



Schools Forum

Date: 8 June 2017

Time: 8.30 am

Venue: STDC, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury

Item/Paper

A

Public

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 23 MARCH 2017

Present

School Forum Members

- Bill Dowell (Chair)
- Phil Adams – Academy Headteacher
- John Hitchings – SSGC
- Sabrina Hobbs -
- Sandra Holloway – Primary Governor
- Shelly Hurdley – Early Years Representative
- Alan Parkhurst – Primary Headteacher
- Michael Revell – Primary Governor
- Mark Rogers – Primary Headteacher
- Philip Sell – Diocese Of Hereford

Members

- Cllr David Minnery
- Cllr Nick Bardsley

Officers

- Julia Dean
- Gwyneth Evans
- Jo Jones
- Chris Mathews
- Neville Ward
- Stephen Waters
- Helen Woodbridge (Minutes)

Observers

- Roger Evans

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from John Eglin, Colin Hopkins, Peter Johnstone, Geoff Pettengell, Philip Poulton, Kay Redknap, Karen Bradshaw, Phil Wilson and Gareth Proffitt

ACTION

2. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper A)

The minutes were accepted as a true record (subject to the amendment to next year's meetings dates where the year had been entered incorrectly). Gwyneth Evans confirmed that the response to the NFFF consultation had been submitted.

HW

3. National Fair Funding Lobbying

The Chair thanked Gwyneth Evans for her work on developing and submitting the response paper which gave the message that overall, Schools Forum are not happy with result for Shropshire. Mark Rogers provided feedback from his recent visit to the DfE in London (with Alan Doust, Karen Bradshaw and David Minnery). They had talked to Nick Gibb and a panel of civil servants who did listen (there had been delegations from various LAs attending throughout the day). Alan Doust represented rural/sparsity well. Per pupil funding and the 3% floor were covered and Nick Gibb had stated that this government does not intend to reduce deprivation funding. When the delegation had suggested the need for extra funding they had been advised that there is none available. Mark Rogers confirmed that the projected loss for his school has now increased to

around £100k.

The Chair thanked colleagues who attended the meeting.

Gwyneth Evans advised that details have now been released which confirms that 40 Shropshire schools will have funding for floor protection (based on the pupil led element). This amounts to around £1 million funding for floor costs for Shropshire. The Chair reported that the CYP Scrutiny Panel had called in NFF consultation. A very thorough session had taken place and subsequently a response had been submitted from members.

The Chair reported that this issue had been widely covered yesterday in the media and at Prime Minister's Question Time. The general view was that there may be issues re NFFF or it may even be put on hold.

David Minnery confirmed that pressure on local MPs is being kept up and that Shropshire MPs are united on this.

The Chair wondered if Alan Parkhurst and Mark Rogers should meet with Daniel Kawczynski to set out their schools' positions as case studies. Mark Rogers confirmed that one of his governors had done so but he would be happy for this to happen as it is a very complicated and confused situation.

John Hitchings agreed that the situation is confused. There is more money coming in but a number of issues to take on simultaneously. Large/small schools, deprived/non-deprived area schools, sparsity issues etc.

The Chair suggested a simple question re large non-deprived schools asking if that is the effect that was required?

Phil Adams suspected that MPs do not fully appreciate the whole situation eg other financial pressures – pensions, NI, apprenticeship levy.

Roger Evans concurred as he received a letter from an MP which indicates that there is confusion. He suggested that MPs are being briefed by civil servants who also don't understand.

The Chair recognised that there are distinct lobbying areas but he suggested the need to focus on NFFF.

Mark Rogers expressed a concern that Schools Forum may be left with management of a formula for up to three years if the process stalls. He was also concerned that gaps between how areas are funded per pupil may grow.

The Chair suggested that Gwyneth Evans, Mark Rogers etc meet with working group of colleagues to work on a presentation/case studies which focus on schools which are likely to have lowest per pupil funding.

Phil Sell advised that the triple deprivation funding is led from Justine Greening. He reported a commonality in the diocese's response to the consultation. The Bishop has been in touch with MPs and will continue to do so.

Gwyneth Evans was asked about an area cost adjustment analysis but this has not yet been done.

Phil Adams expressed a concern if areas with PFI buildings are receiving extra funding.

GE/MR

4. Strategic Overview of High Needs Block

Julia Dean gave a presentation – appended.

She thanked the High Needs Working Group for their work on responding to the High Needs Funding consultation.

She advised that there has been a move to a more stable system which is not necessarily fairer. Shropshire would lose out in real terms whereas the majority of West Midlands LAs would gain. Sparsity and small schools have not been considered.

Sabrina Hobbs advised that she had attended a briefing where the audience was told that other services needed to be used.

The Chair asked about health funding of mental health needs. Julia Dean advised that she was working with health on this as sometimes health funding finishes and

education/social care are left with consequences.

Phil Adams asked about 6 day exclusion. Julia Dean advised that they access high needs funding because they become high needs when excluded (although they are not necessarily SEN).

Julia Dean was asked why the exclusion rate is so high - almost double? She confirmed that this is a national trend and spoke of the need for schools to be careful in case SEN pupils are being discriminated against.

There was concern that needs are not being met in secondary schools. The impact is that the LA have had to commission more places at Woodlands and TMBSS.

Sabrina Hobbs advised that needs are becoming more complex and fewer services are available.

Chris Mathews confirmed that CPG would be the forum to discuss these issues.

However, secondary schools need to look at this as Shropshire's performance is not as good as it could be.

Headteachers wondered if there was a tendency to exclude prior to January caused by the pressure re attainment.

David Minnery asked about the level of statements/EHCP asking why it is much higher in Shropshire.

Julia Dean advised that the thresholds are not quite right between Statement/EHCP and SEN support. This is because to get extra funding, schools have had to go through the statement/EHCP process. She advised that Shropshire LA is considering following a graduated pathway which includes social care and health.

This approach should lower the number of pupils using TMBSS and Woodlands.

Mark Rogers suggested that sometimes due to parent pressure EHCPs are applied for, refused but then given at appeal. It is then difficult for school to stop funding at a future point a bubble is created round a child that is not helpful.

Julia Dean confirmed that a streamlined speedy process is the aim.

Phil Adams advised that schools sometimes receive children who have needs that have not been recognised.

Sabrina Hobbs spoke of the growth in MLD – level of ability has increased leading to more specialists becoming involved. As the biggest SEN school in country with 300 staff additional costs are massive and a £300k deficit is projected. She confirmed that she is in favour of a graduated pathway.

Julia Dean confirmed the intention to start a pilot which will stay in place, progress and be refined.

Schools Forum members were in support of this. The Chair highlighted the need to ensure that funding would not be adversely affected.

Mark Rogers thought that this would be dependent on branding and need may swamp the system. The children who either just got EHCPs or just missed EHCPs need to be involved.

Julia Dean's initial thoughts are that it would be an annual request. The High Needs Task and Finish Group will plan this.

John Hitchings suggested a corrective system which is fluid enough to meet needs when needed. He added that it is hard to employ staff in a time limited system.

Shelly Hurdley advised that recently there has been a huge increase in high needs pupils - four have gone to Severdale. There is a lack of support from an EY SENCo and a voice is needed on the High Needs Forum. Shelly Hurdley was persuaded to join.

Neville Ward advised of pressure within EY SEN budgets. The LA is expected to support with no or very little extra funding. There are a number of settings which parents recognise as first choice for their SEN children – this adds pressure to these settings

Julia Dean advised of a preferred provider list and that her service has provided training so that children can remain within local community.

Neville Ward recognised difficult decisions re funding at an early stage when needs

are not confirmed. Short term funding would be an advantage.

Julia Dean explained that once a child is admitted to Severndale, it is hard to move them out.

Sabrina Hobbs advised of a structured programme being put in place which is time limited with parents so they expect their child to move out. There are struggles with some parents but there have been two successful moves to mainstream this year. Schools Forum thanked Julia Dean for her presentation.

5 Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring

Stephen Waters went through his report. Detail re three/four year old funding will be brought to the next meeting. Gwyneth Evans added that this budget is still only provisional until the summer term actuals and should increase.

Neville Ward added that the hourly rate won't change next year so need to manage budget centrally.

It was confirmed that the school condition survey will use some of the underspend on 1.4.6.

Mark Rogers was concerned that the average Shropshire head would not understand this budget. This matters because of academisation considerations and the need to understand what any top slice includes – he suggested a need to revisit decisions made.

It was agreed that the quality of monitoring reports is much better.

The Chair advised that Phil Wilson will be asking for detailed work from officers for 8 June meeting. Need for schools to know cost of traded services for that meeting.

Mark Rogers – SLAs (or converted to SLA) are relatively simple. Other issues are more complicated eg redundancies, maternity insurance, 10% growth fund. The Chair agreed that this will be added to the planning for June.

6 Communications

Lobbying continues.

7 Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 8 June 2017

The meeting closed at 10.55 am.

Future meetings (please diary):

14 September 2017	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
2 November 2017	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
7 December 2017	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
18 January 2018	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
1 February 2018 (provisional)	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
22 March 2018	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
7 June 2018	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor