

Schools Forum Task & Finish Group on Sustainability

Notes of key points raised at the meeting held on 10 March 2015 at the Shrewsbury Training and Development Centre, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury.

In attendance:

Bill Dowell (Chair)
Nick Bardsley
Hilary Burke
Chris Davies
Sandra Holloway
Jo Humphreys
Mark Rogers
Phil Wilson
Gwyneth Evans
Rob Carlyle

1. Bill Dowell welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies were received from Hannah Fraser, Phil Adams, Peter Ingham and James Sparkes.
3. **Modelling Tool**
RC showed the group the latest version of the budget modelling tool including 2015-16 budget figures and data. This version includes details of the de-delegation budgets that maintained schools will see deducted from their budget share allocation.
RC also showed the group a modelling tool designed to enable schools to estimate future years' pupil premium levels. MR stressed that the tool must include a caveat that pupil premium is not guaranteed for future years and that it must be spent on the pupils it is intended for.
The group agreed that the detailed funding sheet developed as part of the modelling tool will be useful to schools. There was a discussion around the risk of some of the factors into the future. A need for caveats regarding the uncertainty of this data into the future as it is based on current (15-16) sparsity criteria and minimum funding guarantee levels.
The group were informed that the Government has not guaranteed that the new additional funding in 2015-16, £10m for Shropshire schools, will be part of the baseline for future years. f40 has raised this with the DfE and stressed the point that schools need to be able to commit this additional funding to additional staff costs and therefore need to know that it will be included in future year budget settlements.
4. **Summary Forecast Budget Analysis**
RC shared with the group a spreadsheet, with schools anonymised, summarising individual school budget shares over the period 2015-16 to 2019-20 based on 2015-16 formula and the LA's estimation of future numbers on roll.

NB commented how important it was for schools in some areas to understand that the pupil number decline is an issue for their area and therefore attracting more pupils is unlikely to be a realistic solution to their budget situation. MR suggested an area rag-rating system within the modelling tool to alert schools to the fact that pupil decline is an issue for their area and not just their individual school.

BD recommended that schools with falling rolls should be required to produce a 3 year budget plan showing how they will address the impact of the expected decline in pupil numbers.

The group suggested schools with predicted falling rolls should be invited to a training session to take them through the modelling tool and discuss options for addressing the impact on their budget.

The group felt governors should be encouraged to share issues with their local Member.

5. **Collaboration Tool**

RC showed the group how individual school budget modelling tools can be used in a collaboration tool for use by schools in, or planning for, formal collaborative arrangements. The group felt this was very useful. The group discussed the importance of the local Member being informed and understanding what their local school is potentially facing.

6. **Development Work**

RC showed the group further budget modelling tools that have been developed in relation to early years funding and post-16 funding.

SH asked if an additional funding line could be added to the early years' budget modelling tool, and into the bar chart at the bottom of the tool, to allow schools to include any additional parental income.

7. **Benchmarking**

RC showed the group the local benchmarking tool which is being developed. The intention is to make this available to maintained schools in September. The group agreed that whilst it was useful for primary schools it had limited usefulness in secondary schools in Shropshire.

8. **Post-16**

BD highlighted the particularly stark budget picture for Post 16 which has knock on consequences to the budget of schools with Post 16 provision. Aiming to get a briefing paper to local members. A briefing paper for members, schools and colleges is being collated by Janine Vernon and Graham Moore.

9. **A Shropshire Strategy for Pupil Place Planning**

PW presented a draft Shropshire strategy which will be out for consultation in the summer. It was agreed by the group that the Strategy needs to make reference to the number of surplus classrooms across the County also. It needs to give the whole picture. It is important it does not give schools the impression that there is not a pupil number decline issue in the County.

10. **Date of next meeting**

It was agreed to meet again in the summer term.