

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 23rd September 2016

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre

Status: Draft

In attendance:

Name	Establishment	Representing
Sue Blackburn (SB) – Chair	Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary	Maintained Primary – South Cluster
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primary - Newport Cluster
Becca Butler (BB)	Dothill Primary	Maintained Primary-Wellington Cluster
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special	Maintained Special Schools
Chay Davis (CD)	Ercall Wood Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Ros Garner (RG)	Newport Girls’ High	Academies
Louise Lowing (LL)	Madeley Nursery	Nursery Schools
Helen Osterfield (HO)	Tibberton Primary	Maintained Primary - Small Schools
Paul Roberts (PR)	HLC Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Gilly Reynolds (GR)	Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Regeneration	LA Observer
Tim Davis (TD)	Finance Team Leader	LA Observer
Andy Wood (AW)	Schools Funding /Senior Accountant	LA Observer

1. Apologies – AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Jim Collins – Assistant Director, Education & Corporate Parenting

Penny Hustwick – ABC Day Nurseries

Claire Lamb – Redhill Primary

Jessie Gupta – Captain Webb Primary

Tracey Smart – Finance Manager

2. Membership of Forum 2016/17 – TD.

2.1 An email had been sent to the members of the Forum in June and again in September asking if Forum members were going to continue for the academic year (AY) 2016/17. As there were no reported changes the current members will continue in post.

2.2 MB resigned as Governor member in the summer and chairs of governors have been emailed asking for volunteers for the Forum’s governors representative. To date we do not have any volunteers and so the LA will seek to appoint a member in accordance with the School Forum regulations.

3. Election of the Chair of the Forum for Academic Year 2016/17 – TD.

- 3.1 This was the first meeting in AY16/17 and the Forum chair for the next twelve months therefore needed to be elected. SB volunteered to continue in post if no one else wanted the position.
- 3.2 SB was unanimously elected as chair of T&W Schools Forum for AY2016/17.

4. Minutes of the 20th May 2016 meeting and matters arising – SB.

- 4.1 BB pointed out that apologies were from Dohill Primary rather than Queenswood Primary.
- 4.2 Regarding the requested update on the Single Status project, TD informed the Forum that Jonathan Eatough, Assistant Director, Governance, Procurement and Commissioning, the LA's lead on Single Status was invited to come to the meeting but had a prior commitment and would therefore attend the November meeting.
- 4.3 The minutes were accepted subject to the amendment above. The approved minutes can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4656/may_2016_-_minutes

5. DSG Outturn 2015/16 – TD.

- 5.1 TD briefed the Forum on the 2015/16 DSG outturn position. The amount of DSG left at the end of financial year 2015/16 was £351,000. This compares to a balance brought forward from the previous year of £856,000 and therefore means that just over £0.5m more DSG was spent in 2015/16 compared to that year's allocation. This is an illustration of the pressure on the high needs area of the DSG budget. The balance brought forward has been used to support the 2016/17 DSG budget.

6. 2017/18 Schools Funding Formula – TD.

- 6.1 TD presented a paper and summarised the main points. The paper can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4673/september_2016_-_201718_school_funding_formula#maincontent

- 6.2 The national funding formula has been postponed until 2018/19 and therefore for 2017/18 the details of the local funding formula will remain a Cabinet decision. The DfE have issued some details for 2017/18, following the stage one consultation, mainly around the schools funding formula rules for 2017/18. These are little changed from 2016/17. A stage two consultation covering rules around the revised DSG blocks and the implications of the cessation of the Education Services Grant has been promised to be issued at an unspecified date in the Autumn Term.

6.3 Pending this consultation, the draft schools funding regulations for 2017/18 have yet to be issued. At this stage, we therefore do not know what we will be asking the Forum to approve for 2017/18, regarding central expenditure from DSG, etc.

6.4 The group discussed whether we should make any potential changes to the schools block funding formula, such as removing the ring fence around the deprivation funding. There was no general feeling that changes should be made and a consensus that in the context of the soon-to-come national funding formula, the local funding formula for 2017/18 should remain consistent with 2016/17.

7. 2017/18 Growth Fund – TD.

7.1 The Forum were presented with a paper on the growth fund for FY1718 onwards and this can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4674/september_2016_-_201617_growth_fund

7.2 In FY1617 the Forum approved a top slice of £100K for a growth fund to support schools with significant pupil growth. The allocations were made by the Forum based upon submission of an application for funds by schools. Although there were minimum conditions that schools must have met to be considered, the final allocations were decided upon by the Forum on a case by case basis rather than using a purely formulaic approach.

7.3 DfE's stage one consultation proposed limiting the amount that LAs could have within the growth fund to the amount in FY1617. However, with the national funding formula being postponed until 2018/19, we still have the power to determine the amount allocated to the growth fund for 2017/18.

7.4 The Education Funding Agency's (EFA's) Operational Guide for 2017/18 states that "*The growth fund may not be used to support.....general growth due to popularity*" and should be "*used only for the purposes of supporting growth in pre 16 pupil numbers to meet basic need, to support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation and to meet the costs of new schools.*"

7.5 This could be interpreted as a somewhat tighter definition than that used in practice by T&W definition if 'basic need' is taken to mean an increase in a school's Pupil Admission Number (PAN) in response to demographic pressures. It would potentially mean that only three T&W schools would fall within the criteria for an allocation from the growth fund. One of these schools, Lawley Village Academy, is funded on estimated numbers, so would not fall within the growth fund. This leaves Hadley Learning Community (HLC) Primary, which is adding an extra reception class each year from September 2016 onwards and Holy Trinity Academy (HTA) which opened as a joint RC/CofE faith school in Priorslee in September 2015 and is now growing very rapidly.

- 7.6 Another possible option would be to approach the EFA for disapplication of the regulations and fund HTA and HLC based on estimated numbers, similarly to Lawley Village Academy. The Operational Guide suggests that: *“The growth fund may not be the most appropriate source of funding for growing schools and local authorities should consider requesting a variation to pupil numbers where there is a more permanent and significant change to numbers.”*
- 7.7 The group discussed the merits of approaching the EFA for permission to fund the two schools on estimated pupil numbers. It was considered that there was merit in the proposal as it would then allow the growth fund to be a smaller residual fund for other exceptional cases which are less long term and large scale.
- 7.8 The LA agreed to ask the EFA to be allowed to fund HTA and HLC based on estimated pupil numbers and feedback to the Forum regarding the results of this request as soon as possible.

8. Education Services Grant – TD.

- 8.1 A paper was presented for the Educational Services Grant (ESG) and can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4675/september_2016 - education services grant](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4675/september_2016_-_education_services_grant)

- 8.2 The removal of the ‘general funding’ element of ESG means that T&W will lose around £1.6m from September 2017. The Operational Guide states that DfE will convert the retained duties element to DSG – around £400,000 per annum for T&W assuming that the 2016/17 rate of £15 per pupil remains the same in 2017/18. The LA will have to seek Forum approval on a line by line basis in order to retain any of this funding, even though it currently supports statutory duties. The Operational Guide states that; *“Further detail of the duties to be included under this arrangement will be included in our forthcoming consultation on changes to the School and Early Years Finance Regulations.”*
- 8.3 PR raised the point that schools would be asked to pay for services over which they have little control, as they are based on statute rather than schools demand.
- 8.4 The services that the DfE state are covered by the ESG are listed in the paper. As the reduction in funding is so large there will inevitably be an impact on LA provision to schools.
- 8.5 It was asked if the regulations could be forwarded to schools when available. It was confirmed that the LA would do this.

9. Early Years National Funding Formula – TD.

- 9.1 A Early Years (EY) paper was presented and can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4676/september_2016 - early years national funding formula](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4676/september_2016_-_early_years_national_funding_formula)

- 9.2 The consultation closed the day before this meeting. The LA has therefore submitted a response which is solely from the LA, rather than attempting to agree a joint response with the Forum. The response can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20025/school_information/1039/schools_forum_meeting_papers_-_2016#maincontent

- 9.3 The planned additional funding for both 2 year olds and 3 and 4 year olds is welcome – funding is increasing both in T&W and nationally. However, particularly for PVIs, the increase is likely to be offset by inflationary cost pressures, in particular associated with increases in the minimum wage and pension auto enrolment, which at present tend to impact more upon PVIs.
- 9.4 The proposals have also created medium term uncertainty around the future of nursery schools, as the additional funding proposed for LAs with nursery schools is only guaranteed for two years, 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- 9.5 During the summer the DfE requested capital applications to support the roll out of 30 hours free entitlement. T&W submitted applications for three projects. LAs will be notified of the outcome of the bids in December.
- 9.6 HD spoke about the impact on The Bridge’s assessment nursery - there is no current capacity to provide thirty hours provision as the setting is at capacity based on providing 15 hours. The implication is that either more accommodation will be need to be found and developed at the Bridge, or mainstream early years settings would potentially have to adapt their provision to support children that currently would attend the Bridge – a very challenging prospect.

10. AOB – SB.

- 10.1 It had been requested if an allocated place on the Forum could be created for School Business Managers (SBMs). This issue is complicated by the need for any Forum member to belong to an elective group which then determines voting rights. In this context it was agreed that the local SBM group could elect one of their members to attend Forum meetings as an official observer, i.e. on a similar basis to LA attending officers. The representative would not have voting rights.
- 10.2 There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:40

11. Future Meetings – AW.

- 11.1 In the context that the deadline for submitting T&W’s 2017/18 school funding formula to the EFA is 20 January 2017, later than in previous years, TD said that the January meeting of the Schools Forum, currently planned for Friday 27 January is likely to be brought forward. Forum members will be notified once an alternative date is agreed.
- 11.2 All future meetings will be held in the Walker Room, Meeting Point House. With the above caveat around the January 2017 meeting, dates of meeting can be found at the following link:

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

