

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 8th January 2016.

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre

Due to member attendance being less than eight the meeting is not quorate.

Status: Draft

Name	Establishment	Representing
Mark Gibbons - Acting Chairperson	Windmill Primary	Maintained Primary - Central Cluster
Helen Osterfield (HO)	Tibberton Primary	Maintained Primary - Small Schools
Jessie Gupta (JG)	Captain Webb Primary	Maintained Primary Schools
Becca Butler (BB)	Queenswood Primary	Maintained Primary - Wellington Cluster
Claire Lamb (CL)	Redhill Primary	Maintained Primary – North Cluster
Malcolm Boulter (MB)	HLC Primary	Maintained Primary – Governors
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Day Nurseries	PVI & Childminders
Paul Watling (PW)	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	LA Observer
Jim Collins (JC)	Assistant Director, Education & Corporate Parenting	LA Observer
Tracey Smart (TS)	Finance Manager	LA Observer
Tim Davis (TD)	Finance Team Leader	LA Observer
Maria Bowen (MBo)	Human Resources Consultant	LA Observer
Tim Wasdell (TW)	Union Representative	Unions
Andy Wood (AW)	Schools' Funding Accountant	LA Observer

1. Apologies – AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Chay Davis – Ercall Wood Secondary,
Louise Lowings – Madeley Nursery,
Sue Blackburn – Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary,
Christobel Cousins – Lilleshall Primary,
Heather Davies – The Bridge Special School.

1.2 As there were only seven members present, less than the eight required to make T&W Schools Forum quorate, no vote taken at the meeting was binding on the group or the local authority although any decisions or views at the meeting will be taken into account.

2. Appointment of a chairperson for the meeting - TD.

2.1 The current Chair had given apologies for this meeting. MG volunteered to take on the role for this meeting only.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting - MG.

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were presented for information only. Ratification will take place at the next meeting of the Forum on 22 January.

4. Union Facility Time De-Delegation – MG.

- 4.1 JC reminded the group that this meeting was requested by schools as they didn't feel in a position to vote on the issue at the previous meeting, due to lack of the information requested to inform the decision on whether to de-delegate funding for Union Facility Time.
- 4.2 TD clarified what de-delegation entailed and that this meeting was only discussing proposed de-delegation for Union Facility Time for maintained primary schools.

Questions directed by Forum members towards the LA or TW with responses were as follows:

How do secondary school union members receive their local union representation?

- 4.3 TW stated that secondary meetings are generally after school but any support provided to the secondary sector in 2015/16 was effectively paid for by the primary sector through their de-delegation. Until recently he had not been aware that only primary schools had contributed to de-delegation in 2015/16.

Why has a primary/secondary split of time spent by union representatives not been provided?

- 4.4 TW stated that it is difficult to detail time taken for each case.

How is the funding/hours of union facility time allocated?

- 4.5 AW referred the group to the union facilities time agreement which details the proportion of time allocated to each union representative.

How many meetings have unions had with the LA during 2015/16 to date?

- 4.6 MBo responded that there had only been one meeting, but that there has been work done by the representatives with the LA that would be difficult to quantify, such as emails and telephone calls. MBo also stated that schools and the Forum need to be happy with the Trades Union Facilities Time document that sets out the relationship between schools and the union facilities representatives.

Is it a principle of union facility time contributions that they should only be used to fund backfilling of union representatives, and not contribute to work carried out that does not require backfill?

- 4.7 MBo confirmed that the agreement does state that monies allocated to schools should be for back filling staff away on union facilities business – if there is no need to backfill, monies should not be paid out.

Why is union facility time not funded from union member contributions?

- 4.8 TW commented that if facility time was covered by union member subscriptions, the cost of these would have to increase substantially. Regional centres currently have to cover vast areas with few staff.

Could we calculate how much secondary schools would pay if they were to buy-in on a similar basis?

- 4.9 TD answered that it is straightforward to work out what secondary schools would pay, assuming the same per pupil contribution as primary schools, but that without de-delegation there was no power to enforce contributions from individual schools. Based on experience in a previous year, some secondary headteachers didn't feel able to commit their schools to contributing without obtaining governor approval.

Are some secondary schools willing to voluntarily contribute to union facility time?

- 4.10 TD confirmed that some secondary schools, including academies, had expressed a willingness to contribute, but that he did not expect this to be a universal view in the sector.

What would happen if a local union representative was asked to represent a member at a non contributing school?

- 4.11 TW responded that at present his view was that the union would support that member of staff anyway.

What is the LA role in monitoring union facility time?

- 4.12 TD responded that since the new funding formula imposed by central government, the LA's role in union facility time has been limited to passing funds voted on by the Forum to employing schools of union representatives, in the proportions identified in the Union Facility Time agreement.

Could the amount charged to each school be based upon the numbers of teachers in the school?

- 4.13 TD responded that the charge would need to be calculated based upon one of the DfE's funding drivers within the funding formula, the logical one being the AWPU.

General comments from Forum members including the following

- 4.14 Union reports received refer to work done for the secondary sector. Forum members have a responsibility to ensure that funds are used for the purposes for which they were voted for. The DfE document describes what funds should be spent on. There still seems to be no Primary/Secondary split of costs provided and demonstration that funds have only been used for backfilling union representatives when doing qualifying work.

- 4.15 De-delegation amounts are based upon historical amounts which may no longer be relevant.

- 4.16 Monies allocated to schools are for the purpose of educating pupils, not to support unions. If heads and teachers are doing their jobs properly then there should be few issues that need unions.
- 4.17 De-delegation for Union Facility Time is akin to an insurance policy. Whilst schools may not want to pay for it, the service might be needed at some point, and thus the risk of not buying in needs to be assessed.
- 4.18 Union members need to raise the issue of where funding should come from for Union Facility Time with their unions if they feel that it should not be coming from the schools budgets. If more LAs decide not to de-delegate unions may then address where they are expecting funding to come from to finance their activities.
- 4.19 Services should be self sufficient. For Union Facility Time to be sustainable it needs to be provided without using DSG.
- 4.20 The DfE had set up the rules around de-delegation of union facility as part of a policy objective to reduce the influence of unions. The current terms and conditions of staff and generally good relations between staff and management in schools were in large part due to union efforts over the years. The service provided by the unions promotes harmony in schools which promotes the achievement of children. If de-delegation is lost locally, that will assist the government's policy direction and will further erode the power of unions.
- 4.21 The local union facility time agreement may need to be re-written so as to tighten the reporting requirements and the rules for disbursement of the funds.

The views of other schools, as conveyed to their Forum Representatives, included the following;

- 4.22 MG stated that all 14 schools within his cluster feel that ideally monies should not come from school budgets for Union Facility Time. There is however a pragmatic minority that accept that there is a need and are willing to continue with a system which is in place and seems to be working.
- 4.23 BB stated not all schools were represented at the meeting of the Wellington cluster. Of those that were, they generally valued the service of the unions but the point had been raised that there was a year without de-delegation without dire consequences.
- 4.24 HO stated that for small schools, having one member of staff with an issue can be a big problem which can seriously affect the rest of the school. Budgets are getting tighter especially in smaller schools, but without local union representation there would be a vacuum in support for staff in schools. However, the issue with secondary schools needs sorting out. It cannot be right that small schools are paying for a service for much larger secondary schools.

Proposals for 2016/17

- 4.25 JC suggested that maintained primary schools could contribute a lesser amount, with other schools also being asked to contribute outside de-delegation.
- 4.26 TD suggested we break the votes into two: firstly is the principle of de-delegation for union facility time supported?; and secondly, if de-delegation is to take place, how much should be provided?
- 4.27 It was agreed that a vote should take place on this basis to determine the intentions of those present. This would then be part of information distributed to members to inform an electronic vote.
- 4.28 The vote on the principle of union facility time was on the basis that:
- the funds de-delegated would be only used to pay for union facility time supporting union members in maintained primary schools;
 - the funds would only be used to backfill staff undertaking Union Facility Time duties within the school day.
- 4.29 The vote resulted in three votes for and three against.
- 4.30 Regarding the possible amount to be de-delegated, In the context that some schools in the secondary sector have expressed a desire to contribute to union facility time, it was suggested that the proposed de-delegated amount for primary schools for 2016/17 should be at half the rate per pupil of 2015/16, i.e. £1.92 per pupil, which would generate around £28,000.
- 4.31 The vote on this proposed amount resulted in four votes in favour and two against.
- 4.32 JC stated that an electronic vote of all maintained primary Forum representatives would be arranged prior to 20 January.

5. AOB – MG.

- 5.1 There was no further business and the meeting ended at 11:10.

6. Future Meetings – AW.

- 6.1 Future meetings dates and venues are as follows:

Friday 22nd January 2016, 9.30 am, Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre

Friday 18th March 2016, 9.30 am, Venue tbc

Friday 20th May 2016, 9.30 am, Venue tbc