



## Schools Forum Task And Finish Group on Sustainability

**Date:** 12 February 2014

**Time:** 9.00 am

**Venue:** STDC, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury

### MINUTES

#### Present:

Bill Dowell (Chair)  
 Nick Bardsley  
 Phil Adams  
 Hilary Burke  
 Rob Carlyle  
 Chris Davies  
 Chris Endacott  
 Gwyneth Evans  
 Hannah Fraser

John Hitchings  
 Sandra Holloway  
 Jo Humphreys  
 Chris Huss  
 Peter Ingham  
 Gareth Profitt  
 Mark Rogers  
 Phil Wilson  
 Helen Woodbridge

#### 1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Pete Johnstone, Kay Miller and James Sparkes.

#### 3. Minutes meeting on 28 November 2013

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

#### 4. Follow up on actions from last meeting:

##### Curriculum-led structures in secondaries

It was agreed that modelling curriculum led structures in secondary should not be pursued as they are impractical and unaffordable.

The Chair suggested that more collaborative ways of working need to be encouraged but was sensing that secondary headteachers are not keen. Phil Adams thought that this may change through the creation of the SLP. It was agreed that the group would continue with the modelling work and continue to engage with secondary headteachers.

##### Data release to schools

Rob Carlyle had been working on this. A two stage approach had been proposed– pupil numbers sent out first, adjusted by schools, and then budget information sent. However, this would take too long and there would be the possibility of inflating pupil numbers as schools are optimistic. It was agreed to send all of the information at the same time, with a 'health

### ACTION

warning’.

Rob Carlyle demonstrated the modelling tool which will allow schools to flex the information.

Phil Wilson agreed to add notes re housing developments and the possible numbers they could generate – quite often new pupils at a school just means a drop in numbers for other Shropshire schools.

Mark Rogers suggested adding an accompanying graph re long term urban/rural trends to temper hopes re housing.

Chris Endacott suggested that the LA prediction line should be embedded as a second line which is unchangeable and this was agreed.

Chris Davies suggested a questionnaire for buyers of properties on new developments but this was felt to be impractical.

Phil Adams spoke of the need to share this information with Parish Councils.

Peter Ingham agreed. Parish Councils need to know that if they don’t allow development then village schools may disappear.

Chris Davies wondered if the LA’s role was as a commissioner, commissioning the number of school places that it needs.

It was agreed that the information would be sent out after half term with a note asking schools to inform the LA if they think their pupil numbers will be different.

Phil Adams wondered if there was a need to talk to the press in advance of this.

### **Comparative appraisal of school sizes with statistical neighbours**

Rob Carlyle presented information re schools sizes from statistical neighbours which showed a similar pattern to Shropshire.

Peter Ingham asked if any of the LAs are doing similar work.

The Chair advised that through F40 some interesting work that Somerset are doing had been identified. For example, funding had been provided on the basis on two classes in the mornings and one in the afternoons.

However there are differences as Somerset has more larger schools and are better funded by £165 per pupil. If Shropshire was funded to the same level as Somerset we would be £3 million better off and if the same as Cumbria, £11 million better off.

It was agreed that the F40 research group should be approached to see if any work has already been done.

### **Primary school sustainability threshold**

Rob Carlyle presented some more data which demonstrated the losses that schools of various sizes would incur with the disappearance of MFG. Eg:

Size	Loss
57	£83,500
40	£16,765
35	£32,672

The Somerset approach was discussed – ie schools funded on a set basis and then spend as they wish. It was thought that schools may not like it but it would demonstrate the need to federate etc.

Benchmarking was discussed and Gwyneth advised of the National Benchmarking website.

The Chair asked how we can best support schools over the next few years.

PW

RC

RC

GE

Mark Rogers thought that the loss of MFG gradually would be affordable. It was agreed that a picture of the less sustainable schools would be gleaned through the data.

Chris Davies suggested that schools need to be categorised eg as sustainable, optimal economic viability, most cost effective etc. The band of the most expensive schools would need to be protected if they were essential.

Chris Huss suggested a RAG rating. He thought that the Somerset model gives credibility and Gwyneth Evans added that it would be similar to LMS. Peter Ingham wondered if schools need to be presented with an economic model and make their own minds up.

It was agreed that a RAG rating would be good.

Chris Endacott suggested a two class school commitment around the £200,000 line.

Nick Bardsley emphasised the need to share this information with Parish Councils, Shropshire Councillors and the public as overall the situation is not understood.

Gwyneth Evans pointed out that an uneconomic school is not necessarily a small school.

Mark Rogers suggested sending out key information 12/13 – per pupil amount, LA amount and Shropshire average amount.

Phil Adams was worried that small schools that are RI don't have the capacity to improve.

Hannah Fraser thought that the data will be crucial for governing bodies. She asked how the LA supported schools to get in more money.

The Chair and Phil Wilson advised that there was training for governors including from National College. However it was agreed that something short and sharp held in schools, especially those rated RED would be better. Phil Wilson and Gwyneth Evans agreed to consider business support and training for schools.

The Chair asked if this would apply to secondary too?

Hilary Burke thought that it would but there was a need to tread carefully. Headteachers are under a lot of pressure and a RED rating coming in would be hard. She asked what are we expecting headteachers to do that doesn't damage education in Shropshire.

Phil Adams said that the bottom line is that there are too many schools in Shropshire.

Hilary Burke thought that Councillors need to grasp the nettle and tackle this issue.

Chris Huss added that if there is not a clear understanding of the situation then we are not being upfront.

The Chair suggested that market forces will make the situation worse.

Hilary Burke added that the comparative data for Shropshire is most useful.

Peter Ingham advised that business managers are looking at this.

Governing bodies are improving and getting more involved so information needs to be sent to Chairs too.

John Hitchings advised that even if a school is GREEN they still need to strive for improved economic efficiency.

Mark Rogers thought that an entitlement model would have some disadvantages.

PW/GE

RC

<p>It was agreed that the Chair and Gwyneth Evans would speak to their equivalents in Somerset to check how the model is working.</p>	<p>Chair/ GE</p>
<p><b>Inclusion of school deficits</b> It was agreed that these would be included with this sheets sent to schools.</p>	<p>RC</p>
<p><b>5. Area level appraisal of forecast pupil numbers</b> Rob Carlyle explained the forecasted significant reduction in primary numbers into secondary catchment areas. The reasons for this were discussed, not least being the ageing population. The Chair suggested that an anonymised version should be shared which will enable a focus on the area dynamic. Again, the involvement of the Parish Councils was discussed. Phil Wilson agreed to liaise with members around the inclusion of parish councillors on governing bodies. It was agreed that final numbers won't be as they are on the list as popular schools will continue to be full.</p>	
<p><b>6. National funding formula update</b> The Chair advised that there was no date as yet for the publication of the consultation. The common view is that the delay is due to inter-departmental wrangling.</p>	
<p><b>7. Initial consideration of options for schools in addressing budget pressures</b> Phil Wilson requested ideas. Hannah Fraser suggested promoting collaboration rather than a sink or swim approach. Mark Rogers suggested more advice for headteachers on collaboration – perhaps top-slice funding for facilitating. It was agreed that Schools Forum could authorise an overspend. Chris Huss suggested that federation experience could be shared. Jo Humphreys spoke of the need to get the diocese on board.</p>	
<p><b>8. Focus for further officer work</b> Governing bodies to be communicated with re options for the future eg SLP Area meetings. A position report on SLP has been requested.</p>	
<p><b>9. Communications With Schools</b> No particular issues were discussed.</p>	
<p><b>10. Any Other Business</b> Post 16 sustainability to be on the next agenda.</p>	

**11. Future meeting dates (at Shrewsbury Training & Development Centre)**

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday 6 March 2014 - 9.00 to 11.00 am**

**The meeting closed at 11.03 am.**