

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 13th January 2022

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams and YouTube

Status: Draft

Name	Establishment	Representing
Gill Eatough (GE) Chair	Learning Community Trust	Academies (Special)
Yvonne Crilly (YC)	Woodlands Primary School	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Claire Medhurst (CM)	St Peter’s Edgmond Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster
Rachel Cook (RC)	Newdale Primary School	Maintained Primaries - Central Cluster
Robert Fox (RF)	Donnington Wood Junior School	Maintained Primaries – North Cluster
Sarah Roberts (SR)	High Ercall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Wellington Cluster
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special School	Maintained Special Schools
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Day Nurseries	PVI
Tom Cash (TC)	Kickstart Academy PRU	Academy PRUs
Darren Lennon (DL)	Linden Centre PRU	Maintained PRUs
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:

Christobel Cousins – Lilleshall Primary School (CM covering)

Claire Whiting – Redhill Academy.

Laura Arscott – Telford College.

1.2 GE thanked Tom Cash for attending the Forum this being his last meeting.

2. Minutes of the 18th November 2021 meeting and matters arising - GE

- 2.1 The minutes of the 18th November 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record.
- 2.2 There were no matters arising that would not be covered in the current meeting agenda.

[18th November 2021 approved minutes.](#)

3. School Funding Formula 2022-2023 Onwards - TD.

- 3.1 TD provided a paper for the Forum on the schools block funding formula which can be found at the follow link:

[School Funding Formula 2022-2023 Onwards.](#)

- 3.2 The paper shows the funding rates used within the funding formulae for the previous year compared to the National Funding Formula (NFF) values and the funding rates for the FY2022-2023. Due to updated data within the authority planning tool (APT), which has to be used within the formulae, this resulted in an overspend of £176K when using the NFF rates.
- 3.3 The growth funding received was approximately £1.1M. The cost of funding the required growth exceeded this by around £195K.
- 3.4 As a result, the balancing of the formulae required a reduction of the funding factors by around 0.5%. This is a reversal of the situation in previous years, in which we were able to allocate slightly more than the NFF rates, due to the data enabling funds to be available over and above the NFF rates. Funding for schools is still increasing compared to 2021/22 however and the minimum funding per pupil and the minimum funding guarantee protections remain in place.
- 3.5 In addition to the funding formula, TD advised of a new grant for schools “The Schools Supplementary Grant”. This is a one off grant for 2022/23, but will provide an ongoing increase as it will be subsumed within the DSG for FY2023-2024. Schools within T&W will receive around £4M but school entitlements are yet to be confirmed. We have estimated the allocations to T&W schools based on DfE details concerning how allocations will be determined. The resulting figures can be found at the link below.

[The Schools Supplementary Grant](#)

- 3.6 GE/TD stated that although there was significant additional funding coming into schools over the next year there are significant calls on that funding, such as a teachers pay award in September 2022 (which could also include a move towards the promised £30K starting pay for teachers), an increase in employers national insurance contributions of 1.25% from April 2022 and an NJC (support staff) pay award. General inflationary pressures are also increasing, particularly heating costs.

- 3.7 TD advised that High Needs had again received a sizeable increase of around £2.75M with a further £1.1M from the School Supplementary Grant. However, high needs pressures are leading to substantial year on year increases in expenditure. Government have stated that for the years FY2023-2024 local authorities should plan for an increase in funding of around 5% and for FY2024-2025 around 3%, which is substantially less than the increases in recent years.
- 3.8 The long promised government paper around high needs policy going forward is still awaited.
- 3.9 SW stated that at the March 2022 meeting a paper would be presented concerning the HN budget for FY2022-2023. SW also pointed out that other LAs have incurred multi £million high needs deficits, in part due to rapid increases in expensive out of area placements.

4. De-delegation for Statutory School Improvement Services - TD.

- 4.1 TD presented the paper regarding the request for de-delegation from school budgets for the cost of providing the school improvement statutory duty. The paper can be found at the link below.

[De-delegation for Statutory School Improvement Services](#)

- 4.2 TD advised that the DfE's response to the consultation was published on Tuesday 11th January. The majority of the 500+ responses did not support the government's contention that removal of the grant would leave statutory school improvement services adequately funded. Nonetheless, the DfE is continuing with its plans as proposed, with half of the funding being removed in 2022/23, with the remainder being cut in 2023/24. For T&W this means that £90,826 will be lost in FY2022-2023 and the remaining £90,826 removed in 2023/24.
- 4.3 The LA requests that schools de-delegate £6.31 per pupil to replace the funding cut for FY2022-2023.
- 4.4 SW stated that he understood that there are likely to be changes in local authorities statutory responsibilities for school improvement in the future and if so the LA and schools need to consider how we do things in the longer term.
- 4.5 RF stated that he was concerned about the affordability of the proposal for schools and the value for money of de-delegation, in the context of the role of the Severn Teaching School and possible duplication.
- 4.6 RC stated that it would be useful for schools to have a list of the duties of the LA so schools know what they are responsible for.
- 4.7 SW stated that DfE/ESFA were making a point that LAs did not need the funding as the number of interventions was low. SW stated that this was because, certainly in the case of T&W, local authorities focused on prevention rather than cure. T&W have only once in the last five years had to issue a notice of concern.

- 4.8 CM asked if there was another way of de-delegation rather than an amount per pupil.
- 4.9 GE felt that the Forum, and therefore schools, should support the LA with the proviso that more information is forthcoming around the services provide as statutory work.
- 4.10 RF asked that if the school improvement service has to be restructured would the de-delegation funding be used to pay for redundancies. TD stated the funding requested was to provide a statutory service not fund redundancy costs.
- 4.11 RF expressed his veiew that there was an issue with accountability, in terms of what impact the service is making and what is being achieved?
- 4.12 GE added it could be useful to see at which schools the team had spent their time and the impact on these schools and what the service will look like going forwards. SW responded that he would seek opportunity to work with schools to shape how the LA provides its statutory responsibility moving forward.
- 4.13 CM stated that within their cluster questions had been raised over the quality and consistency of the service provided.
- 4.14 RF stated that he likes a strong LA but questioned if the system is unbiased, in that more classifications of schools at red means more income for the LA. SW stated that this is not the case.
- 4.15 CM stated that there is duplication of effort for schools caused by the LA & STSA asking for the same information. HD explained that the work carried out with schools was based on an SLA with the schools and was confidential and thereby not shared with the LA.
- 4.16 GE asked the Forum if they were ready to vote on the de-delegation.
- 4.17 CM said that she could not vote in favour of this without further information.
- 4.18 RC stated that smaller schools would struggle with their budget if they lose this funding.
- 4.19 YC advised that the issue had not been discussed with schools at cluster a meeting.
- 4.20 SW stated that we are under pressure to get this done. The vote proposed is for the first year only and for 50% of the total grant. SW confirmed that the vote was agreement for this year and that forum would be asked to make a decision again in terms of future years.
- 4.21 TD reminded the group that this is a vote for statutory duties, not a traded service and therefore the local authority does not have a choice regarding whether it carries out these duties. The fall-back position is that the DfE could be asked to authorise deductions from school budgets.
- 4.22 GE stated that there is a need to send information out to all schools and proposed that we have an emergency meeting next week, covering just this one topic.

- 4.23 YC stated that this is not about supporting the LA, or not, it is about having all the information needed to make an informed decision.
- 4.24 RF agreed that this is a statutory duty and the funding has to come from somewhere. SW agreed but did not want to go to the DfE to overrule the Forum as our approach in Telford is to work in partnership and where problems exist discuss and consider how to collectively move forward.
- 4.25 It was agreed that there would be another short meeting to vote once the LA had sent further information to colleagues about its statutory duties. A meeting was booked for 10:00 Wednesday 19th January 2022, again via Teams. Invites will be sent only to the Chair and to those members entitled to vote: maintained primary, secondary, special and PRU members.

5. Early Years Budget 2022/23 - TD.

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

[Early Years Budget 2022/23](#)

- 5.2 GE asked if this could be dealt with without repeating previous discussions, as this has been discussed at length in the last couple of years.
- 5.3 RC asked who decided to move to the FSM from IDACI as the deprivation indicator. TD confirmed that this was a decision of the LA, in consultation with the Forum and Early Years Finance group. AW stated that a major factor was that the IDACI information was at least five years out of date whereas the FSM indicator used up-to-date information on the actual pupils in each settings. A further consideration was that by using the FSM indicator, pupils are already registered as entitled to PPG & other FSM income when they move to schools.
- 5.4 PH stated that some settings lost funding when the change was made to FSM and in addition, settings found obtaining the information for FSM eligibility to be administratively burdensome.
- 5.5 The Forum voted in favour of the central retentions proposed, noting that they were unchanged compared to 2021/22.

6. AOB - GE.

- 6.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 10:52.

7. Next Meetings

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

- Wednesday 19th January 2022, at 10.00 am (on Teams, Chair and maintained members only)
- Thursday 10th March 2022 at 9.30 am
- Thursday 19th May 2022 at 9.30 am

[Planned Forum Meetings](#)