

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 1st October 2020

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams and YouTube

Status: Agreed

Name	Establishment	Representing
Gill Eatough (GE) Chair	Learning Community Trust	Academies (Special)
Sue Blackburn (SB)	Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary School	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Paul Broomhead (PB)	Burton Borough Secondary School	Maintained Secondary schools and governors.
Rachel Cook (RC)	Newdale Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge School	Maintained Special schools
Mark Davis (MD)	St Peter's Bratton Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Wellington Cluster
Denise Garner (DG)	Wrockwardine Wood Infant School	Schools with nursery classes
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Darren Lennon (DL)	Linden Centre PRU	Maintained Pupil Referral Units
Michael Scott (MS)	Newport Girls' High School	Mainstream Academies
Claire Whiting (CW)	Redhill Academy	Mainstream Academies
Simon Wellman (SW)	Interim Director Education & Skills	Representative of the Director of Children's services
Elizabeth Smith (LS)	SDM School Improvement	Representative of the Director of Children's services
Lisa Seymour (LSe)	Team Leader Early Years	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

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member Education & Skills.

Helen Osterfield – Tibberton Primary School

Robert Fox – Donnington Wood Junior School

Tracey Smart – Finance Manager T&W

2. Appointment of Chairperson – TD

- 2.1 The group were asked for volunteers to act as Chairperson for the academic year 2020 to 2021. GE volunteered and was elected as Chairperson.

3. Minutes of the 8th July 2020 meeting and matters arising - GE.

- 3.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes can be found at the link:

[July 2020 Approved minutes](#)

- 3.2 GE updated the Forum that the member representing 16-19 year olds will be Telford College's Finance Director. Unfortunately they could not attend this meeting but intend to attend future meetings.

4. Update on single status - AP.

- 4.1 Unfortunately AP had to give her apologies for this meeting but will attend the November 2020 meeting. The group recognised that single status has now been ongoing for a considerable period and at a future meeting will reconsider whether or not the centrally held single status balance of £0.6m should continue to be retained, or used to benefit current T&W pupils.

- 4.2 SB stated that in the current crisis schools are looking to improve their ICT provision and that this is one possible use of single status monies.

- 4.3 GE pointed out that the makeup of schools has changed from 2009 when the funds were allocated. The majority of the secondary sector is now represented by academies for which single status does not apply. TD added it also does not apply to voluntary aided (VA) and Trust schools.

- 4.4 HD stated that single status remains a big concern for special schools as they tend to employ a higher proportion of support staff.

- 4.5 SW agreed that we need clarity on progress of single status and the impact on schools.

- 4.6 CC added that schools are under pressure financially now and current pressures may need to take priority.

5. School Funding 2021/22 Onwards - TD.

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

[Schools Funding 2021 Onwards](#)

- 5.2 TD talked the Forum through the main points within the paper.

5.3 RC stated that she recently had obtained the IDACI data for her schools and thought it would be useful for all schools to have the data. AW agreed that he could send this out to schools.

5.4 When the discussion turned to the High Needs part of the paper SW stated that the focus of the SEND team had been on supporting and encouraging high needs pupils to remain within mainstream schools where appropriate. Another focus was on reducing the number of out of county placements so that children and young people are supported locally where possible.

6. Early Years' Service Provision - ES.

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

[Local Authority Early Years Team – Function & Impact](#)

6.2 LS went through the paper highlighting the major points.

6.3 CW queried how much schools use the service and school usage compared to PVI's. She queried whether the service could be provided on a buy back basis? LS responded stating that schools can buy back additional services should they wish to do so. LS also stated that she is currently working with seven schools, supporting them in expanding their provision.

6.4 RC stated that the service should publicise the services available, as there has been a high level of turnover in school staffing over the summer months. LS agreed and said that something would be on the education noticeboard as soon as possible.

6.5 RC asked about how well the hubs were working. LSe answered that one of her team attends each of the hubs but that attendance varies - the Grange Park hub which has been running for at least six years is well supported for example.

6.6 CC stated that attendance at the hubs seemed to have increased now that there is the option of remote attendance using (e.g.) Microsoft Teams.

6.7 TD stated that we have some benchmarking data for the early years' service. Nationally LAs top slice an average of £14 per pupil for central early years provision, but T&W only top slices £6 per pupil – less than half the average amount.

7. New Financial Transparency Rules for maintained schools - TD.

7.1 The Forum were presented with a paper which can be found at the link below:

[New Financial Transparency Rules](#)

7.2 TD went through the main points of the paper.

7.3 GE stated that academies are required to submit three year budget plans but this was difficult due to inflation and pay rises becoming less predictable the further into the future

one attempted to plan. TD concurred and said that in addition a tendency to be conservative with assumptions around income etc led to most plans suggesting a worse financial outcome than actually would occur.

8. AOB.

- 8.1 TD advised the group that schools had received £119K of COVID emergency grant in respect of 28 schools. Any school that used the exceptional category or exceeded their threshold are still awaiting approval of their claim.

9. Next Meetings

The dates of the forthcoming meetings for the academic year 2020/2021, are as follows:

Thursday 19th November 2020, Walker Room, Meeting Point House at 9:30 am

Thursday 14th January 2021, Walker Room, Meeting Point House at 9:30 am

Thursday 11th March 2021, Walker Room, Meeting Point House at 9:30 am

Thursday 20th May 2021, Walker Room, Meeting Point House at 9:30 am

Whilst the venue above remains booked, whether or not we have remote meetings in future will depend upon the Covid 19 situation.

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

[Planned Forum Meetings](#)