

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 22nd November 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 Academy | Academies |
| Helen Osterfield (HO) | Tibberton Primary | Maintained Primaries - Small Schools |
| Shaun Tyas (ST) | St George’s Primary | Maintained Primaries – North Cluster |
| Christobel Cousins (CC) | Lilleshall Primary | Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster |
| Jo Weichelbauer (JW) | Ladygrove Primary | Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster |
| Lee Hadley (LH)* | Haberdashers Abraham Darby | Academies |
| Gill Eatough (GE) | Learning Community Trust | Academies (Special Schools) |
| Heather Davies (HD) | The Bridge | Maintained Special Schools |
| Penny Hustwick (PH) | ABC Nursery | PVI Representative |
| Heather Loveridge (HL) | T&W Assistant Director Education & Corporate Parenting | Representative of the Director of Children’s Services |
| Simon Wellman (SW) | T&W SEND 0-25 Service Delivery Manager | Representative of the Director of Children’s Services |
| Tim Davis (TD) | T&W Group Accountant | Representative of the Director of Finance |
| Andy Wood (AW) | T&W Senior Accountant - Schools | Representative of the Director of Finance |

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet member with responsibility for Education & Skills
Paul Broomhead – Burton Borough Secondary School
Michael Scott – Newport Girls High School
Tracey Smart – T&W Finance Manager

2. Membership of the Schools Forum AY2018-19 - TD.

2.1 The new academies member, Clare Lamb from Redhill Primary Academy, was welcomed to the meeting. As CL moves from being the North Cluster representative to academy representative ST moves from being a “Primary Schools” representative to representing North Cluster.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising – SB

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, 20th September 2018, were accepted as correct. A copy of the minutes can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7615/september_2018 - minutes](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7615/september_2018_-_minutes)

- 3.2 There were no matters arising that would not be covered at this meeting.

4. Arrangements for funding statutory services provided by the Local Authority – Central School Services Block and De-delegation - TD.

- 4.1 The Forum were presented with papers to support this agenda item which can be found at the link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7816/november_2018 - statutory services - words](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7816/november_2018_-_statutory_services_-_words)
[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7817/november_2018 - statutory services - numbers](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7817/november_2018_-_statutory_services_-_numbers)

- 4.2 TD reminded the group that under this agenda item there would be two votes. The first vote would be for all schools for the top slice for services provided to all schools and the second vote would be by maintained schools representatives only, for the services which are specifically provided to them.

Statutory Services for all schools – Funding from the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).

- 4.3 TD presented the paper, reminding the Forum that these are services that the LA has a statutory duty to provide, and that the CSSB is the funding allocated to the LA to do this. The LA is requesting the use of £835,000 from the CSSB to be used for central schools services, the balance of the CSSB being used for High Needs.
- 4.4 JW queried the attendance amount requested as work is done at schools with their own EWOs. What are schools getting for this service? HL stated that she would provide further details of the service at the next meeting of the Forum.
- 4.5 ST stated that North cluster use the service. HD concurred that they also use this service.
- 4.6 GE stated that schools need to know what is the statutory element, that is paid for centrally, and what is the traded element.
- 4.7 ST asked how many members of staff the funding requested actually funds. TD stated that the amount requested was to cover the full cost of the service so covers overheads as well as staffing. Additionally the staffing in the attendance team would work partly for the traded elements so not an exact science when working out the detailed figures.

- 4.8 CL asked if a decision needed to be made today, as she was concerned about voting on behalf of other schools without the benefit of having all the information required. HL stated that we need to make a decision to be able to move the wider budget process forwards. We can vote on the funds today and come back with the detail required at the next meeting and review if necessary.
- 4.9 TD commented that the amounts requested had been frozen at the same amount as 2018/19 and therefore inflationary pressures across all the services would have to be absorbed by the local authority.
- 4.10 ST commented that the admissions team do not answer the phone, instead requesting email communication. CL stated that this was because the number of calls that they would otherwise receive, would prevent the team getting through their caseloads. CL also stated that in her experience call backs on emails were normally prompt, e.g. within a half an hour. HL thanked CL for the useful feedback.
- 4.11 CL asked if the income received from the GDPR could be used to reduce the amount requested for internal audit. HL pointed out that the amounts recovered for the GDPR SLA were used to cover the essential additional capacity taken on to support GDPR. Also the SLA is a traded service not a statutory service.
- 4.12 CL asked what the funding for internal audit supported. TD advised that it was auditing central activities in relation to the local authority duties for schools.
- 4.13 ST asked if the money requested would enable the LA to run the services at the current levels or is there another restructure around the corner. HL stated that all her service areas had been restructured and nothing further was planned so services should be stable.
- 4.14 The Forum proceeded to a vote and agreed that £835,000 from the Central School Services Block should be allocated to central services, the remainder of the block being used to support high needs.

De-delegation for statutory services provided specifically for maintained schools – top slice from the schools block.

- 4.15 TD explained that the amount requested was calculated at the same rate per pupil as FY1819, £24.93, so the total de-delegated would fluctuate dependant on the final census figures and any further conversion of schools to academy status. It had been assumed that the conversion of Charlton would take place before the 2019/20 financial year.
- 4.16 ST asked at what point would the conversion of schools to academy status necessitate the LA looking for partners to provide statutory services and whether the LA is looking at this already. HL stated that the LA would take a pragmatic approach – there have been several services that either have or still are being provided in partnership with Shropshire. GE added that the Learning Community Trust continues to purchase significant numbers of LA services, so increasing numbers of academies did not always lead to a reduction in the use of LA services.

4.17 Maintained school members of the Forum voted in favour of de-delegation for statutory central services for 2019/20 at the rate of £24.93 per pupil.

5. High Needs (HN) funding 2019/20 - transfer of funds from Schools Block - TD.

5.1 The Forum were presented with the consultation paper as this contained both the case for transferring of funds and the proposals for the transfer of funds. The paper can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7818/november_2018_-_high_needs_transfer

5.2 TD briefed the Forum on the responses from the consultation. There were five responses, three of which which were from groups of schools. Three of the responses supported the transfer of 0.5% from the schools block. The two other responses did not support a transfer of funds to support the HN block. There were no responses in favour of the £250,000 above the 0.5% level. There was some overlap in the comments that were made in the consultations but key comments included the following:

- Whilst acknowledging the pressure on the high needs block, mainstream schools are also under financial pressure which impacts upon the quality of support and early intervention able to be allocated to early intervention. Moving funds from the mainstream sector is therefore 'robbing Peter to pay Paul';
- At some point the Government states that it is planning to move to a 'hard' national funding formula at school level and at this point block transfers would presumably not be possible. High needs provision therefore needs to be based around the amount allocated in the high needs block;
- The Local Authority should look to make efficiency savings and investigate alternative funding sources and / or pursue the DfE for additional funding;
- Some schools in the local authority are already supporting a disproportionate number of pupils with high needs and such schools can least afford to have their budgets top-sliced to pay for costs of the overall high needs provision.

5.3 HL advised the Forum of work that was ongoing in the HN area with other West Midlands authorities. Many of these authorities have larger DSG deficits than T&W, in all cases arising from HN pressures.

5.4 SB stated that she felt that the Forum was being asked to take successive decisions on small parts of the budget rather than taking an overview of the whole situation.

- 5.5 GE asked if the LA will be disadvantaged by attempting to live within their budget when the DfE finally addresses the HN problem. GE also stated that she was taken aback that the LA was asking for an additional £250,000 on top of the half of one percent transferred last year.
- 5.6 HL stated that there has been an increase of 43% in requests for EHCPs which is being driven by parental demand. The HN system includes appeal panels and both nationally and locally, the large majority of appeal judgements support the appellant.
- 5.7 SW stated that the additional £250,000 that was requested was in the context of the intention to develop resourced provision, as something to bridge the gap between mainstream and high needs provision. SW pointed out that even with the half of one percent, funds in the HN block are inadequate, even with the amounts saved with the reduction of out of county provision.
- 5.8 HD added that special schools are still admitting more pupils, with no growth funding, and these pupils tend to be getting even more complex which means they are more expensive to educate. All special schools are struggling to live within their cash limited budgets and may end the year in deficit.
- 5.9 LH considered that the work that mainstream schools are doing to work with HN pupils is not being recognised.
- 5.10 CC agreed with LH that mainstream schools cannot increase the work with HN pupils whilst absorbing the additional costs of doing so and losing some of their budget.
- 5.11 ST stated that the public would not think that giving £23 per pupil to ensure that the neediest pupils were educated properly was too much. Would they also think that giving £33 was too much? Where the line would be drawn?
- 5.12 CL stated that she can see progress being made to reduce costs but is concerned at the post 16 problems. New incentives should be trialled in the secondary sector rather than the primary as this is where the most pressure is.
- 5.13 HL stated that schools had been consulted upon the proposed changes, e.g. resource bases. Progress has been slower than the LA would have liked but the changes have to be made in partnership with schools and it is apparent that there is some caution in schools about committing to the changes.
- 5.14 GE commented that some schools are more inclusive than others and carry more than their fair share of pupils with EHCPs. Schools within the Learning Community Trust find that the large majority of EHCP pupils in the schools live outside their catchment area. Secondary heads need to get together and agree some common principles to encourage all schools to be equally inclusive and welcoming to HN pupils.
- 5.15 SB suggested that the Forum vote on the half of one percent now and return to the additional £250,000 at a later meeting if necessary.

- 5.16 TD advised that if the Forum agreed to an extra £250,000 there would need to be a disapplication request submitted to the ESFA by 30th November. The LA will submit this as a precautionary measure and withdraw it if not needed after the January Forum meeting.
- 5.17 The Forum voted on the proposal to transfer half of one percent of the Schools Block allocation to the HN block eight in favour with nil against.

6. Growth Funding 2019/20 - TD.

- 6.1 The Forum was presented with a paper for information in preparation for a decision at the January 2019 meeting. The paper can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7815/november_2018_-_growth_funding_fy1920

- 6.2 TD apologised for the late distribution of the paper which was still being worked on until midday yesterday. The delay was caused by repeated interrogation of the estimated pupil numbers for September 2019. These are expected to rise significantly in the secondary sector due mainly to larger cohorts feeding through from primary phase.
- 6.3 TD outlined the current methodologies for funding for growth and explained the new way that the DfE/ESFA was funding LAs for growth, which would deliver an estimated additional £400,000 in funding to T&W.
- 6.4 CL asked if the growth funding would just be for secondary schools. TD replied that the growth funding formula treats both primary and secondary growth on the same basis.
- 6.5 CL then asked if the growth funding is for schools in financial difficulty. TD responded that whilst some recipients could be experiencing financial difficulties, the monies were allocated based purely on pupil numbers.
- 6.6 CL stated that she was worried that the schools that were funded when numbers were falling are now receiving funding when numbers were rising. TD explained how the falling rolls funding had worked, in that it provided a one year delay in schools experiencing the full financial impact of falling pupil numbers, rather than providing a longer term support for school budgets. Falling rolls funding was now substantially lower than five or so years ago, with a budget of £50,000 in FY1819.
- 6.7 GE stated that schools that are full and are expanding need the additional funding now to support the additional pupils.
- 6.8 ST stated that St George's expanded their PAN and managed to absorb the additional costs as the funding was merely lagged and eventually caught up.

- 6.9 TD commented that whilst a school might be expected to deal with a single year's growth using reserves etc, successive years of growth, in the context of a lagged funding system, could cause fundamental financial difficulties without additional financial support.
- 6.10 JW asked if the LA could present any paper for growth at cluster meetings, so that any questions could be asked directly rather than asking the Forum representative.
- 6.11 CL & ST felt that the papers should be presented to the Primary Heads Forum (PHF) as we are talking about a significant amount of funding. HL stated she would be happy to meet the PHF and present to them and will speak to Rob Leckey to arrange.
- 6.12 HO stated that if necessary an additional meeting could be arranged so that the issues could be discussed before decisions are made at the 17 January 2019 meeting.
- 6.13 HL & TD reiterated that the paper will be available in good time for the January meeting to enable the Forum to make an informed decision.

7. Any Other Business - SB.

- 7.1 There was no further business so the meeting closed at 11:40.

8. Next Meetings:

The dates of the future meetings in academic year 2018/19 are as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Thursday 17 January 2019 | 9.30 am | Meeting Point House |
| Thursday 14 March 2019 | 9.30 am | Meeting Point House |
| Thursday 23 May 2019 | 9.30 am | Meeting Point House |

A full record of future meetings can be found at the following link:

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

