



Schools Forum

Date: 27 November 2014

Time: 8.30 am

Venue: STDC, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury

Item/Paper

A

Public

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2014

Present

School Forum Members

- Bill Dowell (Chair)
- Phil Adams – Academy headteacher
- Richard Bray – Secondary governor
- Hilary Burke – Secondary headteacher
- David Chantrey – Primary governor
- Christine Harding – Early Years and Childcare
- Christine Hargest – Association of Secretaries
- Sandra Holloway – Primary governor
- Jo Humphreys – Primary governor
- Peter Ingham – Secondary governor
- Sally Lill – Primary headteacher
- Yvette McDaniel – Primary headteacher
- Kay Miller – Primary headteacher
- Mark Rogers – Primary headteacher
- Joy Tetsill – Secondary governor

Members

- Cllr Ann Hartley
- Cllr Nick Bardsley

Officers

- Anne Gribbin
- Phil Wilson
- Gwyneth Evans
- Neville Ward
- Rob Carlyle
- Helen Woodbridge (Minutes)

Observers/visitors

- Cllr Roger Evans
- Cllr Hannah Fraser
- Nathan Rowden, Shropshire Star

ACTION

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Austin Atkinson, Colin Case, Chris Davies, John Hitchings, Pete Johnstone, Martin Jones, Kay Redknapp, James Sparkes, Ruth Thomas, Karen Bradshaw and Deb Fern.

Late apologies were received after the meeting from Ian Nurser, Phil Poulton and Gareth Proffitt.

The Chair welcomed Richard Bray to his first meeting. He also welcomed Nathan Rowden as an observer and he was asked step out of the meeting whilst the one confidential item was discussed.

Confidential item

Deficit Balance of a Sponsored Academy

Gwyneth Evans took Schools Forum through the paper which had been tabled. Phil Adams reiterated his disappointment that the school in question had not offered to pick up part of the deficit. He felt that this is unfair on other schools, some of whom would be competing for pupils.

The Chair advised that the deficit would be paid back over time and not from school budgets.

Anne Gribbin advised that she, together with funding officers, is working with

vulnerable schools with potential deficit problems.

Christine Hargest was pleased that lessons have been learned and that the steps being taken will improve the situation for the future.

David Chantrey asked what would be reduced in central expenditure to cover this cost. Gwyneth Evans advised that it, for example, the costs could be met from under spends but acknowledged that this would be an opportunity cost as this retained funding supports schools indirectly.

The Chair had drafted a letter as discussed in the last meeting but it needs further work.

Hilary Burke asked about the possibility of never paying back the over spend as discussed in the last meeting.

Gwyneth Evans advised that it was an approach that could be taken but she would be uncomfortable with this 'hanging over us'.

Peter Ingham was concerned that the EFA providing additional funding for a converting school leaving a deficit balance. The Chair agreed to write to the EFA and include this point as it is unfair to other schools in the area served by the school.

Richard Bray was concerned that publicity about extra funding may have an adverse effect on maintained schools in the area.

Anne Gribbin and Gwyneth Evans advised that they are jointly challenging schools who potentially cannot afford their staffing structure.

It was agreed that more sharing of 'Shropshire-ised' benchmarking could take place and Rob Carlyle added that the benchmarking tool will help.

Sally Lill felt that it is not just vulnerable schools on the radar – successful schools need support to be sustained. There are other costs eg headteachers' emotional labour and this human cost should not be forgotten.

The Sustainability Task & Finish Group will continue to meet.

Phil Adams reminded Schools Forum that there are still too many schools in Shropshire.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper A)

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record. There were no matters arising which weren't on the agenda.

3. Lobbying

Lobbying was added to item 7.

4. Shropshire Schools Forum Constitution (Paper B)

Phil Wilson went through the paper.

Phil Adams advised that the secondary headteacher mini conference on 13 November would be an opportunity to discuss representation. Geoff Pettengell, who chairs the secondary headteacher group, will be asked to consider this and liaise with headteachers and governors.

David Chantrey asked how amendments to the constitution would be handled – would any representatives need to resign.

Jo Humphreys advised that she would be meeting with John Hitchings in December and that Phil Wilson could join this meeting to discuss governor representation.

Headteachers felt that it would be best to keep Chris Davies as the special school representative.

Schools Forum agreed to reword the constitution to allow the appointment of an independent Chair.

5. School Funding 2015-2016 (Paper C)

Gwyneth Evans went through her paper and the responses from schools were considered. Gwyneth advised that she will contact Lacon Childe School about their detailed response.

Peter Ingham asked about the 10 schools that had disagreed with the majority of funding being allocated on a pupil led basis. He asked if further explanation would be made to those schools.

Gwyneth Evans and Rob Carlyle confirmed that a response would be sent to all schools following this meeting.

Sally Lill felt that some comments had been made without wider understanding.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed to recommend the allocation of the additional funding, in line with the recommendation of 18 September 2014 Forum meeting, to the local authority.

It was confirmed that Cabinet would meet in early December to consider this.

Phil Wilson provided feedback from the meeting for headteachers and chairs of governors at The Lord Hill Hotel. The meeting had been generally positive and that the level of understanding of funding among schools was good. The simplicity of the formula has brought clarity. The Chair suggested that this was an endorsement of the successful work of Schools Forum.

The underlying message re sustainability continues. Other messages re federations have helped.

Peter Ingham thanked the officers for their work.

6. Dedicated School Grant Monitoring (Paper D)

Phil Wilson went through the paper.

David Chantrey asked what happens to any underspend. It was confirmed that if there is any underspend (and this is not planned) it will be carried forward.

7. Communications and Lobbying

The Chair advised that Gareth Proffitt has supported in developing a communication strategy which has been picked up by the local media. Nick Bardsley and the Chair have had a slot on local radio and there will be a feature on national radio and BBC TV in the near future. The focus will be on the falling numbers as the situation in Shropshire is very different to the national picture. This will help in getting the message across to Shropshire residents.

Schools Forum recorded their thanks to Gareth Proffitt.

It was agreed that there is a tremendous challenge for Shropshire but by working together it can be overcome. MPs need more briefings to understand that market forces don't work everywhere.

Ann Hartley advised that there was a Cabinet meeting next week and education sustainability is on the agenda. She reminded colleagues that although numbers are decreasing overall, there are some pockets in Shropshire where numbers are rising.

Phil Adams suggested that the removal of the middle tier of government was an issue.

Kay Miller was not sure that the establishment of federations is the answer to the sustainability issues being faced by some schools.

Ann Hartley stressed that collaboration is key.

Sally Lill made a plea for models of good and effective collaboration/federation to

be shared.

The Chair agreed suggesting messages being given about how it might work.

The Chair advised about continued concerns re Post 16 – it is not the responsibility of Schools Forum but there are 11-18 schools with sixth forms.

A briefing session with the Chair, Nick Bardsley, Janine Vernon (Lifelong Learning Manager) and Steve Wain (Principal, Shrewsbury College of Art & Technology) will continue discussions. Issues include the increased number of providers and unsustainable provision.

8. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 27 November 2014.

The meeting closed at 10.00 am.

Future meetings:

22 January 2015, 26 March 2015, 18 June 2015.

DRAFT