

 Shropshire Council	Schools Forum Date: 5 December 2013 Time: 8.30 am Venue: STDC, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury	<u>Item/Paper</u> <h1 style="text-align: center;">A</h1> Public
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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2013

Present:

School Forum Members

Bill Dowell – 14-19 Forum
 Phil Adams – Academy headteacher
 Austin Atkinson - Diocese
 Chris Davies – Special school headteacher
 Chris Endacott – Primary governor
 Sheila Halsall – Secondary governor
 Christine Hargest - Association of Secretaries
 John Hitchings - SSGC
 Sandra Holloway – Primary governor
 Jo Humphreys – Primary governor
 Chris Huss – Primary headteacher
 Peter Ingham- Secondary governor
 Pete Johnstone – Secondary headteacher
 Martin Jones – Primary governor
 Phil Loveday – Academy headteacher
 Yvette McDaniel – Primary headteacher
 Kay Miller – Primary headteacher
 Phil Poulton – Secondary headteacher
 David Ravenscroft – Secondary governor
 Kay Redknapp – Head of TMBSS
 Mark Rogers - Primary headteacher
 Philip Sell - Diocese
 James Sparkes – Secondary governor

Members

Cllr Ann Hartley

Officers

Karen Bradshaw
 Phil Wilson
 Rob Carlyle
 Gwyneth Evans
 Neville Ward
 Deborah Fern
 Helen Woodbridge (Minutes)

Observers/visitors

Cllr Roger Evans
 Cllr Hannah Fraser
 Paul Tynan (EFA)

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Joyce Barrow, Hilary Burke, David Chantrey and Ian Nurser.

The Chair welcomed Phil Loveday (Academy headteacher), Deborah Fern (Finance Officer) and Paul Tynan (observer from the EFA's Funding and Reform Team). Paul Tynan advised that last year the EFA had sent observers to some Schools Forums which were causing concern. Now they are sending observers to the remainder in order to gauge how the various Schools Forums are operating.

ACTION

2. Election of Vice Chair

John Hitchings was unanimously elected as vice chair.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper A)

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2013 were accepted as a true record.

Chris Huss asked if the item at agenda point 6 about regulation 3 had been addressed and Gwyneth Evans and Neville Ward confirmed that it had.

4. Lobbying

The Chair reported that the F40 Group have increased lobbying prior to the launch of a consultation on the introduction of a National Funding Formula. The MP for Shrewsbury had a letter re fair funding published recently in the Shrewsbury Chronicle.

Karen Bradshaw reported that schools continue to lobby the LA re SEN and sparsity. The LA is also responding to various MP letters.

John Hitchings spoke of the need to raise the profile of Schools Forum.

A representative from communications attended the last meeting but there had been nothing to report.

Chris Huss suggested that there would be communication items from this meeting and it was agreed that Communication should be a standing item for future meetings and it should be revisited at the end of this meeting.

5. School Funding Update (Paper B)

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper.

Schools Forum agreed that the recommendation to reduce the low prior attainment unit value as agreed on 12 September 2013 should remain unchanged.

Mark Rogers advised that the sparsity funding had been the hardest issue to deal with so far. The problem considered was that there is too little funding coming into Shropshire for the number of schools. The Task and Finish Group had been in a difficult position and reluctantly after much agonising came to its decision. In the interest of fairness it had been decided to give a workable amount of funding to the most sparse schools.

The Chair advised that Schools Forum needs to respond to those schools that made suggestions as part of the consultation process.

Chris Endacott advised that the 100/150 NOR limits is not based on affordability and highlighted the need establish where funding being allocated is not adequate.

Kay Miller thought that it was unfortunate that local national politicians had raised expectations re sparsity funding.

Phil Adams was worried that funding sparsity would take funds from other schools that can't afford it.

The Chair spoke of the need to keep all children in mind. He agreed to write to the DfE to clarify that there are 54 sparse primary schools in the county but that Shropshire can only afford to fund the 10 most sparse primary schools.

Chair

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that the 10 most sparse primary schools would be funded as per the recommendation agreed on 12 September.

Chris Huss suggested that in future, Schools Forum meets immediately before the annual financial return needs to be sent in. The autumn 2014 meeting dates will take this into account.

Phil Adams reported that the Task and Finish Group would have preferred to use tapering for allocating secondary sparsity funding and it was unfortunate that this is not allowed in the regulations.

Jim Sparkes strongly agreed that using the tapering approach would be fairer.

Chris Huss pointed out that not using tapering could lead to a school losing a large amount of funding for admitting an extra child. He found it frustrating to be so constrained when Schools Forum take time and effort to ensure fairness.

The Chair asked Paul Tynan to take the fact that the policy is not helpful back to the EFA.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that for allocating the secondary sparsity factor, a flat rate of £40,000 would be applied with the threshold measures narrowed to less than 450 on roll and an average distance of greater than or equal to 9 miles.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that the lump sum values should remain at the levels recommended at the last meeting.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that the decision not to have a short term Falling Rolls fund remains unchanged.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that high needs funding is allocated as per the decision at the last meeting.

The Chair thanked Karen Bradshaw, Gwyneth Evans and Rob Carlyle for their work on the consultation process.

Gwyneth Evans advised that there is currently an issue for 13 schools who have a budget shortfall due to a disproportionately high number of SEN pupils. There is a projected underspend of £50,000 in the High Needs Contingency Budget for 2013-14. She proposed helping these 13 schools by using the £50,000.

John Hitchings was concerned about setting a precedent by funding an emergency this time.

Gwyneth Evans confirmed that this is only a one year problem. However, Schools Forum will need to continue to consider disproportionately high numbers of SEN pupils

Chris Davies wondered if half of the funding could be distributed now and half at the end of the year.

Yvette McDaniel asked if the model re disproportionately high numbers of SEN children could be distributed to headteachers. Gwyneth Evans agreed to do this.

PW

GE

Kay Miller proposed that it should all be distributed as there would be an overspend somewhere (school budgets or central budget) however it was done.

Phil Adams stressed the need for the funding to follow the child.

Chris Huss reminded colleagues that the notional SEN budget is not just for high needs – it also has to cover school action, school action + and Bands1/2.

Chris Davies advised that pupils who are not yet known were considered but it was felt that they would have minimal budgetary impact as there would be only 3 months of the year remaining.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that the £50,000 is made available to the 13 schools.

6. Shropshire Schools Forum Constitution (Paper C)

Phil Wilson presented the paper.

Several members thought that it may be difficult to always find people who are willing to join Schools Forum.

Martin Jones disclosed that he is also a governor at an academy.

Mark Rogers stressed the need to stick to the ratios laid down by legislation.

Varying the length of terms of office was agreed as sensible to allow for continuity.

Kay Miller was concerned at the cost (eg supply) for small school representatives.

In order to keep the balance of representation (academy/non academy) it was agreed that the membership of Schools Forum would be agreed annually from 1 April.

James Sparkes suggested that all maintained schools eg Trust schools needed to have a voice.

The two recommendations at Point 9: that a representative from 16-19 be sought to joins Schools Forum from April 2014 and the place of the 14-19 representative to be extended to 31 August 2014 were agreed by Schools Forum.

Martin Jones asked about sharing email addresses for all primary governors but there are data protection issues.

Chris Huss advised that headteachers on Schools Forum represent all headteachers.

Phil Adams suggested that membership details of all consultative groups are circulated to all headteachers so that they can contact their representatives.

The Chair encouraged headteachers and their Chair of Governors to spend time consulting on key issues.

Kay Miller commented on the perception that Schools Forum is an enemy to some sections of education. Since joining, she has seen that it is not.

Chris Huss reported back on conversations with headteachers who are worried about the funding formula. He assures them that they should be engaging and that the onus is on them to get their views across.

John Hitchings felt that communication is an issue as several Chairs of Governors did not know about a recent event despite an email being sent to all schools.

Several members of School Forum did not know about the background and role of the EFA and Paul Tynan agreed to take this message back.

Chris Endacott felt that communications with headteachers are working but more problematic between governors. After discussion it was agreed that feedback from Schools Forum should be a standing agenda item at Area Governors Meetings.

Chris Davies reminded colleagues that governors are volunteers and if there is too much pressure – eg a requirement to talk to others - they may walk away.

Phil Poulton spoke of the element of trust in Schools Forum – he has many times witnessed members of Schools Forum take decisions that would financially disadvantage their own school.

Phil Wilson confirmed that he will remind headteachers of Schools Forum membership including email addresses (Schools Forum members agreed to their email addresses being circulated).

PW

7. Task and Finish Group on Sustainability (Paper D)

The Chair reported that he had met with Cabinet re school funding and it had been very useful. Cabinet have no plans to work on school organisation. However, they would find the technical work of Schools Forum on sustainability issues very useful.

Chris Endacott felt there was a real need to understand sparsity/impact needed and there would be additional resources needed to undertake this detailed work.

Ann Hartley welcomed the work of Schools Forum on sustainability. She suggested that Cabinet members be invited to the presentation of a final report, which is scheduled for 20 March 2014.

Chris Huss was concerned at the complexity of the issues. The arrangements for the funding from 2015/16 onwards was not yet decided and it is unclear whether sparsity will be funded.

The Chair asked Paul Tynan if he would investigate details of timescale.

Gwyneth Evans advised that she had attended the National Fair Funding Formula meeting on 6 November and there are no details available yet - consultation will take place from December.

Martin Jones asked if Cabinet wanted Schools Forum to tell them which schools to close. He stressed that governors in small schools are feeling the pressure of reduced budgets.

Ann Hartley advocated the need for partnership working and advised that waiting for schools the 'wither on the vine' is not an option.

The Chair felt that this work would give schools a vision of the future.

Chris Davies reminded colleagues that this exercise has been done before and non-viable schools (those below a red line) were identified. We need to consider if the current organisation of schools is disadvantaging children.

Kay Miller advised that the time is right – some schools feel that they are only able to operate due to extra funding (eg sports funding).

Chris Huss welcomed Ann Hartley's comments but advised that without

MFG schools would be 'withering on the vine'.
Neville Ward reminded colleagues of the impact on schools 'above the red line'.

James Sparkes felt that this is an important piece of work.

Mark Rogers queried membership of the group. Jo Humphreys, Peter Ingham and Sandra Holloway expressed an interest in joining the group.

Schools Forum unanimously approved the Term of Reference for the Sustainability Task and Finish Group.

8. Early Years Single Funding Formula

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper.

Kay Miller felt that having the funding termly would be difficult eg for handling redundancy.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that the approach outlined at 4i. should be taken. (The predicted total number of hours attendance of children who will receive early years provision from the relevant early years provider during the period using as a basis for the calculation the actual hours of such attendance in each of at least three sample weeks.)

9. Joint Use Task and Finish Group

Phil Wilson gave an overview of the paper.

10. Dedicated Schools Grant 2013-14

Deborah Fern gave an overview of the paper.

11. Any other business

It was agreed that Governors Support and Development Service would be asked to provide a database of Chair of Governors email addresses so that they could be copied into communications where necessary.

GSDT

Chris Huss asked for feedback from Paul Tynan who confirmed that he had been impressed with the Forum, particularly with the use made of Task and Finish Groups.

Communications:

The Chair is to write to:

- Schools who made suggestions
- DfE to clarify Shropshire's approach to sparsity funding.

Chair

12. Next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 5 December 2013. (Phil Loveday gave his apologies for the next meeting.)

The meeting closed at 11.00 am.

Future meetings:

Thursday 23 January 2014, Thursday 20 March 2014, Thursday 19 June 2014