

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 21st November 2019

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

Status: Agreed

Name	Establishment	Representing
Gill Eatough (GE) Chair	Learning Community Trust	Academies (Special)
Paul Broomhead (PB)	Burton Borough School	Mainstream Secondary schools
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special School	Maintained Special schools
Claire Whiting (CW)	Redhill Academy	Mainstream Academies
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster
Mark Davis (MD)	St Peter’s Bratton Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Wellington Cluster
Rachel Cook (RC)	Newdale Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Michael Scott (MS)	Newport Girls’ High School	Mainstream Academies
Lee Hadley (LH)	Abraham Darby Academy	Mainstream Academies
Jo Weichelbauer (JW)	Ladygrove Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Jenny Griffiths (JG)	Church Aston Infant School	Maintained Primaries – Small Schools
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Heather Loveridge (HL)	Assistant Director Education & Corporate Parenting	Representative of Director of Children’s Services
Tracey Smart (TS)	T&W Finance Manager	Representative of the Director of Finance
Tim Davis (TD)	T&W Group Accountant	Representative of the Director of Finance
Simon Wellman (SW)	T&W SEND Manager	Representative of Director of Children’s Services
Andy Wood (AW)	T&W Senior Accountant - Schools	Representative of the Director of Finance

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Sue Blackburn – Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary School.
Helen Osterfield – Tibberton Primary School.
Robert Fox – Donnington Wood Junior School.

2. Minutes of the 19th September 2019 meeting and matters arising - TD.

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

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/10616/september_2019_-_minutes

2.2 The group confirmed that letters had gone out to schools from the unions requesting funding for the AY2019/20.

2.3 TD advised that the search for a post 16 member for the Forum is ongoing.

3. School funding 2020/21 onwards - TD.

3.1 TD gave the group an overview of the papers presented to the Forum. The papers can be found at the following links:

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/10977/november_2019_-_schools_funding_2020-21_onwards
https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/10978/november_2019_-_schools_block_provisional_modelling

Schools Block

3.2 TD advised the Forum that the initial modelling has continued to be based upon the principle of moving towards the national funding formula (NFF). As the LA is not asking for a 0.5% transfer from the schools block to the high needs block for 2020/21 and the DfE has increased T&W to NFF levels, it is possible (depending upon confirmed local data) that we could be able to fully implement the national formula for T&W schools in FY2020-21.

3.3 CW stated that in the NFF, and also in the historic funding formula, deprivation and low prior attainment allocations to schools (major elements of mainstream schools notional budget for high needs) did not always reflect where the need was for SEN funding, i.e. the extent to which individual schools are having to meet the first £6,000 of additional costs for each pupils from their general budget allocations.

High Needs

3.4 The provisional 2020/21 allocations to T&W have increased by 14% compared to the national average of 12%. This produces an increase of approximately £3m compared to 2019/20. However the lack of a top slice from the schools block will reduce the net increase in funds by around £600,000. In addition, whilst it is too early in the financial year to be confident about the eventual outturn, it does appear likely that there will be a DSG overspend in high needs by the end of the year. There are cost pressures throughout high needs.

3.5 HD added that special school budgets for FY1920 were under considerable pressure and schools could have incurred significant deficits by the end of FY1920. These deficits will need to be addressed and a realistic inflationary increase added to the FY2021 budget.

3.6 GE stated that nationally there had been a substantial rise in the number of EHCPs being requested. SW responded that in recent years the increase in T&W has been substantially less than national averages.

Early Years.

- 3.7 TD pointed out that the increase in early years funding was very modest in comparison to the schools budget, with an increase of less than 2%. There was a significant increase in early years funding in 2017/18, but no increases in the subsequent two years.
- 3.8 Particularly in the PVI sector, early years has been significantly impacted by year on year increases in the minimum wage in the last few years, leading to substantial financial pressure.
- 3.9 TD highlighted that Nursery Schools still face financial uncertainty, due to the government only extending the guarantee of the lump sum elements of the EYNFF from August 2020 to March 2021.
- 3.10 CW stated that nursery classes are being subsidised by the remainder of the school, as the funding available is insufficient.
- 3.11 PH stated that the PVIs are charging what the market will support in terms of private provision and that private provision is subsidising the free offer.

Central School Services Block (CSSB)

- 3.12 The income for the CSSB is based upon an amount per pupil, which is reducing annually for authorities like T&W that are on a protected sum, as protection is withdrawn. 2020/21 is also the first year of a gradual removal of funding for historic commitments, with funding being cut by 20% next year. This has only a small impact for T&W as we only had £25,000 of historic items.

4. Funding for statutory services - TD.

- 4.1 The Forum was presented with papers which can be found at the following links:

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/11024/november_2019_-_funding_for_statutory_services_2020-21
https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/11025/november_2019_-_central_schools_services_numbers_fy2020-21
- 4.2 The first part of the paper looks at the services that are provided to all schools including academies and the vote for this element will be for all the Forum members.
- 4.3 TD highlighted that the services for which the LA is asking for funding are statutory services that the LA must provide to all schools.
- 4.4 CW asked why internal audit are included in the CSSB funding request when they do not provide services to academies. TD clarified that internal audit have a responsibility to audit the LAs general activities, some of which are provide to academies as well as maintained school. Thus it is an indirect and less visible service than an audit of the school, for which the local authority has no responsibility for academies.

- 4.5 The Forum voted to approve the use of £859,350 from the CSSB for the services listed in the paper presented.
- 4.6 The second part of the paper requests that schools de-delegate funding to support statutory services that the LA must provide to maintained schools.
- 4.7 Maintained mainstream schools representatives voted in favour of de-delegating funding at £26.23 per pupil, approximately £391,400 for all schools, to be used for the services listed in the paper.

5. De-delegation for Free School Meal Eligibility Checks - TD.

- 5.1 The Forum was presented with a paper which can be found at the link:

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/10980/november_2019_-_free_school_meal_de-delegation

- 5.2 The synergistic benefits of the LA carrying out checks on the behalf of schools was discussed.
- 5.3 The maintained primary schools voted in favour of de-delegation for FSM checks for FY2020/21.
- 5.4 PB, as the only maintained secondary schools representative, agreed to de-delegation for both of the maintained secondary schools.

6. Falling Rolls Fund for FY2020/21 - TD

- 6.1 The Forum were presented with a paper which can be found at the link:

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/10979/november_2019_-_falling_rolls

- 6.2 There was a discussion concerning whether there should be a falling rolls fund. The Forum decided not to have a fund for FY2020/21 but to revisit the issue in subsequent years.

7. High Needs Update – SW

- 7.1 SW informed the group that all of the initiatives that were discussed at the January 2019 Forum have either been introduced or are imminent. The authority's strategy remains to support mainstream schools to be as inclusive as possible and to provide funding to support this where appropriate.
- 7.2 SW stated that there are still considerable pressures on special schools and rising costs for post 16 provision. Although the DfE has allocated substantial additional funding for 2020/21 there are many demands upon the available resources.

8. AOB.

8.1 There was no further business and the meeting closed at 10:40.

9. Next Meetings

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

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