

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 20th September 2018

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

Status: Agreed

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
Paul Broomhead (PB)	Burton Borough Secondary	Governors / Secondary Schools
Jo Weichelbauer (JW)	Ladygrove Primary	Maintained Primaries – Central Cluster
Lee Hadley (LH)*	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	Representative of the Director of Finance

* Part of meeting

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 There were no apologies received for this meeting.

2. Election of the Chairperson for the AY201819 - TD.

2.1 Forum were asked for volunteers for the role of Chairperson. SB was nominated, seconded and unanimously re-elected as Chairperson.

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

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, 24th May 2018, were accepted as correct. A copy of the minutes can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7573/may_2018_-_minutes

- 3.2 HL advised that as discussed at the previous meeting (paragraph 3.12 of the May 2018 minutes), representations have been made to the DfE by the National Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Regional West Midlands ADCS Group regarding mounting High Needs budget pressures.

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

- 4.1 The Forum was presented with a paper showing the current and proposed breakdown of the membership of the Forum. A link to the paper can be found below:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7609/september_2018_-_forum_membership

- 4.2 TD noted that following several years without any academy conversions there had been a number in recent months, with the additional conversion of Charlton School expected this term. As a result there has therefore been a significant change in the balance of pupils attending maintained schools and academies in within Telford & Wrekin.
- 4.3 TD advised the Forum that in accordance with regulation 4(6) of The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 which states that "Primary schools, Secondary schools and academies must be broadly proportionally represented on the Forum, having regard to the total number of pupils registered at them" we are amending the numbers of schools representatives.
- 4.4 Maintained primary places will reduce from eight places to seven and maintained secondary places will reduce from two to one. Academy places will remain at five, one of which is a dedicated PRU place and one a dedicated special academy place.
- 4.5 An election will be needed to elect an additional academy member, which the local authority will facilitate.
- 4.6 The Forum discussed the current make-up of the academy members on the Forum and agreed that it would be advantageous to have a primary academy member on the Forum. TD said that whilst the selection of a Forum member was a decision for local academy proprietors, the local authority will make academies aware of this Forum view when sending out election details.

5. Addressing financial risks to the local authority of academy conversion - TD.

- 5.1 The Forum were presented with a paper for this agenda item and this can be found at the link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7575/september_2018_-_addressing_financial_risks_to_the_local_authority_of_academy_conversions

- 5.2 CL asked why LA schools have been allowed to run up large debts. TD stated circumstances vary in individual cases but schools can experience a significant short-time 'budget trauma' such as a poor

Ofsted report, or redundancy and premature retirement costs, which results in a budget problem. The general strategy is to then agree a multi-year recovery plan, but conversion to an academy can take place before this has completed, thus resulting in a deficit upon conversion.

- 5.3 TD pointed out that an implication of the proposals, with an emphasis on responding to potential problems rather than waiting until those problems arrived, is that notices of concern are likely to be issued more frequently than has occurred to date.
- 5.4 GE stated that if schools were not able to manage their finances and were not viable in the longer term then those schools would be unlikely to find a multi-academy trust willing to admit them to the trust.
- 5.5 ST asked how many schools are currently looking at ending the financial year with a deficit balance. TD said that it would be in the region of ten to twelve schools. ST stated that this is high at around 20% of the remaining LA schools. ST asked if this proportion has changed compared to five years ago; TD responded that at that time the proportion would have been around half of what it now is.
- 5.6 TD stated that in the short term, cost pressures in T&W schools are being eased by the increase in funding arising from the NFF, albeit the increases are only taking funding levels to that schools in other areas had received for many years.
- 5.7 The Forum were asked for their views on the proposals and were supportive – the general view being that good financial control should already be a core requirement for any school's management.

6. Schools & Central Services Block Funding FY2019/20 - TD.

- 6.1 The schools were presented with a paper for this agenda item which can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7576/september_2018_-_school_central_services_block_funding_201920
- 6.2 The DfE/EFA published provisional allocations for FY1920 in July 2018. The final allocations, based on October 2018 census data, will be announced in December. The provisional allocations suggest a cumulative average increase per pupil in T&W schools of 5.6% over the two years 2018/19 and 2019/20, compared to the 2017/18 baseline. This increase is the 12th highest of 151 authorities.
- 6.3 Growth funding to LAs will be on a formulaic basis for the first time in FY1920. This will cover explicit growth, e.g. that funded by using estimated numbers, and implicit growth e.g. that funded using the growth fund. Allocations of growth funding to schools will continue to be determined locally.
- 6.4 As in FY1819, the LA intends to continue to move towards the NFF, and keep the MFG rate at 0%. The Forum continued to support the principle of moving the T&W formula towards the NFF model.

6.5 The Central Schools Services Block allocation for 2019/20 is likely to be similar to that received in FY1819. The reduction by 2.5% compared to 2018/19, as a result of removal of some of the protected element of the grant, is likely to be partially offset by an increase in the pupil driven amount. The LA will again be required to seek Forum approval to use this funding for statutory central services for schools and is likely to request a similar amount to 2018/19's £845K, with the balance supporting high needs block. It is currently planned to bring the proposal to the November 2018 meeting.

7. High Needs Block Funding 2019/20 and Budget Position - TD.

7.1 The Forum were presented with a paper for this agenda item which can be found at the following link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7577/september_2018 -
high_needs_block_funding_201920_and_budget_position](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7577/september_2018_-_high_needs_block_funding_201920_and_budget_position)

7.2 HL stated that there is a cost reduction plan in place. All LAs are facing increasing pressures and have nowhere to go to resolve them.

7.3 CL stated that schools need to know how much of their budget is being transferred into the high needs block.

7.4 HD stated that special schools are struggling to balance their budgets in the context of frozen budget allocations.

7.5 GE stated that Queensway is now full and despite restructures and cutting back they are struggling to balance the budget. Queensway is finding that they are receiving more complex pupils compared to those that are leaving.

7.6 TD confirmed that the LA will definitely be requesting a transfer of funding to the high needs block in 2019/20 of at least 0.5% of the schools block.

8. Single Status Central Reserve - TD.

8.1 SB had suggested at the Chair's briefing that the monies top-sliced in 2008/09 and 2009/10 could be released to reduce the DSG deficit brought forward at the end of FY1819, as this seemed the most urgent pressure. A paper was produced to support this agenda item which can be found at the link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7586/september_2018 - single_status_reserve](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7586/september_2018_-_single_status_reserve)

8.2 TD reminded the group that the funding being discussed, £642,000, is not part of schools individual budgets so schools will not see any impact on their individual accounts.

- 8.3 ST asked what is the financial risk to schools and the LA of single status implementation. There was a risk that if these monies were released, school governing bodies could interpret it as a suggestion that schools themselves did not need to retain their single status provisions.
- 8.4 GE stated that this would be an opportunity to clear the DSG deficit and move forward.
- 8.5 TD noted that this would be a one-off transfer of funding. When the reserve was made all schools contributed but if it was ultimately used only for those schools implementing single status, then significant numbers of schools in the area would not benefit. If it was used to clear some or all of the DSG deficit then all schools would benefit from the reduction in high needs pressures.
- 8.6 SB stated that this money has been sat doing nothing for ten years and should have been spent on the pupils in schools at the time. Single status may not be implemented for another ten years so we should use this money now.
- 8.7 GE pointed out that local authority staff have been paid for twenty years to implement single status and yet it has still not taken place. GE also pointed out that as schools have updated their staffing establishments, the risk to their budgets should have reduced, as staff should now be correctly graded.
- 8.8 HL stated that she had met with schools and they wanted to progress with single status.
- 8.9 TD summarised the discussion and stated that there appeared to be a general consensus that the monies have been there too long and need to be used for the benefit of pupils. TD suggested that we wait until the DSG outturn for FY1819 is known, at which time the position regarding single status may also be clearer. At this time, e.g. the May 2019 meeting, the Forum can formulate a view.

9. AOB - SB.

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

10. Next Meetings.

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

Thursday 22 November 2018	9.30 am	Meeting Point House
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

