

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 16th September 2021

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams and YouTube

Status: Agreed

Name	Establishment	Representing
Gill Eatough (GE) Chair	Learning Community Trust	Academies (Special)
Michael Scott (MS)	Newport Girls' High School	Academies
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster
Yvonne Crilly (YC)	Woodlands Primary School	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Robert Fox (RF)	Donnington Wood Junior School	Maintained Primaries – North Cluster
Sarah Roberts (SR)	High Ercall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Wellington Cluster
Darren Lennon (DL)	Linden Centre PRU	Maintained PRUs
Shirley Reynolds (ShR)	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning	T&W Cabinet
Simon Wellman (SW)	Director Education & Skills	Representative of the Executive Director of Children's services
Tim Davis (TD)	Group Accountant	Representative of the Director of Finance
Andy Wood (AW)	Senior Accountant - Schools	Representative of the Director of Finance

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Jo Britton – Executive Director of Children's Services.

Rachel Cook – Newdale Primary School.

Penny Hustwick – ABC Day Nurseries.

Claire Whiting – Redhill Academy.

Heather Davies – The Bridge Special School.

Laura Arscott – Telford College.

Natalie Bevan – Service Delivery Manager for Special Educational Needs & Disabilities.

1.2 GE thanked Mark Davis and Denise Garner for their support to the Forum on their stepping down as members of the Forum.

2. Membership of the Schools Forum & Appointment of Chairperson - TD

- 2.1 Nominations for Chairperson of the Schools Forum were invited and GE was proposed and unanimously elected Chairperson for the academic year 2021-2022.
- 2.2 AW advised of the requirement of The Schools Forum Regulations that “primary schools, secondary schools and Academies must be broadly proportionally represented on the forum”. We have therefore revised the number of primary schools members down to six, to take account of the recent conversions to academy status.
- 2.3 AW pointed out that there are currently three vacancies which we are looking to fill as soon as possible: maintained secondary schools, primary schools governor & academy PRU.

3. Minutes of the 20th May 2021 meeting and matters arising – GE.

- 3.1 The minutes of the 20th May 2021 was accepted as a true and accurate record. A link to the minutes can be found at the link below:

[12th May 2021 approved minutes.](#)

- 3.2 There were no matters arising that would not be covered at this meeting.

4. School Funding 2022/2023 Onwards - TD.

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

[School Funding 2022/23.](#)

- 4.2 TD pointed out that the DfE's national funding formula (NFF) main drivers would increase by 3% with the minimum funding levels increasing by 2%. The T&W formula is planned to follow the same principles as for previous years, in attempting to mirror the NFF as far as possible.
- 4.3 The growth funding allocation is still unknown as this is dependent upon the October 2021 schools census. Growth funding forms part of the schools block and has been used to support those schools with growing numbers. FY2021/2022 growth funding was around £0.85m. If the growth funding allocation is not sufficient to support agreed growth in T&W schools, the implication is that funds would have to be taken from the general school funding formula to make up the difference.
- 4.4 In July 2021 the DfE published its latest NFF consultation document entitled “*Fair schools funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula*”. The document states the desired aim of moving further towards a national funding formula at school level from FY2023/24, but raises a number of issues associated with this that will be the subject of future consultations.

- 4.5 The consultation raises the possibility of moving maintained school funding to an academic year rather than the local authority financial year. The future role of school forums is also discussed, in the context of a reduction in local decision making powers.
- 4.6 There will be a further substantial increase of around £2.6m in the funding within T&W's high needs (HN) block for FY2022/23, making a projected total of £30.5M. The final figure will only be known in December, due to being partly dependent on the October 2021 schools census.
- 4.7 The central schools services block (CSSB) will again reduce by 2.5% due to protection being gradually removed. However if pupil numbers grow as they have in recent years the cash reduction could be negligible as the block is calculated on a per pupil basis. Again the final figure will not be known until December.

5. Notional Special Educational Need & Disability (SEND) Budget - TD.

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

[Notional SEND Budgets paper](#)

- 5.2 TD highlighted that since the new funding formula of FY2013-2014, funding for mainstream schools that had previously been allocated via statements of educational need (now EHCPs) was left within what is now known as the schools block. Funding for the equivalent of 15 hours of EHCP support (i.e. approximately the first £6,000 of additional costs for each child) is within the schools funding formula. Only funding that was deemed to be above this £6,000 threshold is included in what is now known as the HN block.
- 5.3 Creating a new way of calculating notional SEND budgets for T&W schools has highlighted anomalies within the old formula, due to the way additional funding year on year had been distributed..
- 5.4 TD described the workings of the old notional SEND budget, explaining the assumptions used. The proposed new notional SEND budget in T&W, when compared to the national average of notional budgets across English local authorities, is intended to include a similar proportion of the total budget. This is in the context of a lack of definitive national guidance on how to calculate a notional budget.
- 5.5 TD highlighted that whilst the workings of the notional SEND budget may be changing, the actual cash allocations to schools will **not** be effected by this change.
- 5.6 SW stated that the notional budget sets a benchmark for schools spending on SEND. The totality of funding for SEND in mainstream school budgets may have been lost sight of over the years, given the relative lack of emphasis placed on the notional SEND budget.
- 5.7 AW shared an example of what the new notional SEND budget report would look like for schools and emailed this to Forum members for their consideration.

- 5.8 GE/SW agreed that there needs to be conversations with clusters to explain the concept of the notional SEND budget to headteachers.
- 5.9 GE/TD mentioned the desire to have a unified banding system for SEND, with consistent principles applied across different settings, whether mainstream or specialist.
- 5.10 SW reiterated that we are not looking to reduce any schools funding.
- 5.11 CC stated that the new budget seemed a reasonable methodology and would enable schools to review SEND spending.
- 5.12 GE advised that the inclusion of EAL had been discussed at the Forum Chair's briefing. The consensus of the Forum was that it should be used as a factor initially. The calculation of the notional budget could be reviewed once individual schools have seen their notional budgets and have had an opportunity to compare to current spending.

6. AOB - GE.

- 6.1 GE reminded the Forum that the next meeting would be a face-to-face meeting held at Meeting Point House on the 18th November 2021, assuming no changes to Government policy.
- 6.2 GE also wanted to remind Forum members that they are representing their colleagues at Forum and should make every effort to attend.
- 6.3 AW stated that meeting dates are published at least one full year in advance but would also add an invite to all meetings for the current membership so that it appears in diaries.
- 6.4 There being no further business the meeting closed at 10:40.

7. Next Meetings

The dates of the forthcoming meetings for the academic year 2021/2022, are as follows:

- Thursday 18th November 2021 at 9:30 am, at Meeting Point House, Telford
- Thursday 13th January 2022 at 9.30 am
- Thursday 10th March 2022 at 9.30 am
- Thursday 19th May 2022 at 9.30 am

[Planned Forum Meetings](#)