



## Schools Forum

**Date:** 13 September 2018

**Time:** 8.30 am

**Venue:** STDC, Monkmoor,  
Shrewsbury

Item/Paper

**A**

Public

### MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2018

#### Present

##### School Forum Members

Bill Dowell (Chair)  
 Phil Adams – Academy Headteacher  
 Alan Doust – Secondary Headteacher  
 Jean Evanson – Professional Association Representative  
 John Hitchings – SSGC  
 Sabrina Hobbs – Academy Headteacher  
 Marylin Hunt – Primary Headteacher  
 Shelly Hurdley – Early Years Representative  
 Samantha John – Academy Representative  
 Kerry Lynch – Academy Headteacher  
 Stephen Matthews – Primary Governor (and headteacher)  
 Alan Parkhurst – Primary Headteacher  
 Geoff Renwick – Academy Headteacher  
 Michael Revell – Primary Governor  
 Mark Rogers – Primary Headteacher  
 Andrew Smith – 16 -19 Representative  
 Guy Verling – Primary Headteacher

#### Members

Cllr Nick Bardsley  
 Cllr Ed Potter

#### Officers

Phil Wilson  
 Julia Dean  
 Gwyneth Evans  
 Jo Jones  
 Chris Mathews  
 Stephen Waters  
 Helen Woodbridge (Minutes)

#### Observers

Roger Evans

#### 1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Pete Johnstone, Philip Sell, Karen Bradshaw, Neville Ward and Michael Barratt.

#### 2. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper A)

- The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting.
- Item 3 Phil Wilson advised of constructive meetings with Woodlands and Severndale Schools and thanked them for their input. The funding mechanism will be finalised for the Autumn term and should be a sustainable model. The Chair thanked officers, governors and staff for their work on this.
- Item 4 Phil Wilson provided feedback from the Deficit Budget Working Group. There have been constructive conversations re challenges around the use of capital receipts. There is further work to do. The group will be meeting again at the end of September.

#### 3. Allocation of Early Years Block

Phil Wilson went through the paper.

He advised that the level of funding continues to be a challenge so lobbying continues. Shelly Hurdley advised that she had heard of instances where some charges are being made to parents for some items.

John Hitchings asked about population projections for Shropshire.

Phil Wilson advised of significant growth in primary pupil numbers in recent years and that this 'bulge' will move through into secondary in the coming years. He described a number of projects which are underway to expand some primary schools. He added that up until now spare capacity in schools had been used.

#### ACTION

- It was agreed that a paper re place planning will be brought to Schools Forum in the Autumn term.
- 4. School Balances as at March**
- Gwyneth Evans went through this annual paper and a confidential appendix was circulated (and subsequently collected).  
The headlines are that school balances are reducing and that deficit balances are reducing and continue to be monitored.  
Chris Mathews clarified the conditions for a deficit being licensed which are around standards and the ability to repay.  
John Hitchings noted that the pattern is changing – trend was that smaller schools had large surpluses and it is now more of a mixture.  
The Chair was disappointed that there is no similar information available on academies which seems perverse when considering state funded places for Shropshire children.  
The Chair agreed to write to the RCS on this point on behalf of Schools Forum.  
Phil Adams acknowledged the work undertaken by Thomas Adams School to get its deficit down.  
Gwyneth Evans highlighted a recent instance of a school with a deficit leaving the LA to become a sponsored academy where the receiving MAT had agreed to take on the deficit. This had been due to the positive working relationship that existed.  
She asked Schools Forum if withdrawal of delegation should be considered earlier.  
Schools Forum agreed that it should in some cases.  
Sam John suggested earlier talks about finances (like those that already take place about land etc) but also agreed with removing delegation if necessary.  
Chris Mathews cautioned that there may not be enough time to do this as a notice of concern is required first.
- 5. Control on surplus Balances**
- Gwyneth Evans went through her paper. A confidential appendix was circulated (and subsequently collected back in).  
Geoff Renwick advised that secondary academies are advised by the RSC to carry a minimum of 5% as a contingency.  
Stephen Matthews suggested that surpluses need to be questioned and his view was that the control should remain in place.  
Nick Bardsley was concerned that without this process surpluses may increase.  
Mark Rogers suggested that increased reserves would enable schools to cope with some issues eg redundancy. It is public money being delayed to plan for future use and not being used for excessive pay like in some academies. It is more efficient to run a school with some level of reserves eg it can reduce amount of sickness insurance and allow flexibility.  
The Chair expressed concern around schools building up balances year on year for the sake of it.  
Alan Doust agreed and suggested increasing the percentage.  
Gwyneth Evans confirmed that this is a time consuming exercise for relatively small amounts.  
Geoff Renwick stressed the duty to spend this year's money on this year's children.  
Chris Mathews reminded Schools Forum of the School Performance Monitoring – Gwyneth Evans does flag up issues and schools could be called in.  
Marilyn Hunt would be concerned if there were no controls.  
Mark Rogers advised that governors don't plan to save but 'accidents' happen.  
He added that this had been a political issue – (too much balances belied the need for more funding) but this is not such an issue now.  
Schools Forum agreed the recommendation to consult Shropshire schools.
- 6. Dedicated Schools Grant 2018-19 Update**

PW

Chair

GE

Gwyneth Evans went through the paper which was for information only.

**7. Schools Financial Value Standard 2017-18 and Replacement from April 2019**

Gwyneth Evans went through the paper which was for information only.

**8. Scheme for the Financing of Schools Revisions**

Gwyneth Evans went through the paper which was for information only.

**9. Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block Annual Summary**

Julia Dean went through the paper which was for information only.  
 The LA is spending more on mainstream top up and independent placements.  
 EAS are looking at how 6<sup>th</sup> day provision costs can be reduced.  
 It was confirmed that the budget is under increasing pressure.

**10. Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring**

Stephen Waters went through the paper focussing on 2018-19.  
 The significant overspend that is forecast is causing concern.  
 It is a wider problem - not just for Shropshire. F40 has identified a national issue.  
 Headteachers had been shocked to discover independent mainstream schools are not expected to find the £6k. Not funded by LA unless EHCP and identified as best solution.  
 Mark Rogers was confused by para 8 and Julia explained further – Shropshire is a net exporter.  
 Andrew Smith queried length of study and Julia Dean explained that it had been extended as the top age is now 25.  
 Chris Mathews advised that T&W were keen to separate services (SIS). However, a report has found that it would be more efficient to keep together. Need to establish a financial plan over the summer term to bring to Schools Forum in the autumn term.  
 The Chair had concerns re disparity between Shropshire and its statistical neighbours.  
 Kerry Lynch advised that 35 LAs have written to Damian Hinds to challenge around high needs funding.  
 Sabrina Hobbs had attended an Education Select Committee – there were headteachers round the table. They were interested in high needs area and are commissioning a SEND Enquiry. It is a systemic problem so no rationale for LAs getting different levels.  
 Sabrina Hobbs added that Lucy Allen is on the Committee.  
 Ed Potter agreed to add this issue to the MP meetings agenda.  
 There has been an F40 briefing paper for MPs.  
 Karen Bradshaw to be asked to pursue with DCS  
 Gwyneth Evans to circulate paper.

JD

EP

GE

**11 Communications**

This had been included at the previous agenda item.

**12 Future meeting dates:**

13 September 2018	8.30 am	STDC, Monkmoor
8 November 2018	8.30 am	STDC, Monkmoor
6 December 2018	8.30 am	STDC, Monkmoor
17 January 2019	8.30 am	STDC, Monkmoor
31 January 2019 (provision)	8.30 am	STDC, Monkmoor
21 March 2019	8.30 am	STDC, Monkmoor
6 June 2019	8.30 am	STDC, Monkmoor

The meeting closed at 10.30 am.