

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 14th January 2021

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams and YouTube

Status: Agreed

Name	Establishment	Representing
Gill Eatough (GE) Chair	Learning Community Trust	Academies (Special)
Paul Broomhead (PB)	Burton Borough Secondary School	Maintained Secondary schools and governors.
Rachel Cook (RC)	Newdale Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Mark Davis (MD)	St Peter's Bratton Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Wellington Cluster
Stephanie Dowley (SD)	John Randall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Lee Hadley (LH)	Abraham Darby Academy	Mainstream Academies
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Sarah Roberts (SR)	High Ercall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Small Schools
Michael Scott (MS)	Newport Girls' High School	Mainstream Academies
Claire Whiting (CW) *	Redhill Academy	Mainstream Academies
Simon Wellman (SW)	Director Education & Skills	Representative of the Executive 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

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member Education & Skills.

Jo Britton - Executive Director of Children's services.

Louise Lowings – Madeley Nursery School.

Christobel Cousins – Lilleshall Primary School.

Heather Davies – The Bridge Special School.

Darren Lennon – Linden Centre PRU.

Claire Whiting – Redhill Academy – (part of the meeting).

1.2 GE welcomed SD & SR to the Forum representing the South Cluster and Small Schools respectively.

2. Minutes of the 19th November 2020 meeting and matters arising - GE

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

[November 2020 Approved minutes](#)

3. School Funding 2021-22 onwards - TD.

- 3.1 TD talked the Forum through the main points of the paper which can be found at the link below:

[School Funding 2021-2022 Onwards.](#)

- 3.2 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations are now confirmed and were broadly as anticipated. Cabinet has approved the methodology, if not the actual figures, for the funding formula for FY2021/22.
- 3.3 The figures for the funding drivers for FY2021/2022 are still “tbc” as we are still working with schools to determine admission numbers for September 2021. The will be confirmed in order for allocations to be distributed to maintained schools and to the ESFA (for academies).
- 3.4 TD highlighted that from a schools budgetary perspective, if there are no pay rises for staff earning over £24,000, this will assist schools financial positions. From a staff point of view this is obviously less positive.
- 3.5 Within the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) there has been an increase of around £90K of which £81,474 was specifically allocated to replace the now defunct Teachers’ Pension Grant for those teachers employed for Local Authority Central Services.
- 3.6 RC asked where these teachers are employed within the LA. SW advised of the services that employed the teachers and that the funding received was similar to that the LA received under the previous grant.
- 3.7 The Forum members were asked to vote in favour of the LA retaining the funds for centrally retained teachers which they duly did. Remaining funds in the central school services block will be used to support high needs.

4. Early Years Budget 2021/22 - TD.

- 4.1 The Forum was presented with a paper on this agenda item. The paper can be found at the following link:

[Early Years Budget 2021/2022.](#)

- 4.2 TD talked through the paper highlighting the main points.

- 4.3 Three & four year old allocations to the LA have increased by six pence per hour. We will therefore increase the basic hourly rate by six pence from £3.90 to £3.96 with effect from the Summer Term 2021.
- 4.4 Two year old allocations to the LA have increased by eight pence per hour and we will increase the hourly rate to providers by the same amount, from £5.19 to £5.27.
- 4.5 The lump sum for maintained nursery schools will be maintained within the budget, however the DfE/ESFA has pointed out that it is not certain that it will continue after 1st September 2021.
- 4.6 Two increases in central retentions compared to 2020/21 were requested, the first being a central retention of £50,000 for supporting and promoting the 30 hours offer (£10,000 more than 2020/21). This funds ongoing costs for portal maintenance (around £16,000) marketing materials and promotion (around £3,000), staffing (around £20,000), preparation and management of 'Capital' and 30 hour support bidding (around £4,000) and additional costs of the annual sufficiency survey (around £7,000).
- 4.7 The second retention is a central retention of £130,000 to support the costs of the early years team (£10,000 more than 2020/21). This remains much lower than the average amount retained by other LAs. The central retentions in 2019/20 resulted in a per capita retention for T&W of £6, less than half the England average of £14 (median £13).
- 4.8 TD pointed out that T&W distributes in excess of 98% of the Early Years allocations for settings which is in excess of the DfE requirement of 95%.
- 4.9 RC stated that clusters wanted clarification on the £130,000 for the Early Years team. Could this be distributed to settings and then used to buy back into the services that are required by settings.
- 4.10 SW pointed out that Liz Smith and Lisa Seymour came to Forum in October 2020 to explain the services that are provided by the Early Years team. SW also stated that the impression from PVI's and Childminders was that they were more than happy with the Early Years service.
- 4.11 PH advised that a menu of services available goes out around March, giving details of the free elements and the available services to buy into.
- 4.12 GE stated that it might be beneficial for Liz Smith to attend the Primary Heads' Forum to discuss the services provided.
- 4.13 MD stated that he had worked with the Early Years team and found them very useful, but stated he had not had sight of the menu of services.
- 4.14 TD advised that the team supports disparate providers, some of whom are very small in scale, and for those a wholly bought back service could be impractical.

- 4.15 RC stated that the PVI sector seems to use the services more and felt that she would be unable to vote on the proposals.
- 4.16 SD stated that she was unaware of the menu. However her school was working to align the local PVIs with nursery classes via the Early Years hub. This work is dependent upon schools hosting hubs which tend to be after school hours due to working nature of childminders. This work is not uniform across the LA.
- 4.17 PH stated that PVI/Childminders only get the basic statutory services free and have to pay for anything additional as schools do.
- 4.18 SW stated that he would ensure that the Menu would be promoted to ensure that all interested parties are aware of it and what is available both on a free basis and to buy back into.
- 4.19 GE stated that we need to hold onto the fact that over 98% of funding is being passed onto settings within the formula.
- 4.20 SD considered that in the current climate moderation is more important than ever.
- 4.21 RC said that she had approached the Early Years team requesting advice regarding moderation but was offered no help and advised to work through it themselves.
- 4.22 PH pointed out that an increase of eight and six pence on the basic hourly rate is very much needed but is still short of the increase required to keep pace with increases in the minimum working wage. Settings in T&W are in danger of having to close due to lack of funding.
- 4.23 SW stated that we need a vote on this now as we need to set a budget for Early Years in 2021/22.
- 4.24 The vote was passed to allow the LA to retain the funds requested, on the proviso that the information requested on services available was forthcoming at the March 2021 Forum meeting.

5. AOB - GE.

- 5.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.26.

6. Next Meetings

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

Thursday 11th March 2021, Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams and YouTube 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 beyond March will depend upon the Covid 19 situation. A full record of future meetings can be found at the following link:

[Planned Forum Meetings](#)