

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 11th January 2018

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Southwater, Telford Town Centre

Status: Draft

Name	Establishment	Representing
Sue Blackburn (SB) – Chairperson	Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primaries - Newport Cluster
Claire Lamb (CL)	Redhill Primary	Maintained Primaries - North Cluster
Helen Osterfield (HO)	Tibberton Primary	Maintained Primaries - Small Schools
Shaun Tyas (ST)	St George’s Primary	Maintained Primaries
Jo Weichlbauer (JW)	Ladygrove Primary	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Becca Butler (BB)	Dothill Primary	Maintained Primaries - Wellington Cluster
Michael Scott (MS)	Newport Girls’ High	Academies
Chay Davis (CD)	Ercall Wood Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special	Special Schools
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Heather Loveridge (HL)	Assistant Director Education & Corporate Parenting	LA Observer
Tracey Smart (TS)	Finance Manager	LA Observer
Andy Cooke (AC)	SDM SEND and Inclusion	LA Observer
Anna Plummer (AP)*	Project Manager Single Status	LA Observer
Jamie Unwin (JU)*	Job Evaluation Scheme Analyst	LA Observer
Sharon Carrington (SC)*	Learning & Development Manager	LA Observer
Calum O’Sullivan (CO)*	Learning & Development Facilitator	LA Observer
Tim Davis (TD)	Group Accountant	LA Observer
Andy Wood (AW)	Senior Accountant - Schools	LA Observer

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member, Education & Skills, Telford & Wrekin Council

Paul Broomhead – Burton Borough

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising - SB.

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, 16th November 2017, were accepted as correct. A copy of the minutes can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6494/november_2017_-_minutes

- 2.2 There were no matters arising that would not be covered with the agenda for this meeting.

3. De-delegation for Free School Meal Assessment - TD.

- 3.1 The group were presented with a paper to discuss which can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6624/january_2018_-_fsme_de-delegation

- 3.2 TD explained that de-delegation only applies to maintained mainstream schools and that other schools could buy into the service if they needed to.

- 3.3 Last year both the Primary and the Secondary Schools decided to de-delegate funds. For FY1819 the cost of de-delegation remains at £8.50 per FSME pupil on the October 2017 census.

- 3.4 Members of the Forum representing maintained primary and secondary schools voted in favour of de-delegation for each sector.

4. Growth Fund for Financial Year 2018/19 - TD.

- 4.1 The Forum were presented with a paper proposing the methodology for allocating T&Ws growth fund for 2018/19. A sum of £152,000 has been allocated by the DfE for this, the amount being based on the amount in the 2017/18 growth fund for each local authority. The paper can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6625/january_2018_-_growth_funding

- 4.2 JW asked for reassurance that there is no double funding of pupils by the DfE and the LA with regard to Lawley Village Academy. TD stated that the LA will obtain details of any academy funding, so that we can ensure that no setting is at an unfair advantage compared to other schools via the growth fund.

- 4.3 The Forum voted unanimously in favour of the methodology for allocating the £152,000 in the 2018/19 T&W growth fund.

5. Falling Rolls Fund for Financial Year 2018/19 - TD.

- 5.1 The Forum were presented with a paper requesting a top slice of £50,000 to form a falling rolls fund, to be allocated as described in the paper. The paper can be found at the following link:

<W:\SCHOOLS\Schools Forum\Forum meetings\Forum 2018\1. 11th January 2018\Forum minutes - 11th January 2018.docx>
http://www.telford.gov.uk/shared/fin_educ/SCHOOLS\Schools Forum\Forum meetings\Forum 2018\1. 11th January 2018\Forum minutes - 11th January 2018.docx

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6626/january_2018 - falling_rolls](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6626/january_2018_-_falling_rolls)

- 5.2 TD commented that the request for £50,000 is a fraction of the £750,000 in the fund several years ago, when we were experiencing significant pupil number reductions in the secondary sector.
- 5.3 Although there are 19 schools with falling rolls, most show reductions of 5 pupils or less and only two meet the criteria within the fund to qualify for an allocation.
- 5.4 CL asked if the two schools concerned had received funding previously from the fund. TD stated that they have not.
- 5.5 ST asked if a school with a policy of excluding pupils could benefit from the fund. TD stated that the 3% threshold should be high enough to avoid such action triggering an allocation from the fund. HL stated that the LA are aware that some schools are more prone than others to use the exclusion option and this will be raised with Secondary Heads & Principals group (SHAP) and the Primary Heads Forum.
- 5.6 The Forum voted in favour of the top slice of £50,000 for the Falling rolls fund for FY1819.

6. High Needs Budget for Financial Year 2018/19 - TD.

- 6.1 The Forum were presented with a paper explaining the context of the planned transfer of £550,000 from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, for which the Forum would have a vote, and the transfer of surplus funds of £237,000, from the Central Schools Services Block to the High Needs Block, on which the Forum would be consulted. The paper can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6627/january_2018 - high_needs_budget](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6627/january_2018_-_high_needs_budget)

- 6.2 TD went through the paper and pointed out that although we have transferred funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in the past, the new formulaic allocations from the DfE still resulted in a higher percentage increase in our High Needs Block than most other local authorities. This was strong evidence that the previous transfers had not created a generously funded high need provision, but had been a response to a comparatively low high needs block allocation.
- 6.3 TD stated that there are a number of pressures within high needs, notably the increasing number of pupils for whom special school provision is being requested and the increasing demand for post 16 provision.
- 6.4 ST asked how the number of special school places in T&W compared to other local authorities. AC stated that our number of places are above the average but we are below average in the

number of out of county placements. AC also stated that work is ongoing to benchmark against other LAs and to look for any ways to control costs whilst maintaining suitable provision.

- 6.5 TD stated that T&W are net importers of pupils into our special schools.. This inflates the numbers, but means that they don't entirely reflect the provision to T&W pupils.
- 6.6 HL informed the group that other LAs have a greater emphasis on resourced units, which can reduce the numbers of places in special schools and can promote inclusion. Extending such provision in T&W is an option which is being explored.
- 6.7 TD stated that this transfer request could not be baselined (DfE funding rules) and would need to be requested again next year.
- 6.8 HL stated that we do not want to grow T&W special schools but slow the flow of pupils into them. The LA view is that other options (e.g. resourced provision in mainstream schools) should be extended to reduce the pressures on special school places.
- 6.9 ST stated that if schools were allowed more flexibility with the curriculum then it would promote a higher inclusion rate within schools.
- 6.10 CL commented that there seems to have been a U-turn around places compared to discussions a couple of years ago, at which time the LA was arguing for the need for special school places. Some schools at that time had made the point that available places in special schools will invariably fill, with a consequent ratcheting upwards of costs. AC responded by stating that we need the places we currently have and in Haughton (for instance) the actual numbers of pupils significantly exceeds the number of places. It is the fundamental demand for provision rather than the actual number of places that has led to the budget strains being experienced.
- 6.11 HL stated that we are ~~planning to putting~~ procedures in place to ~~try and~~ reduce spend but ~~pressure on~~ high needs ~~budgets pressure~~ is a national problem. Post 16 provision, in particular, has experienced significant cost pressures in recent years.
- 6.12 CL commented that taking monies from schools to support the HN block reduces the resources available to mainstream schools to promote inclusive practices and so makes the problem worse.
- 6.13 HD stated that there are more pupils in special schools nationally. Parents are increasingly using tribunals to appeal (usually successful) if their child is not allocated a place in a special school which they think that they need.
- 6.14 CC stated that she had seen research which stated that 85,000 babies were being born early every year, that would not have survived in the past, and have needs that have not been seen before.

- 6.15 AC stated that there is a much higher level of diagnosed autism within the borough than previously and the additional places and Queensway HLC have avoided much higher potential costs that would have been incurred if children had to be placed in independent provision.
- 6.16 ST felt that the demands of the curriculum led to more pupils struggling to cope with it and that this fed into increasing autism diagnoses.
- 6.17 HL advised the Forum that the LA had used DfE funding to commission a review of special school provision in T&W.
- 6.18 CL commented that it is difficult to make a decision on the top slice from the Schools Block when we don't know how much the EY top-slice will be. Some schools with a nursery class will effectively be hit twice.
- 6.19 TD stated that in 2017/18 year £200K of the EY block was used to cover EY high needs intervention. Part of the context of this was that the free entitlement increased from 15 hours to 30 from September 2017 with an associated increase in the amount of EY high needs provision.
- 6.20 PH stated that EY team is now smaller following restructures despite the EY high needs contribution. AC stated that EY inclusion costs considerably exceed the amount top-sliced from EY.
- 6.21 TD stated that the EY top slice is still low compared to other LAs. In FY1718 we passported 99% of funding to providers as opposed to the requirement of 93%.
- 6.22 PH stated that there some cases where settings are covering major medical costs that should be covered by Health and are falling to settings. Picking up from this, CC stated that Lilleshall has a pupil with very considerable health needs and whilst health are contributing, there remains a considerable net cost to the school budget. AC responded that we need to be having discussions with Health to ensure that they are paying their share.
- 6.23 CL asked if we have to make a decision today as she did not feel that they had enough time to consult with clusters. TD stated that the decision had to be made at this Forum, in order to be able to submit the Authority Planning Tool (APT) next week.
- 6.24 CL asked if the £237K would move from the Central School Services block to the High Needs block. TD stated that the LA is consulting with the Forum but the likely outcome is that it will move to the High Needs block as this is the location of the most severe financial pressure.
- 6.25 HD pointed out that The Bridge is full, despite most of the school's post 16 provision transferring to Willow Tree a few years ago and if the school is not able to support pupils, the likely alternative of independent provision is extremely costly.

- 6.26 TS asked if we could incorporate within the proposal that the £550,000 is not automatically transferred each year and is dependent on the LA reporting back to the Forum on progress made with reviews and cost savings. AC responded that feedback would be provided on an ongoing basis during 2018. DfE rules require that Forum approval is required each year for any transfer from the schools block.
- 6.27 BB asked if the LA would be asking for £550,000 for the following FY. TD stated that whilst at this stage no definitive answer could be provided, given the current high needs budget situation, it was difficult to envisage sufficient budget improvement taking place to remove the need for a similar request in 2019/20.
- 6.28 The Forum proceeded to vote on the proposal to transfer £550,000 from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. The proposal was unanimously supported. The Forum also supported the proposal to move any unused funding from the Central Schools Services Block to the High Needs Block.

7. Single Status – AP/JU.

- 7.1 AP stated that the project is now at the point of completing job descriptions and checking them with schools. Most have completed this, but information is still required from eleven schools. Once this is complete job descriptions will be shared with staff for comments in the academic year 2018/19. Once this is complete we can move to pay modelling.
- 7.2 HL asked which eleven schools are holding up the process. AP agreed to give HL a listing of the schools concerned.
- 7.3 TD pointed out that single status is only compulsory for community and voluntary controlled schools.
- 7.4 AP stated that the timetable was dependent upon the Trade Unions. We are now looking at implementation in the year 2020/21. Until pay modelling is complete the potential impact upon school budgets cannot be quantified. However, in general, costs of school support staff have increased in authorities' in which single status has been implemented.
- 7.5 SB commented that whilst her school is Voluntary Aided and thus not directly impacted by single status, it would be useful to have access to the job descriptions so that if this was desirable, her school was consistent with local schools. Similarly, BB asked if a trust school could implement the same terms and conditions that come out of single status. AP replied that Trusts and VA schools etc could do this if they chose to.
- 7.6 CL asked if trust school employees could make a claim related to the period that the school was a community school? AP replied that this could possibly happen, but would be dependent upon final implementation timeframes.

7.7 HD asked how much notice schools would have for implementation; would they know before setting their budgets? For special schools this could have an impact on the overall High Needs budget as well as each individual school. AP stated that the implementation process will be quite long, so should give schools time to incorporate into their budget setting.

7.8 ST stated that governors generally are not happy with the timeframe taken to implement single status. Monies that could have been spent on pupils have been tied up in single status balances.

8. Apprentice Levy – SC/CO.

8.1 The Forum were presented with a paper for the Apprentice Levy which can be found at the following link:

Insert link when available

8.2 SC raised concerns over the amount of unspent levy and proposed that the monies should be pooled and allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Members of the Forum made clear that they did not support the proposal to pool funds at this stage.

8.3 JW stated that budget pressures have stopped some schools employing an apprentice. SC stated that monies can be used to upskill all staff rather than just apprentices.

8.4 SC asked how the team could help schools. ST said that attendance at cluster meetings might be beneficial.

8.5 CC pointed out that schools that cannot afford an apprentice will not be reading emails headed “Apprentice Levy” as they do not see any benefit to doing so. Any communications needs to highlight that the Levy is effectively a training fund.

8.6 JW commented that there is a need to re-distribute literature to schools so that they are aware of the rules around the funds.

8.7 SC will return to the May 2018 meeting with further proposals.

9. AOB - SB.

9.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:25.

10. Future Meetings - AW.

10.1 The next meeting will be held on Thursday 15th March, 9.30 at Meeting Point House. Full details of future meeting dates can be found at the following link:

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