

**Minutes of the Schools Forum – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams and YouTube**

**Status: Draft**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Establishment</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Gill Eatough (GE) <b>Chair</b>	Learning Community Trust	Academies (Special)
Yvonne Crilly (YC)	Woodside Primary School	Maintained Primaries - South Cluster
Sarah Roberts (SR)	High Ercall Primary School	Maintained Primaries - Wellington Cluster
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary School	Maintained Primaries - Newport Cluster
Rachel Cook (RC)	Newdale Primary School	Maintained Primaries - Central Cluster
Robert Fox (RF)	Donnington Wood Junior School	Maintained Primaries - North Cluster
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special School	Maintained Special Schools
Darren Lennon (DE)	Linden Centre PRU	Maintained PRUs
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Day Nurseries	Private, Voluntary and Independent Nurseries
Clare Whiting (CW)	Redhill Primary Academy	Academies
Simon Wellman (SW)	Director Education & Skills	Representative of the Executive Director of Children's services
Tim Davis (TD)	Group Accountant	Representative of the Director of Finance
Andy Wood (AW)	Senior Accountant - Schools	Representative of the Director of Finance

**1. Apologies - AW.**

**1.1** Apologies were received from:

Michael Scott – Newport Girl's High School.

Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning.

Jo Britton – Executive Director of Children's Services

Tracey Smart – Finance Manager.

**2. Membership of the Schools Forum/ appointment of Chairperson - TD**

**2.1** GE welcomed Angus Neal to the Forum, in his absence, as the newly appointed representative of the maintained secondary schools.

2.2 GE advised the group of her upcoming retirement in December and asked if any Forum member wished to take over as Chairperson. As there were no volunteers at this time, GE agreed to continue as chair for this and the November meeting. TD thanked GE for agreeing to continue as Chair for this term.

2.3 GE asked AW where we currently have vacancies on the Forum. AW responded that there are vacancies for primary governors and for academy PRUs

### **3. Minutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 meeting and matters arising - GE**

3.1 The minutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were accepted as a true and accurate record. A copy of the minutes can be found here:

[Minutes of 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022.](#)

3.2 TD gave an update on the Balance Control Mechanism (BCM) for maintained schools; The LA undertook a desktop exercise to identify those schools that were potentially in breach of the threshold of the BCM, but over the summer pay offers for teachers and support staff in maintained schools were announced and the pressures from the energy crisis remained unresolved. In the context of these potential additional costs and the uncertainty regarding the overall impact upon school budgets, it was decided not to pursue the BCM in 2022.

3.3 There were no other matters arising that would not be covered in the current meeting agenda.

### **4. Schools Funding 2023/24 - TD.**

4.1 The Forum were presented with two papers related to this agenda item which can be found at the links below

[Paper for Schools Funding for Financial Year 2023 - 2024](#)  
[National Funding Formula Policy Document for Financial Years 2023 to 2024.](#)

4.2 TD highlighted the key points in the papers.

4.3 Within the Schools block the increase in funding on a like for like pupil basis is around 3.1% compared with the prior year, after taking into account the baselining of the Schools Supplementary Grant. The Forum was reminded that at the May meeting the Growth Fund was reintroduced to provide funding for statutory payments to new schools for start-up costs. TD reminded the Forum of how we currently use the growth allocations and stated that this methodology would be continued in FY2023/24, funds permitting.

4.4 TD advised that the increase in funding in the High Needs block is substantially smaller than in previous years and that this is likely to make the 2023/24 high needs budget situation challenging.

- 4.5 It should be noted that Telford and Wrekin has managed to remain within the funding constraints for High Needs and maintains a small surplus. SW stated that other LAs had built up very large deficits. T&W's ability to control high needs pressures is in large part a result of collaborative working practices with providers and SW wanted to put on record his appreciation of the local education community's willingness to work in this way.
- 4.6 The Central Schools Services Block (CSSB), the funding allocated to LAs for centrally provided statutory services, is likely to remain around the same amount as 2022/23 due to growth in the pupil numbers offsetting a reduction in the amount per pupil. No allowance for inflation is provided within this funding block, despite the cost of centrally provided licences, a charge to the CSSB directly by the ESFA, increasing year on year. This results in additional financial pressure on the local authority services funded from this block.
- 4.7 The Early Years (EY) block will increase by a minimum of 1% but the precise figure will not be known until December and is dependent on the updated data that the ESFA will use to make allocations to LAs.
- 4.8 PH stated that the EY sector is struggling with significant cost pressures, due to increases in minimum ('living') wage amounts etc and the scale of these pressures were not being reflected in the EY block increases. As a result, settings may have to increase their charges to parents for hours above the free entitlement..
- 4.9 RC asked if the IDACI data that is used for schools could be made available to schools. AW stated that the latest data from the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) had been given to schools last year and when the next update is received this will be also be made available to schools.
- 4.10 TD summarised that whilst there are increases in the Dedicated Schools Grants, they are less than in recent years and may not be sufficient to cover cost pressures..

## **5. AOB - GE.**

### Union Facility Time

- 5.1 TD advised the Forum that the Director of Education had received a letter from the teaching unions (excluding the NASUWT), asking schools forums to de-delegate funding for union facility time. A copy of the letter had been provided to Forum members and can be found at the link below:

[Unions letter to Directors of Education](#)

- 5.2 GE stated that she was surprised that the unions signing off on the letter did not include the NASUWT. She felt that the letter would be better targeted to the Primary and Secondary Heads Forums for them to discuss with all headteachers, as de-delegation would override the individual views of Headteachers of maintained schools. This was not felt to be a viable approach, given that academy trusts can decide individually whether or not to buy in.

- 5.3 RC asked if we could have a pay as you go system. GE responded stating the unions would want funding and staff to be in place to provide support and could not do this without certainty over funding.
- 5.4 CW stated that one of the main reasons that de-delegation ceased in T&W was that there was limited visibility of how funds were being spent, particularly in the context that many meetings took place after the school day and would therefore not result in the school that employees the union representative needing to pay for supply cover.

#### SEND Fair Share Fund

- 5.5 The Forum was advised that the autumn & spring terms allocations for the formulaic element of the SEND fund had been calculated and distributed to schools. A copy of the allocations can be found at the link below:

[Fairshare Part A allocations for autumn & spring terms.](#)

#### School Improvement

- 5.6 RF asked if there was an update available on school improvement plans. SW asked for this to be added to the agenda for the next meeting in November 2022.

### **6. Next Meetings**

The dates of the forthcoming meetings for the academic year 2022/2023, are as follows:

- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 9.30 am
- Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 9.30 am
- Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 9.30 am
- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 9.30 am

[Planned Forum Meetings](#)