 5.4 TD pointed out that T&W are in a favourable position compared to many LAs, some of which have very significant deficits. A large contribution to this relatively favourable position is the willingness

of T&W schools to work collegiately and demonstrate a shared commitment to supporting pupils with high needs.

- 5.5 TD fed back from his attendance at yesterday's National Funding conference. The DfE has recognised the scale of the financial challenges in high needs but until the result of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review are known (which may or may not be in 2019), the extent to which additional funding will be found for high needs is unclear. The DfE also recognised the need to look at policy around high needs, to potentially mitigate some of the pressures by adapting policy.
- 5.6 GE/ST asked if the LA would be likely to request the 0.5% top slice again for FY2021 in the context of the FY1920 underspend. TD responded that until the DfE clarifies 2020/21 income to the LA then the LA could not rule out another request for a top slice.
- 5.7 HD said that if cost pressures become too great in special schools and schools are unable to support pupils with the most complex and costly needs, the placements out of area can be exceptionally costly – thus making the financial situation worse.
- 5.8 GE considered that parents are generally happy with T&W special school provision. However, there is still a great deal of pressure on costs and capacity.
- 5.9 ST perceived that local Heads recognise the pressures on special schools and the possible impact upon mainstream schools of not supporting them sufficiently.

6. Scheme for Financing Schools - TD.

- 6.1 The Forum were presented with a paper for the changes to the scheme which can be found at the link below:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/9006/may_2019_-_scheme_for_financing_schools

- 6.2 The changes are mostly directed (i.e. mandatory) revisions from the DfE. Nevertheless, the DfE requires us to consult with all maintained schools. We shared the draft Scheme in March 2019 and received no responses from schools.

- 6.3 The new scheme will therefore be implemented and can be found at the link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2595/scheme_for_financing_schools_-_2018

7. Any Other Business – SB.

- 7.1 CL requested the LA to produce the impact on schools of NJC pay increases over the last few years. The figures presented to Forum can be found at the link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/9007/may_2019_-_impact_on_njc_budgets

- 7.2 The impact is highest in the special school sector, due to the higher numbers of classroom support staff that need to be employed.
- 7.3 SB took the opportunity to thank ST, as this was his last meeting, for his service to the Forum.
- 7.4 There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:00.

8. Next Meetings

The dates of the meetings for the academic year 2019/20, are as follows:

| | | |
|--|---------|---------------------|
| Thursday 19 th September 2019 | 9.30 am | Meeting Point House |
| Thursday 21 st November 2019 | 9.30 am | Meeting Point House |
| Thursday 16 th January 2020 | 9.30 am | Meeting Point House |
| Thursday 12 th March 2020 | 9.30 am | Meeting Point House |
| Thursday 21 st May 2020 | 9.30 am | Meeting Point House |

A full record of future meetings can be found at the following link:

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