

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 24th May 2018

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

Status: Approved

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
Becca Butler (BB)*	Dothill Primary	Maintained Primaries - Wellington Cluster
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster
Chay Davis (CD)	Ercall Wood Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Pete Rowlands (PR)	Abraham Darby	Academies
Michael Scott (MS)	Newport Girls’ High	Academies
Paul Roberts (PR)	Hadley Learning Community	Academies
Gill Eatough (GE)	Hadley Learning Community	Academies (Special Schools)
Heather Davies (HD)*	The Bridge	Maintained Special Schools
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Nursery	PVI Representative
Shirley Reynolds (SR)	T&W Cabinet Member, Education & Skills, Telford & Wrekin Council	Elected member with primary responsibility for children’s services.
Heather Loveridge (HL)	T&W Assistant Director Education & Corporate Parenting	Representative of the Director of Children’s Services
Tracey Smart (TS)	T&W Finance Manager	Representative of the Director of Finance
Tim Davis (TD)	T&W Group Accountant	Representative of the Director of Finance
Andy Wood (AW)	T&W Senior Accountant - Schools	LA Observer
Keith Howkins (KH)	Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)	Observer
Rob Montgomery (RM)*	T&W Audit & Governance Team Leader	LA Observer
Calum O’Sullivan (CO)*	T&W Assistant Learning & Development Facilitator	LA Observer
Sharon Carrington (SC)	T&W Learning & Development Manager	LA Observer

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Lee Hadley – Abraham Darby Academy (covered by Pete Rowlands)

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

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, 15th March 2018, were accepted as correct. A copy of the minutes can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7109/march_2018_-_minutes

- 2.2 There was one matter arising that would be covered under agenda item three.

3. Financial pressures impacting on the local authority services for children and young people - 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/7163/may_2018_-_financial_pressures_on_la

- 3.2 TD talked the group through the paper.

- 3.3 CL asked if the increase in house building would be financially beneficial to the Council. TD stated that whilst services have to be provided for new houses, overall there was usually a net financial benefit to the Council from housing growth.

- 3.4 GE asked about recent increases in council tax. TD responded that council tax has increased in recent years, in part due to the Council applying a social care precept as recently permitted by Government, but T&W council tax remained one of the lowest in the West Midlands.

- 3.5 ST asked whether the LA would be seeking greater contributions from schools? From a school perspective, less money is being spent on vulnerable children as a result of tighter budgets. Schools do not have the resources to bail out the LA. The Government says there is more funding in education but think tanks are saying the opposite. What is the truth?

- 3.6 KH responded that there will be Government spending review to take effect in 2020/21 and that the DfE will put a case to the Treasury for an increase in education funding. To date schools have had their funding comparatively protected compared to other areas of public spending. ESFA are offering training to school staff in order to encourage schools to become more efficient. The ESFA recognise that there are financial pressures on schools and the National Funding Formula is being introduced to make funding allocations fairer. An additional £1.3bn was added to FY1819 school budgets.

- 3.7 GE raised concerns over the increase in staffing costs in recent years, in particular National Insurance and pension costs. These together with pay awards have absorbed most if not all of the additional funding in recent years.

- 3.8 TD advised the group that there may well be further increases to employers pension costs coming, with a potential increase in teachers' pension costs to 18% or more (compared to 16.5% currently) in 2019/20.
- 3.9 ST stated that he has been benchmarking the schools in T&W for some time and it has showed T&W schools consistently in the bottom quarter nationally for funding. Any increase that T&W schools are now getting is being absorbed by additional staffing costs, e.g. the recent pay award for school support staff. ST felt that expectations of what schools can deliver will have to shift downwards unless funding genuinely keeps pace with rising costs.
- 3.10 CC stated that some of the problems affecting schools are arising from the rigidity of the new curriculum, which is inappropriate and counter productive for large numbers of pupils. She and HO had recently attended a seminar looking at the increasing prevalence of mental health problems for children, which included evidence that the most common source of stress for children was school work. Schools and the LA were having to devote time and resources to addressing problems created by the school system itself, which in its over-emphasis on data and measurable performance was making children unhappy and diminishing children's enjoyment of learning.
- 3.11 ST asked KH if when funding formulas and policies are decided whether the link between standards and funding is genuinely considered.
- 3.12 HL stated that T&W schools, along with the LA, could make representations to government explaining the pressures upon education.
- 3.13 ST stated that we need to bring out examples from schools of the impact of lack of funding upon pupils at ground level. There is a perception that government ministers typically visit schools (usually academies) in well funded areas (e.g. London) and then assume/portray this as representing the circumstances of all 22,000 schools in the country.

3.14 HL reemphasised the need to lobby with the NAHT.

4. 2017/18 DSB budget outturn - HL.

4.1 HL presented the Forum with a paper which can be found at the link below:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7138/may_2018_-_dsg_outturn

4.2 Further to the issues highlighted in the paper, the LA and specialist settings are still in negotiations over 2018/19 budget / expenditure and are engaged in an ongoing dialogue to address rising expenditure. The LA is working with other LAs to learn from each other and strengthen LA commissioning powers with regard to independent specialist settings.

4.2 CL asked if special schools have had additional funding for the increase in places. HD responded that the basis for special schools 2018/19 budgets was the same level of funding as in 2017/18.

This is particularly challenging as due to the higher number of support staff in special schools the recent pay award for local government with increases of up to 9% for staff on lower pay grades, has had a large impact on special schools' cost base.

- 4.3 GE stated that a large piece of work had been undertaken to reduce costs at Queensway, but that due to the complexity of the pupils there is a need for small classes.
- 4.4 CC stated that more complex children are now being managed in mainstream schools and this has resulted in additional staff having to be employed, with a consequent pressure on the rest of the school budget.
- 4.5 GE pointed out that Ofsted now expect pupils in special schools to make the same progress as pupils in mainstream schools.
- 4.6 TD highlighted that the in-year overspend in FY1718 was £815K, as the £544K overspend occurred despite £271K of balances having been brought forward.
- 4.7 HD pointed out that one out of county placement could cost up to £200K so it would not take too many of these to cause fundamental budget problems.
- 4.8 CL stated that any update that the LA could give the Forum on progress in addressing the high needs budget would be very helpful.
- 4.9 GE reminded the Forum that a number of out of county placements had been prevented as a result of the formation of Queensway and the efforts of other special schools, but this didn't necessarily mean that absolute numbers had fallen (i.e. it can just slow the pace of increases).
- 4.10 ST asked what would be the effect of the Forum refusing to carry forward the DSG deficit.
- 4.11 HL advised that if the Forum did not vote in favour of the carry forward then the LA would approach the DfE for approval to carry forward. KH stated that the deficit would have to be met from LA resources if the carry forward against DSG was not approved.
- 4.12 TD reminded the Forum that the LA is already paying £1.3m every year for historic schools premature retirement costs, whereas LAs that had top-sliced DSG to pay for this were being funded by the DfE for these costs through the Central School Services Block of DSG. KH stated that the DfE had no intention of funding costs that were not already in the DSG.
- 4.13 The Forum voted in favour of carrying forward the 2017/18 DSG deficit to FY1819 by thirteen votes to zero.

5. Apprentice Levy Update – SC/CO.

- 5.1 The Forum was joined by CO & SC to update the Forum on the progress made with the Apprentice Levy. A paper was provided which can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7139/may_2018 - apprentice levy update](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7139/may_2018_-_apprentice_levy_update)

- 5.2 CO advised the Forum that he had met with all schools and some cluster meetings. Literature had been distributed to schools advising on process and courses available.
- 5.3 The levy collected that is unspent 24 months after collection would be clawed back by central government. The levy collected to date in respect of schools is £252K of which only £89K had been committed. There was the danger therefore of the remaining £163K being lost.
- 5.4 It was therefore proposed that the remaining funding should be pooled and used according to a process which will prioritise and co-ordinate use of the funds. Details will be distributed to all schools contributing to the fund shortly.
- 5.5 CL pointed out that schools are looking at reducing their non-teaching staff and so would be attempting to find ways of using the apprentice levy to train existing staff.
- 5.6 CC stated that she definitely did not want FY1819 funds pooling as schools were currently making plans to use these funds.
- 5.7 HL confirmed it will only be unclaimed FY1718 funds that will be pooled for now.
- 5.8 SC confirmed that there will be a further update in around six months; probably at the November 2018 meeting.

6. Scheme for Financing Schools – 2018 revisions - TD.

- 6.1 TD advised the Forum that periodically the DfE publish Directed Revisions to the scheme for financing schools which the Forum must vote upon before incorporation into the T&W scheme. An extract from the DfE document can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7140/may_2018 - scheme for financing schools](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7140/may_2018_-_scheme_for_financing_schools)

- 6.2 The main change to the scheme was a restriction upon local authorities being able to issue a loan to a school rather than a licenced deficit; not a practice that happens within T&W. The remainder of the changes were predominantly tidying up the scheme.
- 6.3 The scheme describes the financial relationship between the local authority and the schools which it maintains. The scheme therefore does not apply to academies.
- 6.4 Maintained school members voted in favour of the changes to the Scheme.

7. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) - RM.

- 7.1 RM briefly updated the Forum on the GDPR which comes into effect on the 25th May 2018.

- 7.2 RM stated that schools should have appointed their Data Protection Officer (DPO), and have amended their privacy notice which should be on their website.
- 7.3 RM added that generally speaking if schools were broadly compliant with DPA then they would be broadly compliant with GDPR.
- 7.4 KH pointed out that the DfE has provided a note for schools on their website.
- 7.5 GE asked about training. RM stated that training would be ongoing for staff either via Ollie or on a face to face basis.

8. AOB - SB.

- 8.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:15am.

9. Next Meetings.

- 9.1 The next meeting will be at 09:30 Thursday 20th September 2018 at the Walker Room, Meeting Point House. The full listing of planned meetings can be found at the following link:

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