

 Shropshire Council	Schools Forum Date: 23 October 2014 Time: 8.30 am Venue: STDC, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury	<u>Item/Paper</u> <div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">A</div> Public
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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present

School Forum Members

Bill Dowell – 14-19 Forum
 Phil Adams – Academy headteacher
 Hilary Burke – Secondary headteacher
 Chris Davies – Special School
 Christine Hargest – Association of Secretaries
 Christine Harding – Early Years and Childcare
 John Hitchings – SSGC
 Sandra Holloway – Primary governor
 Jo Humphreys – Primary governor
 Peter Ingham – Secondary governor
 Pete Johnstone – Secondary headteacher
 Martin Jones – Primary governor
 Sally Lill – Primary headteacher
 Yvette McDaniel – Primary headteacher
 Kay Miller – Primary headteacher
 Phil Poulton – Secondary headteacher
 Kay Redknap – TMBSS
 Mark Rogers – Primary headteacher
 Philip Sell – Diocese representative
 James Sparkes – Secondary governor
 Joy Tetsill – Secondary governor
 Ruth Thomas – Post 16

Members

Cllr Ann Hartley
 Cllr Nick Bardsley

Officers

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

Observers/visitors

Sonia Taylor
 Cllr Hannah Fraser

Karen Bradshaw welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Joy Tetsill, new secondary governor representative and Sonia Taylor, new headteacher at Grove School as an observer.

	ACTION
1. Apologies Apologies had been received from Austin Atkinson, Richard Bray, Colin Case and David Chantrey.	
2. Election of Chair Schools Forum unanimously elected Bill Dowell as Chair. IT was agreed that the constitution would be amended to allow this at the next meeting.	PW
3. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper A) The minutes were accepted as a true record. The Chair confirmed that letters had been sent to the four schools that had not returned their SFVS return.	
4. Lobbying	

The Chair advised that the f40 group continue to lobby.

5. School Funding Reforms (Paper B)

Gwyneth Evans went through the paper in detail. A significant increase in funding for Shropshire schools is good news.

Gwyneth advised that Barrow1618 Free School will now be funded in the same way as academies – their budget share will come in to Shropshire and then go to the EFA for distribution.

Chris Davies asked if the changes in the Carbon Reduction scheme removed the concerns that Schools Forum had re unfairness and it was confirmed that they did and it is now done on a per pupil basis.

Gwyneth reported that discussions and modelling around the Sparsity Factor had taken up a significant portion of the Task and Finish Group's time. The costs of running sparse schools had been investigated and modelled.

Gwyneth added a health warning that the figures had been worked on October 2013 numbers.

John Hitchings thought that MFG may be a hard point to sell, and asked should recovering any deficit budgets more quickly using this extra funding be considered.

Gwyneth confirmed that this would be discussed with individual schools as part of the licenced deficit monitoring process.

The Chair stressed the importance of budget management and for schools to live within their means.

John Hitchings reported that the sparsity approach suggested was the best fit – modelling had demonstrated a wide range of variances.

The Chair thanked Rob Carlyle for the work that he had done on modelling.

The Chair advised that the issue in paragraph 23 needed further work and Gwyneth has a meeting arranged to discuss this. It will be brought back to Schools Forum.

Martin Jones asked if there was a list of the 14 primary schools that would benefit from sparsity funding. It was confirmed that whilst it is not confidential the list is based on 2013 figures and therefore not necessarily correct.

Recommendations

1. Schools Forum noted the confirmation of additional funding for Shropshire schools from April 2015 and other changes required to DSG funding arrangements.
2. Schools Forum unanimously agreed the recommendations proposed by the Task & Finish Group on the allocation of the additional funding through the local funding formula, as detailed in paragraphs 28, 30, 31 and 33.

Peter Ingham thanked officers and the Task and Finish Group for the work that had been carried out.

Phil Wilson confirmed that Schools Forum recommendation would be put forward to the Council for approval and that it will be consulted upon from today, specifically at a meeting on 2 October 2014 to which all headteachers and chairs of governors have been invited.

The Chair asked SSGC representatives to highlight the importance of this meeting to chairs of governors.

GE

PW

SSGC

6. High Needs Funding (Paper C)

Chris Davies went through his paper. He highlighted the additional costs and pressures including maternity cover, clinical waste and specialist equipment.

Phil Adams expressed a concern that the increase that schools are getting could be eaten away when the high needs block will be considered next year. Gwyneth Evans advised that discussions would be needed before allocations are made as high needs cannot be funded on a flat rate top up – the regulations stipulate that it has to be on individual needs.

It was agreed that the High Needs Task and Finish Group (CD, JHu, CoG Woodlands, KR, MDa, YM) should be reconvened and Chris Davies volunteered Severndale as a meeting venue.

Mark Rogers asked about the significant surplus at Severndale.

Chris Davies confirmed that the surplus would be £70,000 at the end of 2014/15.

Yvette MacDaniel asked if anyone monitors the number of children coming in from out of county.

Karen Bradshaw advised that where another local authority places a child in Shropshire, that local authority pays high needs funding to Shropshire.

Phil Adams suggested that LAs are placing fewer LAC out of county.

Chris Davies did not think that was the case for Severndale.

Ann Hartley questioned the role of health and whether the specialised equipment should be their responsibility as it used to be.

Chris Davies advised that health do fund some specialised standing frames. He added that health and safety has added more costs eg for hoists.

Mark Rogers thought it would be useful to compare funding for a child in a Shropshire special school to a child in a standard school.

Kay Redknap advised that alternative provision in Shropshire receives lower than average funding.

Chris Davies added that the work of the task and finish group would be useful for providing information to support the government review.

PW

7. School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2014 Changes (Paper D)

Gwyneth circulated an additional DFE paper. 2.2, Regulation 3 was stressed. The High Needs Task and Finish Group will consider this.

PW

8. Review of Deficit Balances (Paper E)

Phil Wilson went through the report. It was agreed that a protocol on deficit balances for sponsored academies is required and a Task and Finish Group will consider this.

PW

Sally Lill asked if there is any control on schools' spending when they are moving to sponsored academy.

Gwyneth Evans advised that there is and letters are sent to headteachers and Chairs of Governors advising them of monthly monitoring and the ability of the LA to withdraw delegation.

Phil Adams asked where the funding would come from should a deficit remain with the LA. He was advised that the deficit would remain with the LA and could be put against DSG. The intention is to do this but to run the DSG at an overspend so that schools do not feel any affect. An exemption for this has been applied for.

Phil Adams, Hilary Burke, Phil Poulton and Pete Johnstone were vociferous in their views that schools should not pay for other schools' deficits and children in prudent Shropshire schools should not suffer because of other schools' overspending. They were concerned that keeping the deficit as an overspend on DSG would risk it at some stage being taken from schools.

Karen Bradshaw advised that the LA would seek to reduce this overspend over

time through using any underspends.

The headteacher cited other schools where budget management had been good in order to reduce deficits. It does not seem fair that when schools have been irresponsible they benefit.

Karen Bradshaw advised that the current school with a large deficit had managed a balanced budget this year through their IEB. She confirmed that there had been negotiation with the sponsoring school but they would not agree to take any of the deficit.

The DFE, EFA and Academies Trust had considered the future of this school and had conceded to fund it to a higher level. Phil Poulton added that the EFA are bankrolling this deficit.

The secondary headteachers understood that this situation is due to legislation which works against LAs and for academies.

James Sparkes suggested withdrawing delegation at an earlier stage.

Mark Rogers agreed and suggested the same if deficits are not being paid off.

A Task and Finish Group to comprise JHi, MR and PP was arranged.

The Chair summarised – Schools Forum are concerned that this was allowed to happen. Chris Endacott had warned David Taylor of this eventuality.

Karen Bradshaw conceded that the LA could have taken action earlier.

It was agreed that the Chair and Pete Johnstone would write a letter from Schools Forum to the Secretary of State expressing concern re the anomalies.

Joy Tetsill suggested asking for a meeting to discuss.

PW

Chair/
PJ

9. Dedicated School Grant Monitoring (Paper G)

Deborah Fern presented the paper.

10. Communications

A letter re school sustainability had been sent out last week. The press release was kept simple but led to some mixed coverage – good on Radio Shropshire and less so in the Star.

Nick Bardsley felt it was important to keep the press informed even if they are sometime irresponsible.

The Chair suggested that the new modelling tool will help headteachers' understanding.

Kay Miller reported parental feedback from the Star which confirmed that they did understand about falling rolls.

Jo Humphries checked that members and parish councillors had been included in the communication and Ann Hartley confirmed that they had.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 23 October 2014.

The meeting closed at 10.35 am.

Future meetings:

27 November 2014, 22 January 2015, 26 March 2015, 18 June 2015.