

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 8 JUNE 2017**Present****School Forum Members**

Bill Dowell (Chair)
Phil Adams – Academy Headteacher
Jean Evanson – Association Representative
Meryl Green – Post 16 Representative
John Hitchings – SSGC
Sabrina Hobbs – Academy Special School Headteacher
Marilyn Hunt – Primary Headteacher
Shelly Hurdley – Early Years Representative
Alan Parkhurst – Primary Headteacher
Phil Poulton – Secondary Headteacher
Mark Rogers – Primary Headteacher

Members

Cllr Clare Aspinall
Cllr Nick Bardsley

Officers

Julia Dean
Gwyneth Evans
Chris Mathews
Neville Ward
Stephen Waters
Phil Wilson
Helen Woodbridge (Minutes)

Observers

Dave Tinker (Item 9 only)

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Michael Barratt, John Eglin, Peter Johnstone, Geoff Pettengell, Karen Bradshaw, Jo Jones and Hannah Fraser.
Later apologies were received from Sandra Holloway and Kay Redknapp

2. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper A)

The chair welcomed everyone and especially a new member – Marilyn Hunt and a new councillor - Clare Aspinall. He also welcomed Nick Bardsley as the new lead member for Children and Young People.

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

It was reported that the action for Mark Rogers and Gwyneth Evans on collecting some case studies had commenced using 2015/16 data but temporarily stalled until the 2016/17 data is received.

3. Central Retention

Phil Wilson presented the paper.
John Hitchings advised that schools had accepted the top slice/de-delegation but only 'on approval' and there is a need to further engage with schools.
Phil Wilson went through the proposed timetable for this (paragraph 9) and added that the starting point is not to top slice or de-delegate.
Mark Rogers identified that governors should take this issue on board. He asked if the 10% growth contingency and maternity could also be considered.
Phil Adams pointed out that small schools could be severely affected by maternity –

ACTION

however the MAT model may solve this issue.

Schools Forum generally agreed to including other de-delegated budgets.

Mark Rogers added that the % of budget paid for LA services is nowhere near as much as paying 5% to a MAT although it was understood that as maintained schools diminish, each school would need to pay more.

Sabrina Hobbs stressed the importance of maintaining the quality of any retained services.

Phil Adams added that with the disappearance of IAG/Youth, schools have had to look to the private sector which is much more expensive.

The chair asked if the issue could be raised at governor briefings.

John Hitchings advised of a rescheduled governors conference on 9 September.

Chris Mathews undertook to keep governors up to date through the agenda information. Maintained schools will also be updated re EIS changes and need for increased school to school support.

John Hitchings asked about joint / cooperative ventures with other LAs.

Chris Mathews advised that there is some joint working and there are some joint services eg Multicultural Development Service (MDS).

Phil Wilson added that the £60k retained funding for MDS could also be considered as English as an Additional Language will be a line in the NFFF.

Mark Rogers suspected that some schools will not know how much money their school is paying, although this is itemised on the back of the budget sheet. Schools Forum agreed that this should be highlighted, especially for governors. Phil Wilson undertook to build this into his presentation.

Schools Forum agreed the planned approach to engaging the wider school community on the future delivery of the support services that are currently funded through centrally retained DSG from April 2018 onwards.

JH

CM

PW

4. **Strategic Overview of High Needs Block**

Phil Wilson provided a verbal report from the High Needs Task and Finish group which had met before half term and advised that a written report will come to the September meeting.

The group had considered the review of high needs funding for the two special schools (a report had been received in March which had been commissioned from the National Development Team for Inclusion).

Recommendations were general with two key recommendations around banding and funding. The consensus of the group was that the report was light and the evidence trail leading to the decisions was not sufficient. More information, particularly on finance is required and will be requested.

The chair checked that representation on the T&F Group is correct – it was highlighted that representation from a secondary headteacher colleague is required and that Shelley Hurdley has been added to the group.

John Hitchings had found it difficult to understand the methodology re special needs funding and felt that a guide to the process would be beneficial. Julia Dean agreed to produce a guide for the next meeting.

The chair advised that he had received a lengthy email from Sabrina Hobbs and he undertook to take her issues forward with the relevant officers.

PW

JD

Chair

5 **School Balances as at March 2017**

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper which was for information only. A confidential appendix was circulated.

Phil Adams asked about the basis of challenge in paragraph 13. Gwyneth Evans advised that the school did not respond to her letter regarding the deficit balances but subsequently raised an issue with the EFA.

Phil Poulton was concerned that when balances are in the public domain there may

be a view that there is surplus funding, when in reality, this position has been achieved by cutting staffing etc.

Marilyn Hunt added that the situation is volatile.

Phil Adams suggested that the EFA are not as clear about balances.

Chris Mathews added that LA call in meetings and monthly monitoring take place if there are concerns.

It was recognised that some schools are struggling financially in 2017-18.

The chair, on behalf of Schools Forum, recognised that the process has tightened up and he thanked officers and schools/governing bodies for their work.

He added that further meetings are taking place around a particularly difficult financial situation for one secondary school

Nick Bardsley suggested that the clear communication was helpful enabling schools to understand that deficits will not be allowed.

6 Control on Surplus Balances

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper which was for information only. A confidential appendix was circulated.

7 Dedicated Schools Grant 2017-18 Update

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper which was for information only.

8 School Financial Value Standard Returns

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper which was for information only.

She advised that at this point, 13 schools have not returned their SFVS returns.

Schools Forum agreed that Gwyneth Evans should write to those schools on their behalf.

Chris Mathews asked about any links between the non return of the forms and poor financial management. Gwyneth Evans suspected that there may be some but it was not a general pattern.

9 10% Pupil Growth Contingency

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper. She explained the complicated NOR issue including reception uplift.

Neville Ward cautioned that more children may defer entry due to the 30 hours provision.

Dave Tinker advised that in his view the position was black and white ie in his school there were 65 pupils and there are now 72 pupils meaning funding would be triggered.

Mark Rogers thought that it was a 'swings and roundabouts' situation as if children are lost from a school, their funding is not clawed back.

The chair reminded Schools Forum that they are not considering a particular issue as that the role of officers. Schools Forum as considering a policy decision.

Neville Ward clarified that contingency funding is not an automatic right for schools.

Phil Adams asked if any applications for this funding had ever been turned down.

Gwyneth Evans advised that she has limited and changed applications - schools have to make a case for what the additional costs are. All applicants who have met the criteria have received something.

Marilyn Hunt advised that her school missed out by one pupil last year. There was no extra funding for the seven new pupils and this did have an effect.

Sabrina Hobbs suggested that this is also a management issue of how to control numbers.

Mark Rogers pointed out that numbers can't be managed – it is admissions policy dependent.

Phil Wilson asked if this should be added to the items to be discussed with all

GE

schools. Schools Forum agreed.

Primary School representatives (three) approved the policy.
Primary School representatives agreed that this policy should be applied on a funded pupil basis (not census). (two for, one abstention).

10 Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring

Stephen Waters presented the report.

The chair asked about the increased take up of 2, 3, and 4 year olds.

Neville Ward advised of a good news story as effective communication had led to increased take up. However, there is a deficit is because additional take up is not funded until the following financial year.

Neville Ward explained that following the TUPE process when provision moves into schools, there is increased expense so transitional sustainability funding has been provided.

Neville Ward added that SEN children are being funded much earlier which has resulted in an increase in spend – it is envisaged that by age 3 and 4 their funding will reduce as their needs will have been tackled at an earlier stage.

Neville Ward confirmed that all of the overspend has been spent on early years providers and none has been retained centrally.

Julia Dean added that age range for high needs funding has been extended to 25 and there needs to be further clarity around education/social care responsibilities.

Schools Forum agreed that:

£0.918m of the unallocated underspend carried forward from 2015-16 is partially used to fund the net 2016-17 overspend on the Early Years Block, High Needs Block and Central Provision with Schools Budget.

£0.488m of the underspend carried forward from 2015-16 is applied to spend on Independent Providers within the High Needs Block as has been reported in previous DSG.

Sabrina Hobbs noted that dispute over the banding values remains for both special schools. Both were expecting reimbursement which has not happened.

Contributions from health and social care for post 16 have not been forthcoming.

11 Communcations

This item was deferred.

The chair thanked Phil Poulton for his many year of service on Schools Forum.

The meeting closed at 10.45 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