

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 16th January 2020

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

Status: Draft

Name	Establishment	Representing
Gill Eatough (GE) Chair	Learning Community Trust	Academies (Special)
Helen Osterfield (HE)	Tibberton Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Small Schools
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special School	Maintained Special schools
Claire Whiting (CW)	Redhill Academy	Mainstream Academies
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
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Heather Loveridge (HL)	Director: Education & Skills	Representative of 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
Sharron Carrington (SC)	Learning & Development Manager	Co-operative Council Delivery Team
Sharron Hardy (SH)	Assistant Learning & Development Facilitator	Co-operative Council Delivery Team
Liz Noakes (LN)	Director: Health, Well Being & Commissioning	Public Health & Civil Resilience
Tracy Hall (TH)	Music Team Leader	Health & Well-Being
Jo Barnett (TB)	Outdoor Education Service Manager	Commercial Services

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Sue Blackburn – Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary School.

Paul Broomhead – Burton Borough Secondary School.

Robert Fox – Donnington Wood Junior School.

Councillor Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member – Education & Skills.

Christobel Cousins – Lilleshall Primary School.

Darren Lennon – Linden Centre PRU.

Louise Lowings – Madeley Nursery School.

Tracey Smart – Finance Manager T&W.

2. Minutes of the 21st November 2019 meeting and matters arising - GE.

- 2.1 The minutes were approved subject to TD amending paragraph 7.1 which would be amended to read: *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.* The minutes can be found at the link:

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/11178/november_2019_-_minutes

- 2.2 GE kindly offered to approach Graham Guest, Principal of Telford College, regarding the post 16 Forum member vacancy.

3. Update on School funding 2020/21 onwards - TD.

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

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/11175/january_2020_-_update_on_schools_funding_2020_onwards

Schools Block

- 3.2 TD advised that since the last Forum meeting, data has been released by the DfE enabling the formula to be finalised. Following Cabinet approval on 2 January 2020, we have moved to the national funding formula (NFF) and been able to add a slight uplift, due to timing differences between the data used to distribute the allocations to the LA and the data used to allocate to schools.
- 3.3 As the Authority and Forum's aspiration for the last few years has been to converge our formula to the NFF, this marks the culmination of this strategy. It has become possible because the DfE have moved previously underfunded authorities such as T&W on to the full NFF for 2020/21, so that the authority in turn is able to fund it's schools at this level.
- 3.4 GE asked why the mobility rates have increased so dramatically. AW advised that the methodology used by the DfE had changed, whereby the threshold had been reduced from 10% to 6% of schools cohorts.

High Needs

- 3.5 The provisional 2020/21 allocations to T&W have increased by 14% compared to the national average of 12%. In the updated allocations released in December 2019, we received a further £134K, due to increases in numbers on roll at specialist settings, as recorded on the October 2019 census.
- 3.6 GE asked if it would be possible for special schools to have their budgets earlier this year. TD confirmed that the target was to get budgets out to special schools by the end of March.

Central School Services Block (CSSB)

- 3.7 The income for the CSSB has improved slightly since the last meeting, by around £20K due to increased pupil numbers in the October 2019 census, but is still less than the prior year allocation.

4. Early Years Budget FY2020/2021 - TD.

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

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/11176/january_2020_-_early_years_budget

- 4.2 TD advised that the additional eight pence per hour received by the LA has been added to the hourly rate for all settings. The hourly rate for flexibility has reduced slightly, due to additional schools delivering flexibly, so the available funds have to be spread slightly more thinly. The funding received for maintained nursery school lump sums in 2020/21 will be distributed in full to the two nursery schools, resulting in an increase in the figure compared to 2019/20.
- 4.3 The methodology for distributing deprivation funding is changing for FY2020/2021. To date, tax credit data applied to children's home postcodes has been used. However this data is several years out of date. In addition the early years portal now makes identifying pupils eligible for free school meals (and thus the early years pupil premium grant (EYPPG)) more straightforward. We are therefore going to use EYPPG eligibility to allocate deprivation funding. In 2020/21 the total allocation for a deprived child for a full year will be £730.
- 4.4 PH pointed out that the national minimum wage is due to increase by 6.2% in April for those over 25, whereas the early years increase of eight pence is the equivalent of 1.84%. T&W's PVI sector has been relatively stable, but across the country more settings may close in 2020/21 as a result of financial pressures.
- 4.5 It was proposed that for 2020/21 the centrally held funding for central services is maintained at the prior year levels, as described in the paper.
- 4.6 CW stated that there whilst central retentions are required to provide statutory services and support, her perception is that schools do not use the early years team as much as the PVI settings.
- 4.7 RC asked if a note could be produced for settings which describes the activities undertaken by the early years service and distinguishes between traded and non traded elements. HL agreed to provide this information.
- 4.8 GE called for a vote to approve the centrally held funding at the amounts specified in the paper. All Forum members voted in favour.

5. Apprentice Levy - TD.

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

https://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/11177/january_2020_-_apprentice_levy

- 5.2 SC advised that take up had increased year on year. However around £80K of funding is uncommitted. It is proposed - as in previous years - to pool funds that are still unapplied at the 31st March 2020, and run an application process for schools.
- 5.3 RC asked about the new qualifications that have been added to the apprentice levy. SC agreed to send out the updated listing of qualifications.
- 5.4 RC asked if there could be increased flexibility around the hours and length of the qualifications for participants and GE asked if schools could suggest qualifications that could be added to the scheme. SC stated that the LA we keen to commission provision that schools would find useful and welcomed feedback in order to shape this.
- 5.5 It was agreed that it would be useful for SC to talk to clusters about the type of provision that could be offered and what schools would find useful. SC agreed to liaise with clusters.

6. Remissions for Arthog & Music Service – LN.

- 6.1 HL stated that T&W are one of the last LAs using funding from their general fund to support remissions. There is ongoing pressure on LA budgets as result of the deep cuts in Government funding in the last decade. There has been an ongoing debate about funding for remissions, particularly in the context of PPG funding for schools.
- 6.2 T&W's Cabinet is still keen to support opportunities for deprived pupils and have decided to introduce an Opportunity Fund to replace the current system for remissions. Due to funding pressures the fund will be less than currently spent on remissions, but it will be equally open to pupils in academies and maintained schools, whereas currently funding is only available to maintained schools.

Music service.

- 6.3 LN stated that the music service supports around 3,000 pupils per annum. A significant number of these pupils benefit from remitted fees.
- 6.4 Under the new system remittances will continue and will be available for pupils from all settings, whether schools or academies. The remittances will however be limited to one year of tuition per pupil. Any further tuition would need to be funded from other sources (the school, parents, etc).
- 6.5 The proposed date for changes to the new system will be September 2020 with a consultation due soon.
- 6.6 CW asked if there was a risk to the service if pupils ceased their tuition after one year. TH stated that there was a risk as pupils tended to be clustered in order to make the services financially viable. A reduction in take-up would therefore risk reducing the service able to be offered.

Arthog.

- 6.7 JB stated that a letter had gone out to schools on Friday 10th January outlining the changes relating to the Arthog remissions. The appendix stated that the current remissions policy would be honoured for all bookings made before the date of the letter for the period April 2020 to March 2021. Any new bookings would fall under the new policy.
- 6.8 The opportunity fund will be prorated based on all schools average remission levels over the previous three years. Eligible schools who make a booking to come to Arthog will receive an allocation from the Opportunity Fund in the form of a discount from their invoice.
- 6.9 Schools will have flexibility on how to use their allocations.
- 6.10 During 2020/2021 the council will review the effectiveness of the Opportunity Fund in meeting local needs. Schools will be asked for feedback and information on how they have utilised their allocations.

7. AOB.

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

8. Next Meetings

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

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