

Schools Forum

Date: 7 December 2017

Time: 8.30 am

Venue: STDC, Monkmoor,
Shrewsbury

Item/Paper

A

Public

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2017

Present

School Forum Members

Bill Dowell (Chair)
 Phil Adams – Academy Headteacher
 John Eglin – Primary Headteacher
 Jean Evanson – Professional Association Representative
 John Hitchings – SSGC
 Sabrina Hobbs – Academy Headteacher
 Sandra Holloway – Primary Governor
 Marilyn Hunt – Primary Headteacher
 Shelly Hurdley – Early Years Representative
 Pete Johnstone – Secondary Headteacher
 Mark Rogers – Primary Headteacher

Members

Cllr Clare Aspinall
 Cllr Nick Bardsley

Officers

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

Observers

Roger Evans
 David Vasner

The chair welcomed Schools Forum members to the meeting and explained that the main agenda item is the Arrangements for School Funding.

	ACTION
<p>1. Apologies Apologies had been received from Michael Barratt, Samantha John, Alan Parkhurst, Michael Revell, Philip Sell, Gareth Proffitt and Neville Ward</p>	
<p>2. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper A) The minutes were received and agreed. John Hitchings asked about the work of the High Needs Group and it was confirmed that this, including the report from Julia Dean, will be on the next agenda.</p>	PW
<p>3. Minutes and Matters Arising (Paper B) The minutes were received and agreed.</p>	
<p>4. Arrangements for School Funding in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 – Consultation Outcome Phil Wilson provided some background which explained the reasons behind the change of date of the meeting. This was largely due to the extension of the deadline for schools to respond to the consultation.</p>	

Gwyneth Evans reminded colleagues that the final decision on the distribution of the funding is made by Shropshire Council's Cabinet.

Gwyneth Evans took Schools Forum members through the paper. She explained how Finance Regulations have not been updated to allow distribution of funding to schools in line with the transitional NFF allocations without disapplications. A strongly worded letter regarding this was sent to Tom Goldman at the DfE who responded promptly, in detail, giving assurance that he anticipates any such requests will be agreed.

Mark Rogers asked if Gwyneth Evans was confident that she had the means to produce the distribution of funding in line with the NFF. She advised that she had set up a spreadsheet mirroring the NFF formula so that the 2018-19 dataset, once agreed, could be dropped in.

The individual responses in Appendix B were examined.

John Hitchings felt that it was important to recognise that the maximum information available had been shared with schools.

Gwyneth Evans advised that the two responses that advised that they had not received enough information came in before the extra information was sent out.

Mark Rogers provided feedback from a colleague from a larger primary school which mirrored some of the comments received (there is an email chain which can be shared with Schools Forum members on request). There was also a concern that the NFF may not actually come into effect.

Mark Rogers felt that pressures between large and small school funding issues will always exist.

Phil Adams was happy that the majority of schools were in agreement with moving to the NFF and was pleased that at least there is some certainty.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that they would recommend to Shropshire Council's Cabinet that the funding to schools from April 2018 is distributed in line with the transitional NFF.

To allow this to happen, Schools Forum unanimously agreed that disapplication of the finance regulations for the following three areas should be applied for:

- the gains cap
- the sparsity methodology
- the MFG.

It was also agreed that this recommendation would be communicated to schools.

PW

5. Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring

Stephen Waters went through his paper.

John Hitchings commented that there is a lag when there is a change of regulations which contributes to a confused picture. More clarity around high needs funding is required and the need to continue to campaign re issues was highlighted.

Phil Adams asked what happens if the high needs budget keeps overspending.

Gwyneth Evans advised that the schools block is ringfenced but Schools Forum can agree for up to 0.5% to support pressures. However, the answer is not known for when the NFF is fully implemented after two years.

Mark Rogers asked which budget heading the graduated pathway comes out of.

Julia Dean responded that it is very early days and initially it is coming out of the top up fund, but that this will be reviewed. She added that there is some work to do on

the top up payments.

Phil Adams asked what happens about the £6k that schools are supposed to put in before EHCP.

Gwyneth Evans advised that there is no news that the requirement for schools to contribute £6k for each high needs pupils from their notional SEN budget will change. She is planning to consider the impact on schools as it is part of the NFF allocation. She confirmed that contingencies allow for the top up of the notional fund (if there are more SEN pupils that funding allows for) which also ensure that 20% of fund remains for more general SEN support.

Phil Adams suggested that schools may need to be reminded of this.

6. Communications

The chair advised that the letter to Tom Goldman has been copied to local MPs and the Secretary of State. He will ensure that they are kept in the loop in the process for applying to disapply.

Phil Wilson advised that F40 have conducted a survey re their future. Shropshire has supported positively to the continuance of F40.

Phil Adams suggested that Schools Forum mustn't lose track of the fact that there is not enough money going into school budgets.

Phil Adams established that Woodlands/Severndale funding comes out of the high needs block.

The chair thanked Schools Forum members for their attendance and advised that the agenda for the next meeting is likely to be heavier and so possibly a slightly longer meeting. Consultation is currently ongoing with schools re de-delegation and top-slicing.

John Hitchings asked for early papers if at all possible.

John Eglin gave his apologies for the December meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.30 am.

Future meetings (please diary):

7 December 2017	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
18 January 2018	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
1 February 2018 (provisional)	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
22 March 2018	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor
7 June 2018	08.30	STDC, Monkmoor