

Schools Forum Task & Finish Group

Notes of key points raised at the meeting held on 10 January 2017

In attendance

Bill Dowell (Chair of Schools Forum) [BD], Nick Bardsley (Deputy Portfolio Folder, Children's Services) [NB], Mark Rogers (Headteacher, Oxon CE Primary) [MR], John Hitchings (Vice Chair of Schools Forum) [JH], Rob Carlyle (Finance Director, Meole Brace School) [RC]

Local authority officers:

Chris Mathews [CM], Gwyneth Evans [GE], Stephen Waters [SW], Phil Wilson [PW], Ros Bridges [RB], Jo Jones [JJ]

1 Welcome

BD welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies

Apologies received from Pete Johnstone – Belvidere

3 Notes from the meeting on 6 December 2016

The notes from the previous meeting were accepted.

4 Government announcements on school revenue funding 2017 to 2018

- GE reported that the DSG figures were not received until the 20 December 2016, after the autumn term had ended.
- PW proposed that Schools Forum on the 19 January 2017 be asked to make the decisions on addressing the loss of ESG. Due to the impact this loss of funding will have on maintained school budgets, it was deemed that delegation of authority to make these decisions to this group was neither appropriate nor fair. The group will therefore be asked to put forward recommendations for decisions to be made at the Forum meeting.
- An extra School Forum meeting has been arranged for 2 February to cover deal with agenda items remove from the January meeting.
- A school funding event has been arranged for Wednesday 8 February at the Lord Hill Hotel, Shrewsbury for headteachers and chairs of governors to brief them on the decisions taken by Schools Forum.
- MR commented that it may be useful to let Forum members know that GE has to submit the APT on the 20 January and it therefore essential that they attend on the 19 January. PW agreed to send

an email confirming this.

5 Education Services Grant (ESG) – funding levels in 2017-18

- PW handed out a spreadsheet with the ESG changes and proposals.
- The information shows that currently for 2016-17 the ESG figures are £2,515,810 of which £570,000 is the retained duties element (£15pp) and £1,945,810 is the general funding amount (£77pp).
- For 2017-18 it has been confirmed the retained element will remain at £570k – this will be moved into the DSG.
- The recommendation by this group is the £570,000 will be retained by the local authority as in previous years.
- PW reported that for the transitional period of April to August 2017 Shropshire will receive a maximum of £611,016 – this figure has been adjusted for academy conversions post 1 November 2016 and those that are in the conversion pipeline.
- PW indicated that this is the absolute maximum funding Shropshire would receive and if more schools converted to academies this figure would reduce at the point of their conversion.
- JH asked if some further modelling could be done on the impact of further schools converting to academies would have on this budget. **PW/SW to action.**
- BD reminded everyone that 2017/18 is a transitional year and that Forum members would need to understand and be clear about that when making decisions of central retention.
- PW explained that the estimated loss of funding based on current information is at least £1,131,394.
- Each converting mainstream school would result in a further loss of £27.50pp and £1,800 per school (loss of school improvement monitoring and brokerage grant) – for a school of 200 pupils this is £7,300, for a 300 pupil school this is £10,050.

6 School improvement monitoring and brokering grant

- The LA will receive a maximum of £203,400 for the school improvement grant, this is based on a provisional figure of £1800 per maintained school. **[following the meeting, confirmation was received that the final figure will be £1,884 per maintained school]**
- PW advised that this figure could reduce as further schools converted to academies (those in the pipeline have been accounted for).
- CM said that this figure would secure only 3 FTEs for the Education Improvement Service (EIS) team
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7 Proposals for addressing loss of Education Services Grant funding in 2017-18 for approval by Schools Forum on 19 January 2017

- Redundancy costs is one of the biggest uses of the ESG general duties funding. SW provided the group with figures on previous spend. In 2014-15 it was £574k, 2015-16 was £362k and currently for 2016-17 it stands at £455k.
- It was noted that Shropshire does not fund premature retirements out of this funding.
- It was proposed that the £512k budget set against Capital Expenditure from Revenue (CERA) line in the Central Provision within Schools Budget block will be re-prioritised to support these redundancy costs. GE advised that this funding is for both maintained schools and academies. This funding will go back to school's budgets and then be 'top-sliced' back to the local authority. This will have a neutral effect on maintained schools, while academies be able to retain and so will receive an extra £14.69 per pupil. The amount to be top-sliced for maintained schools will be £330k.
- It is proposed of this £330k - £300k will be used for redundancies and £30k will be used towards the provision of statutory finance functions to maintained schools. Members of the group agreed to this recommendation to Schools Forum.
- PW then explained in order to keep the redundancy fund at current levels we would need to top slice £200k from maintained schools. After some discussion by group members it was felt more reasonable to reduce this figure to £150k. Therefore the redundancy fund would be £450k in total.
- It is proposed that £100k is top-sliced from maintained schools to support HR/health and safety costs. PW advised that these costs sit outside the HR SLAs and are mainly due to Shropshire Council being the employer of staff in maintained schools.
- The group asked if officers could find out how many schools is Shropshire Council not the employer for. Also what the split of these costs are between HR and health and safety. **PW/SW to action.**
- Currently the EIS team has 5.5 FTEs and the new school improvement monitoring and brokerage grant will cover just under 3 FTEs. Therefore CM is asking schools to de-delegate an additional £200k to keep that core EIS team in place in September 2017. CM informed the group members of the important work of the team and why this was the minimum funding needed in order to keep the service.
- The group asked if they could have a breakdown of the costs of 5.5 FTEs within EIS - **SW to action**
- MR requested if more work could be done on the breakdown of how many visits each adviser does. – **CM to action**
- It is proposed to top slice £300k from maintained schools to

provide additional funding to support education access services for maintained schools.

- PW informed the group that the Education Access Service (EAS) team have SLAs in place with every school that has converted to an academy. There was discussion that an alternative to top slicing was to set up SLAs with maintained schools from September 2017. The group asked if further figures could be provided on this and whether the price would be dependent on pupil numbers and the number of FSM pupils and deprivation data. **PW to speak to Chis Kerry for details. SW to provide actual costs of the EAS team**
- In conclusion the implications on schools in term of a top-slice on their budgets is £150k for redundancies, £100k for HR/health & safety, £200k for the EIS team and £300k for the EAS team. Further work tasked to officers will be brought to Schools Forum to help inform the decisions to be made.

8 **Future meetings of the group**

No further dates were diaried.

9 **Any other business**

No other business was considered.