

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 15th March 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
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
Paul Roberts (PR)	Hadley Learning Community	Maintained Secondary Schools
Chay Davis (CD)	Ercall Wood Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Abi Martin (AM)	Southall Special	Special Schools
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Shirley Reynolds (SR)	Cabinet Member, Education & Skills, Telford & Wrekin Council	LA Observer
Tracey Smart (TS)	Finance Manager	LA Observer
Simon Wellman (SW)	SEND Manager	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:

Heather Loveridge – Assistant Director Education & Corporate Parenting

Paul Broomhead – Burton Borough

Christobel Cousins – Lilleshall Primary

Heather Davies – The Bridge Special School

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

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, 11th January 2018, were accepted as correct. A copy of the minutes can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6961/march_2018_-_agenda

2.2 TD informed the group that there had been an election for an academies member and the duly appointed member was Michael Scott, Headteacher of NGHS. Due to the recent conversions of HLC Primary and Secondary to academy status and the opening of the newly formed Queensway Special Academy we will need to restructure the membership of the Forum to reflect additional pupils in academies and the special school academy in T&W.

3. Early Years' Budget FY2018/19 - 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/6960/march_2018_-_early_years_budget

3.2 T&W consulted with Forum members electronically in February 2018 as this was required by regulations prior to setting the Schools Budget at the end of February. There were only three responses but all were helpful.

3.3 The funding formula for FY1819 was discussed with the Early Years finance group prior to the consultation to get their thoughts and generally they understood and agreed with the changes proposed.

3.4 ST asked what is the proportional split of centrally held funding between schools and PVI's? TD stated that whilst neither sector dominated, there were more pupils and thus more funding going to PVI's (there is a single funding formula covering all early years establishments).

3.5 ST considered that in general nursery classes in schools are being supported by the school budget and thus contributed to the overall pressure on current school budgets.

3.6 TD responded that there had been a significant increase of around 7% in DfE funding for early years in T&W in 2017/18, to bring the area's funding in line with the national funding formula that had been introduced. However, there had been no further increase in 2018/19. There has also been an increase in school budget allocations in FY1819 as discussed at previous forums, but much of this was being absorbed by the budgeted pay awards for school staff.

3.7 ST stated that he needs to understand the rationale behind decisions made by the LA/Forum. Correspondingly the LA should understand the impact upon schools and he invited LA officers to visit St George's to see the impact on the provision for children at the school.

3.8 TD acknowledged the pressures everywhere in services for children, particularly around safeguarding and High Needs. If it would be useful, at the next Forum a summary of the financial situation of the various sectors could be presented.

3.9 CL stated that the information currently provided to the Forum is much better than previously, but at times still doesn't provide all the information needed to make informed decisions. CL asked if some services for EY could be provided on a traded basis. TD replied the service is already partially traded and the net cost is very low compared to most LAs. PH confirmed that

a traded service is in place and only a limited service is available if providers don't choose to buy into the traded elements.

- 3.10 JW stated that more early information to schools would be useful so that it can be shared with clusters and primary headteachers forum before decisions are made.

4. Early Years Inclusion Panel - SW.

- 4.1 SW presented the Forum with the consultation paper that had been distributed to stakeholders. The paper can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6963/march_2018_-_ey_inclusion_fund

- 4.2 JW pointed out that schools needed to engage with the consultation in order to influence the direction of travel.
- 4.3 SW stated that there will be changes in how funding is distributed to support early year's pupils. The main change is that whilst funding currently covers two to five year olds, under the new system funding would stop for pupils when they enter reception classes.
- 4.4 SW stated that there would be an increase in the inclusion panel budget in FY1819, from £75,000 to £95,000, in the context of increasing needs.
- 4.5 JW commented that pupils have become more complicated entering reception classes and schools would be looking for EHCPs for those pupils that had funding in EY. Ceasing funding when pupils entered reception was at the point when they are most vulnerable.
- 4.6 SW asked if settings were happy with the services provided by mentors? PH responded that they seemed stretched.
- 4.7 ST didn't agree with a cut off at reception as some pupils enter reception having only just turned 4 years old and were both very young and significantly younger than other pupils in the same class.
- 4.8 PR asked why we support two year olds when other LAs do not. SW stated that the LA considered early intervention was the right principle to follow whenever possible. PH pointed out that the two year old budget was being top sliced by £40K to support high needs provision for two year olds.

5. DSG Budget Position - TD.

- 5.1 TD advised that there is always a potential for the actual outturn to differ from projected figures, but at present there is a potential DSG overspend in 2017/18 which could be as much as £1M at the end of the financial year.

- 5.2 Previous years have typically shown a surplus balance to carry forward which has always been applied to the following year's school budget. FY1718's deficit balance will be first call on the FY1819 funding.
- 5.3 The LA are looking at options to bring the DSG budget back into balance - the first step is to balance 2018/19 in-year, to provide a basis for being able to plan to clear the deficit brought forward.
- 5.4 The main reason DSG is overspent is due to High Needs pressures arising from:
- An increasing school population;
 - Extension in the pupil range the HN block must service – now to 25 year olds;
 - Increased complexity of pupils with high needs;
 - DfE funding allocations which do not reflect the pressures (both in T&W and elsewhere – high needs issues are becoming an increasingly significant national issue);
 - A reduction in the flexibility available within DSG as a whole.
- 5.5 ST expressed the view that schools are entering a different world, with successive real terms funding decreases the likely pattern over coming years and that everyone needed to be realistic about this. This is likely to lead to a need to manage expectations regarding the provision schools provide and restructure staff accordingly.
- 5.6 SW stated that the LA are constantly reviewing how we provide services to settings looking for efficiency and best practice.
- 5.7 HO stated that small schools are struggling and are having to move resource from other areas to SEND. Staff are working harder and class sizes are getting bigger. PR said that it would be useful to have best practice guidance around supporting SEND in the most cost effective way, whilst continuing to meet children's needs. BB stated that whilst this was not always the best option, some children do need 1-1 support to succeed in schools.
- 5.8 TD stated that discussions with special schools are ongoing regarding how to deploy resources most effectively. There is likely to be a need for more collaboration and sharing of best practice in order to support high needs most effectively in the future, given very constrained resources.

6. AOB - TD.

- 6.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:00.

7. Future Meetings - AW.

- 7.1 The next meeting will be held at 9.30 am on Thursday 24 May, in the Southwater Room at Meeting Point House. Dates and times for future meetings can be found at the following link:

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