



Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Date: 10 September 2014

**Committee:
Schools Forum**

Date: Thursday, 18 September 2014

Time: 8.30 am

**Venue: Shrewsbury Training and Development Centre, Racecourse Crescent,
Monkmoor, Shrewsbury, SY2 5BP**

You are requested to attend the above meeting.
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter
Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

Members of Schools Forum

Bill Dowell (Chair)
Phil Adams
Austin Atkinson
Nicholas Bardsley
Hilary Burke
David Chantrey
Chris Davies
Christine Harding
Christine Hargest
Ann Hartley
Sandra Holloway
Colin Hopkins
Jo Humphreys

Peter Ingham
Pete Johnstone
Martin Jones
Sally Lill
Yvette McDaniel
Kay Miller
Ian Nurser
Phil Poulton
Kay Redknap
Mark Rogers
James Sparkes
Joy Tetsill
Colin Case

Your Committee Officer is:

Philip Wilson Service Manager Business Support People

Tel: 01743 254344

Email: phil.wilson@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

- 1 **Apologies**
- 2 **Election of Chair (Karen Bradshaw)**
- 3 **Minutes and Matters Arising (Pages 1 - 4)**
- 4 **Lobbying**
- 5 **School Funding Reforms 2015 - 2016 (Gwyneth Evans)**
- 6 **High Needs Funding (Chris Davies)**
- 7 **School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2014 Changes (Gwyneth Evans)**
- 8 **Review of Deficit Balances Protocol (Phil Wilson)**
- 9 **Dedicated Schools Grant 2014 - 2015 (Deborah Fern)**
- 10 **Communications**
- 11 **Next Meeting**

Thursday 23 October 2014, 8.30 am at Shrewsbury Training & Development Centre, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury

Future Meetings:


All 8.30 am at Shrewsbury Training & Development Centre:

Thursday 27 November 2014

Thursday 22 January 2015

Thursday 26 March 2015

Thursday 18 June 2015

 Shropshire Council	Schools Forum Date: 18 September 2014 Time: 8.30 am Venue: STDC, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury	<u>Item/Paper</u> A Public
--	---	---

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 19 JUNE 2014

Present:

School Forum Members

Bill Dowell – 14-19 Forum
Phil Adams – Academy headteacher
Austin Atkinson – Diocese representative
Hilary Burke – Secondary headteacher
David Chantrey – Primary Governor
Christine Hargest - Association of Secretaries
John Hitchings - SSGC
Jo Humphreys – Primary governor
Pete Johnstone – Secondary headteacher
Sally Lill – Primary headteacher
Yvette McDaniel – Primary headteacher
Kay Miller – Primary headteacher
Ian Nurser – Primary headteacher
Phil Poulton – Secondary headteacher
David Ravenscroft – Secondary governor
Kay Redknapp – TMBSS
Mark Rogers – Primary headteacher
Philip Sell – Diocese representative
James Sparkes – Secondary governor
Ruth Thomas – Post 16

Members

Cllr Ann Hartley
Cllr Nick Bardsley

Officers

Karen Bradshaw
Phil Wilson
Gwyneth Evans
Rob Carlyle
Gareth Profitt
Deborah Fern
Helen Woodbridge (Minutes)

Observers/visitors

Cllr Keith Barrow (Leader)
Cllr Roger Evans

The Chair welcomed everyone, especially the leader of Shropshire Council, Keith Barrow. Keith Barrow thanked Schools Forum for inviting him to attend. He confirmed that the Chair of Schools Forum had attended a recent Cabinet meeting. He advised that the members are proud of the schools in Shropshire which deliver a good quality of education. They understand the difficulties caused by falling rolls and projected birth figures and also that building new homes often moves the population around the county rather than increasing it. They also understand the challenges for all schools. They are pleased with the extra funding that is being allocated to Shropshire and are keen that it isn't just used as a 'crutch'. They recognise that schools need to collaborate to provide the best education possible for all of Shropshire's children and the administration wants to work closely with Schools Forum to ensure the best use of resources. It is recognised that if nothing is done, some schools will go into decline.

Nick Bardsley added that the Schools Forum Sustainability Task & Finish Group had asked for a political steer and that this group will meet with a members group

next week. A clear message needs to be communicated to governing bodies that schools have to change. The falling NOR is patchy but some areas are facing dramatic reductions in school population.

The Chair was pleased that the work of Schools Forum and the Task & Finish Group is appreciated. A clear picture of Shropshire has now been established and considerations can be made from this accurate base.

Sally Lill spoke of the demographic issues being faced in the Shifnal and Albrighton areas which is putting pressure on schools. Collaboration is taking place to ensure that there are enough future school places but schools are currently full. Keith Barrow recognised that Shifnal is an area of growth.

Philip Sell spoke of the Welsh influences and the consequence of Welsh school closures on border schools in Shropshire, eg Newcastle. Keith Barrow agreed that this added to an unstable situation. He made the point that one size will not fit all. Mark Rogers welcomed Keith Barrow's comments and valued the recognition the members are giving to work of Schools Forum.

Keith Barrow highlighted the need for communication as the public are generally unaware of the situation. He offered to attend other meetings to ensure Schools Forum and members continue to work closely.

Keith Barrow was thanked for his attendance and left the meeting at this point.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Chris Davies, Hannah Fraser, Christine Harding, Peter Ingham, Martin Jones, Phil Loveday and Neville Ward.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper A)

Apologies from John Hitchings for the meeting on 20 March 2014 were added. Christine Harding (not Hargest) had given apologies for the meeting on 19 June 2014.

3. Lobbying

A briefing note from members to the Task & Finish Group on Sustainability was circulated.

James Sparkes suggested that an exemplification of sustaining a network of schools is needed (eg sparsity) as there are many differing situations.

The Chair was worried that this message would be too complex and there is a need to keep it simple.

Mark Rogers asked if the closure of any schools is ruled out. It was agreed that there may be closures but in a planned and collaborative way.

John Hitchings added that the schools system was built on Victorian principles and a 21st century solution is required.

Ian Nurser supported collaboration, for example, a headteacher and school business manager looking after several schools. He suggested that the education of children had suffered because the politicians backed down during the previous school reorganisations.

The Chair stressed the need to inform and work with governing bodies – any talk of closure risks alienation.

Phil Poulton added that all schools realise that budgets are getting tighter.

Phil Adams made a plea to politicians re listening to lobbying groups but not

**ACTI
ON**

necessarily backing schools.

Kay Redknapp added that demography is more than numbers – locality is important. New populations and changes bring issues and need.

Ann Hartley recognised the key role of politicians. The communication strategy is a way forward. The problem needs to be understood before anything can progress.

Nick Bardsley made a plea for simple messages.

Philip Sell spoke of the historical legacy and the concern re adequacy of buildings.

Kay Miller suggested that considering the heavy workload for headteachers, shared responsibility with governors is needed.

4. Task & Finish Group on Sustainability (Paper B)

Phil Wilson advised that the group had met twice and had worked through developments and models. After the next meeting there will be a recommendation for consideration by Schools Forum in September.

The Chair suggested that briefing sessions would be needed for other parties too.

Roger Evans asked for an early date for this so that cross-party attendance is ensured.

John Hitchings had welcomed the leader's attendance and engagement and endorsed the need for communication with stakeholders.

Nick Bardsley suggested that governing bodies were the main audience but that parish councils and the general public also need informing that pupil numbers are falling. The communication strategy needs to include radio and press. Eric Smith had been useful at the recent governors' conference. Nick agreed to talk to SALC.

5. School Balances as at 31 March 2014 (Paper C)

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper. It was stressed that the figures are confidential to Schools Forum members.

John Hitchings stressed the need for today's funding to be spent on today's pupils and that governors need to be assured that rigorous financial controls are in place.

Hilary Burke explained the large surplus for her school and spoke of the need for financial planning when, for example, a young staff are moving up the pay scales at a cost of £140,000 pa. Also with a building over 50 years old and decreasing DFC, more funding needs to be retained for repairs and maintenance. It is not saving for a rainy day but prudent management to ensure quality over the coming few years.

The Chair welcomed this context.

Phil Adams asked about the SJT deficit.

The Chair advised that clarification was being sought.

Gwyneth Evans advised that the deficit would remain with the local authority when they became an academy. School Forum members were very unhappy at the unfairness of this.

John Hitchings suggested that responsible governing bodies can explain their surpluses and that academisation would solve a school's deficit problem.

Ian Nurser suggested that deficit budgets should not be allowed, especially when academisation is likely.

Gwyneth Evans spoke of LA powers to withdraw delegation of budgets which would involve the appointment of an IEB.
Philip Sell advised from his experience as a headteacher of five schools in four authorities that this is a perennial problem.
Gwyneth Evans confirmed that plans for planned spending are only requested after a surplus has been in place for three years.
Pete Johnstone asked how he could advise colleagues about the SJT deficit. The Chair suggested that he could confirm that it is not taken forward by the school.
Confidential papers were collected back in.

6. Control on Surplus Balances (Paper D)

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper. She confirmed that in the case of sponsored academies, schools would take forward any surpluses but deficits would be left behind. Non sponsored academies take both surpluses and deficits forward.

7. Final DSG Allocation 2014-15 (Paper E)

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper.
The Chair welcomed Ruth Thomas to her first meeting and valued the expertise she will bring re high needs matters.

8. Schools Financial Value Standard – Update on Returns by 31 March 2014 (Paper F)

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper. Schools Forum felt that Gwyneth Evans and Rob Carlyle were spending an unacceptable amount of time chasing returns from schools. The Chair agreed to write to those schools who had not completed their return.

Chair

9. Dedicated School Grant Monitoring (Paper G)

Deborah Fern presented the paper.

10. Communications

It was agreed that Schools Forum would continue to work with Gareth Proffitt. The views of the Leader and the Task & Finish Group will be condensed for presentation to any audience. Feedback to Gareth is welcome.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 18 September 2014.
The Chair thanked colleagues for their attendance and wished them a good summer break.

The meeting closed at 10.00 am.

Future meetings:

23 October 2014, 27 November 2014, 22 January 2015, 26 March 2015, 18 June 2015.