

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 22nd January 2016

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre

Status: Draft

In attendance:

Name	Establishment	Representing
Claire Lamb (CL) – Acting Chairperson	Redhill Primary	Maintained Primary – North Cluster
Helen Osterfield (HO)	Tibberton Primary	Maintained Primary - Small Schools
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primary – Newport Cluster
Mark Gibbons (MG)	Windmill Primary	Maintained Primary - Central Cluster
Becca Butler (BB)	Queenswood Primary	Maintained Primary - Wellington Cluster
Malcolm Boulter (MB)	HLC Primary	Maintained Primary – Governors
Paul Roberts (PR)	HLC Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special	Maintained Special Schools
Ros Garner (RG)	Newport Girls’ High	Academies
Louise Lowings (LL)	Madeley Nursery	Maintained Nursery Schools
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
Andy Wood (AW)	Schools’ Funding Accountant	LA Observer

1. Apologies – AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Sue Blackburn – Chairperson – Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge
Chay Davis – Ercall Wood Secondary

1.2 CL kindly volunteered to take up the role of chairperson for this meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising – JC.

2.1 The group reviewed the minutes from the meetings that took place on 20th November 2015 and 8th January 2016 and accepted them as an accurate record.

2.2 The minutes can be found at the following links:

Minutes for 20th November 2015:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3887/november_2015_-_minutes :

Minutes for 8th January 2016:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3866/january_2016_extraordinary_meeting_-_minutes

- 2.3 The Forum was advised of the outcome of the primary phase vote on the issue of de-delegation for union facility time – of the nine votes available seven were cast with two in favour and five against. Therefore there will be no de-delegation for union facility time in 2016/17.
- 2.4 As a result, if schools want support from local teaching union representatives and this takes place in school time, the employing school of the representative is likely to require payment. The issue can be revisited when we look 2017/18 budgets in November 2016.
- 2.5 MG asked what mechanism would be available for collective bargaining. JC stated that there is currently one meeting per term with unions and the local authority. Meetings are generally held after the end of the normal school day.

3. 2016/17 Schools Funding Formula Allocations – TD.

- 3.1 A paper was presented updating the Forum on the schools block allocations for FY1617. The paper can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3882/january_2016_-_201617_schools_funding_formula_allocations.

- 3.2 The paper confirmed the actual allocation of £106.855M which reflects an increase of around 600 pupils compared to 2015/16; the largest increase for many years.
- 3.3 The formula has a deprivation allocation which increases in proportion with overall pupil numbers; this is now in the region of £9.5M. DfE data for 2016/17 showed a substantial decrease in pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSME). This reduction in numbers has therefore resulted in a substantial increase in the allocation per FSME pupil.
- 3.4 TD will be running budget briefing sessions on the morning of Friday 4th and the afternoon of Monday 7th February 2016 in the Quaker Room, Meeting Point House. These sessions are for schools and academies alike and invites have gone out to settings.
- 3.5 TD informed the Forum that the contextual data for the schools block allocations would be distributed to schools today, Friday 22nd January, and that if possible the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) estimates would also be made available to schools with nursery provision – if not this information will be distributed early in the following week.
- 3.6 JC advised the group that whilst increasing pupil numbers produced additional income for the funding formula there was increasing pressure on school places in some areas of the borough.

4. High Needs (HN) Budget 2016/17 – TD.

4.1 A paper was presented to the Forum and can be found at the link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3883/january_2016 - high_needs_budget_fy1617](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3883/january_2016_-_high_needs_budget_fy1617) .

4.2 TD apologised for the lateness of the paper presented to the Forum. The aim is to distribute papers as early as possible, and no later than a week before the Forum meeting, but the DfE's issuing of High Needs allocations shortly before Christmas, leads to intensive budget work in the first weeks of the new year.

4.3 TD informed the group that despite the DfE advising LA to assume that there would be no cash increase in High Needs allocations for 2016/17, an additional £92M was distributed to local authorities, T&W's share (based on population estimates) is an extra £310K.

4.4 T&W agreed with Telford Park to cease to fund the eight place High Needs unit from September 2016 (any decrease to High Needs places in academies has to be supported by the academy in order for the DfE's Education Funding Agency to make the change). This has not yet been taken into account in the published allocations but the EFA have said that such changes will be accounted for in the 'final' March allocations.

4.5 TD advised the group that since the last meeting of the Forum there have been ongoing discussions regarding additional High Needs places in the context of the varying perspectives expressed by the Forum at the November meeting. The revised plans show a small reduction compared to the previous planned numbers, but similar costs due to the location of places.

4.6 The additional funding that will be received and the movement in places in special schools has resulted in a small contingency fund in the region of £150K. This may change however, depending upon the final 2015/16 outturn etc.

4.7 DfE has stated that it intends to review the funding methodology for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for all three blocks. This may or may not increase the funding received by T&W for High Needs. It could also mean that the current flexibility for the local authority to move funds between blocks could be curtailed. The review creates a possible risk around future High Needs funding.

4.8 At the November meeting the formation and membership of a High Needs working group to review the area was agreed. The first meeting is planned to take place later this term and it is envisaged that the group will be able to review any DfE proposals for 2017/18 funding once published (i.e. as part of the move towards 'National Funding' for schools promised by the DfE). JC suggested that the first meeting should focus on discussing and understanding how the system for funding High Needs currently works.

4.9 MG asked if the membership of the group was fixed or if members could be added. JC stated that interested parties would be welcome to join the group for discussions.

5. Early Years Budget 2016/17 – TD.

5.1 The group were presented with a lengthy paper which can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3884/january_2016 - early_years_budget_fy1617](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3884/january_2016_-_early_years_budget_fy1617) .

5.2 TD apologised for the lateness of the paper which was due to meetings taking place to determine the content of the paper right up to the afternoon before the Forum meeting. The January 2017 meeting of the Forum will be a week later to ensure that papers are distributed in a timely manner enabling members to read and digest them fully before the meeting.

5.3 JC stated that there had been a meeting between early year's providers and senior local authority officers the day before the Forum. This had been very informative especially with regard to the challenges facing the sector over the coming years.

5.4 TD highlighted that the allocations to the local authority have not increased for a number of years which therefore made it very difficult to fund any increase in funding for the EYSFF. The allocation issued to the LA is only an estimate as the actual allocation will be adjusted to reflect the numbers on the January 2016 and 2017 censuses. The logic of this is that if we fund more pupils then the income to the LA should reflect this. Effectively this means that although the allocation may increase it does not mean that there will be any spare funding as we will also have funded more pupils than we budgeted for.

5.5 TD advised the group that following the meeting between EY representatives and senior LA officers it had been decided that an increase of 2% to all funding factors would be applied. This is estimated to cost around £140K.

5.6 PW stated that he was aware of the pressures on Early Years, and especially the PVI sector, regarding funding and outcomes. PW stated that 2% is not enough but in the current climate is the most that the LA feels can be afforded and hopes that it will assist the sector. The message from central government seems to be that the market should look after the issues!

5.7 LL commented that the historical difficulties of working between maintained schools and businesses are still problematic. There is a strong possibility that there will not be enough places if income to settings is not increased. The September 2017 introduction of 30 hours free entitlement for working parents will cause problems for all in the sector.

5.8 HD stated that historically there has been a problem of finding wrap around care for pupils attending the nursery at The Bridge as other settings are not geared up to cope with the additional needs and cannot absorb the additional costs.

5.9 CC stated that she has children with EHCPs and that the additional support for these children will put pressure on her school's overall budget, as the first 15 hours of support is paid from the the general budget allocation.

- 5.10 PH stated that there are similar problems of funding SEN provision felt across the PVI sector generally.
- 5.11 JC stated that this demonstrates the problem with unfunded central government policies (e.g. the living/minimum wage increases). He agreed with PW that 2% is not a sufficient increase but there are no additional funds available.
- 5.12 PH stated that there has been a drastic reduction in the number of childminders in the sector due to financial pressures.
- 5.13 TD reminded the group that as funding rates within the DSG are not rising then all settings are having to absorb inflationary pressures.
- 5.14 CC stated that for her school 2016/17 would be the most financially difficult for some time, as until recently pupil numbers have been increasing, thus leading to additional funding. Now the school is full and there is no additional funding to cover inflation.
- 5.15 TD referred the group back to the paper and pointed out that the amounts previously voted as a top slice would be paid for centrally from the HN block as this is in line with funding regulations. The actual amounts that would be spent would however be very similar to last year's top slices.
- 5.16 CL stated that she was surprised that the Forum was losing control of this amount of funding. Has the LA changed the procedures to guarantee the preservation of central funding? TD stated that whilst it was the LA's view that these services were essential, the change was due to the need to operate according to regulations.
- 5.17 JC stated that following LA restructuring most or all of the High Needs will be within his area and will be reviewed to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. The consolidation of DSG should also facilitate more joined up working.
- 5.18 TD stated that whilst the Forum may feel that they have lost a degree of control over £373K, the High Needs sub-group would be reviewing the whole of the High Needs budget.
- 5.19 LL asked if there was an EY representative on the High Needs sub-group. TD stated that CL & MG have maintained nurseries and were part of the group.
- 5.20 MG stated that activities, and the make up, of the intervention and inclusion panels are determined by the LA. Schools should have greater input into this. The LA should be asking if schools are satisfied with the service.
- 5.21 JC stated that as some of the services are statutory it was logical that the LA should lead these services.
- 5.22 CL asked what services are being provided for free to businesses in the PVI sector.

- 5.23 PH stated that the PVI only receive a limited service, despite still having to comply with the same statutory requirements, and that the service received was only for the free (funded) entitlement hours of their provision. It is also the case that smaller settings may need additional support.
- 5.24 CL stated that she would like greater visibility of monies spent on, and by, the inclusion and early intervention panels.
- 5.25 CL stated that the £10K for moderation of EY foundation stage seemed a little high. Could we have a costing for this?
- 5.26 JC stated that this was only ever a notional amount. The manager that was running this has now left the LA and the work was being carried out by the teaching school. JC proposed that the amount of £10,000 be reduced to £5,000 and this was approved by the Forum.
- 5.27 TD stated that the amount for EYFSME checks had been worked out in a similar way to that for primary schools and based upon the same rate. The alternative to this was for every setting to have an invoice raised for each eligibility check, which would actually increase the costs, or to do the checks themselves.
- 5.28 The Forum voted on the top slice of £4,195 for EYFSME checks and this was agreed unanimously.

6. Pupil Growth Fund – Distribution methodology – TD.

- 6.1 TD presented proformas for allocations of the growth fund, including the possible allocation of funds for KS1 growth. These can be found at the following links:
- http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3885/january_2016_-_growth_proforma
http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3886/january_2016_-_ks1_proforma :
- 6.2 TD reminded the group that in previous financial years allocations for growth and KS1 growth was a purely formulaic process with no account taken of need. At the November 2015 meeting it was stated by the group that they would prefer to have a review process whereby the Forum approved any allocation of the fund.
- 6.3 CL confirmed that this was what was discussed and agreed at the last Forum meeting.
- 6.4 PR asked if the LA is requiring schools to increase their PAN should they then still be having to justify any additional funds allocated from the growth fund? JC stated that this was being put in place to look at unplanned growth.
- 6.5 MG agreed that there is a need to focus on need and that the Forum will need to be objective and ensure that monies are spent in the best way possible.

- 6.6 RG was concerned at the timing of the allocations process as staff could have been taken on with the presumption of the additional funds being available and it may be the case that the funds may not be forthcoming.
- 6.7 CC commented that additional pupils would often be spread across cohorts and would not necessarily need additional classes and thus additional costs.
- 6.8 MB stated that a distinction should be made between planned and unplanned growth.
- 6.9 TD stated that it is difficult to write a paper, or formula, that would take all eventualities into account so there will need to be some kind of manual intervention to ensure fairness.
- 6.10 JC said that the LA would report back at the next meeting in March with specific proposals for the distribution of funds in 2016/17.

7. Any other business - JC.

- 7.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:22.

8. Future meetings - AW.

- 8.1 The next meetings of the Forum, both of which will be in the Walker Room, Meeting Point House are as follows:

Friday 18th March 2016,
Friday 20th May 2016,

- 8.2 Details are also available at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/507/forum_meetings