

**MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2018**

**Present**

**School Forum Members**

Bill Dowell (Chair)  
Phil Adams – Academy Headteacher  
John Hitchings – SSGC  
Sandra Holloway – Primary Governor  
Marilyn Hunt – Primary Headteacher  
Kerry Lynch – Academy Headteacher  
Stephen Matthews – Primary Governor (and headteacher)  
Alan Parkhurst – Primary Headteacher  
Mark Rogers – Primary Headteacher  
Andrew Smith – 16 -19 Representative  
Charles Thomas – Professional Association Rep  
Guy Verling – Primary Headteacher

**Members**

Cllr Ed Potter

**Officers**

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

**Observers**

Roger Evans – Shropshire Council

**1. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Nick Bardsley, Mark Cooper, Julia Dean, Alan Doust, Sabrina Hobbs, Shelley Hurdley, Samantha John, David O'Toole, John Parr, Michael Revell, Darren Reynolds and Andrew Teale.

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

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

The Chair advised that he had not written to the RSC (re academy balances) as an alternative approach had been suggested Gwyneth Evans who had established that some LAs write to each academy asking them to share end of year balances. It was proposed that Schools Forum do this and this was agreed. The letter will highlight the opportunity to qualify figures and should there be no response, the public figures will be used.

Some colleagues had seen the letter from Peter Nutting – it was agreed that Phil Wilson will circulate it.

It was reported that secondary headteachers had agreed to invite local MPs to a meeting in order to lobby for more funding. LA officers offered to support if required.

Charles Thomas advised that the professional associations had picked up the issue of funding for high needs – he undertook to keep Schools Forum informed.

Gwyneth Evans advised that she had carried out modelling around the schools revenue funding following the concerns raised re the impact of any removal of the funding floor

**ACTION**

**GE**

**PW**

**CT**

(although there is no intention or plans to pull this away at present). She had ascertained that many schools would lose out if the funding floor protection was removed and had shared this with the Chair and Mark Rogers. She had not shared it more widely to avoid scaremongering as the funding policy officer from the DfE had confirmed that the funding floor protection was part of the national funding formula (NFF) and there were currently no plans to remove it.

### **3. School Funding Arrangements 2019-20**

Gwyneth Evans went through the paper

Phil Adams reported back from a meeting with Nick Gibb MP who had appeared sympathetic to more local flexibility.

#### **Minimum Funding Guarantee**

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that the Minimum Funding Guarantee should be set at -1.5%.

#### **Disapplication of School Finance Regulations**

Schools Forum unanimously agreed the submission of a disapplication request to the Secretary of State to allow the local funding formula to mirror the alternative gains cap methodology within the NFF.

#### **Additional Targeted High Needs Contingency Funding**

Schools Forum unanimously agreed the approach outlined in the paper – current calculation basis continues for the 2019-20 financial year to ensure consistency of funding.

Mark Rogers simplified the issue for colleagues. Broadly, NFF at present is too distorted with disproportionate levels of funding delivered through the social deprivation factors rather than the basic pupil funding factor.

John Hitchings asked about contingency and it was confirmed that it continues to be funded from the High Needs Block.

#### **Movement Between Funding Blocks**

Schools Forum agreed that up to 0.5% of the Schools Block funding could be transferred into the High Needs Block as per 2018-19.

Kerry Lynch cautioned that transferring would reduce deficit in High Needs Block meaning that the true picture is not presented.

Gwyneth Evans assured colleagues that it would be made clear that the High Needs Block is being topped up by the Schools Block.

### **4. Growth Funding 2019-20**

Gwyneth Evans went through the paper. She clarified that this is Schools Block funding. Schools Forum agreed that actual growth funding within Shropshire's 2019-20 Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is top-sliced and allocated for growth funding to Shropshire schools - as this would provide more effective control - using the following criteria:

- Where the predicted numbers for a school (excluding nursery classes and Post 16) for the following September show an increase, due to basic need, requiring the running of additional classes they may be able to access additional funding.
- Where schools have chosen to admit above their Published Admission Number (PAN) to meet parental preference from outside their agreed planning area and not basic need they will not be eligible to receive funding from the Growth Fund in recognition that the local authority could have secured places for the children concerned at other schools.
- The requirement for additional classes or forms of entry will be reviewed on a case by

case basis.

- Allocations will be based on appropriate costs of resourcing additional classes.
- Initial growth funding requests will be evaluated using admission data and demographic forecasts to aid schools with budget setting. Where there is uncertainty or disagreement around the predicted pupil numbers, funding will not be allocated until receipt of the actual October census data.
- In instances where actual growth was at lower levels than original estimates, schools will not be subject to claw-back on any funding already allocated.
- For maintained schools any growth funding is available to the end of the financial year. For academies any growth funding is available to the end of the academic year.
- To avoid double funding, any maintained primary school attracting funding from the Growth Fund will not receive funding from the de-delegated pupil growth contingency in that financial year.

The Chair clarified that this is revenue funding only. He asked about capital funding. Phil Wilson advised that school place planning has been ongoing and CIL and Section 106 funding is being accessed. 10 expansion projects have been commissioned so far. There is a possibility of a new school in Bowbrook which will require a free school presumption process to be followed. He added that start-up costs will be required from the Growth Fund.

The Chair requested a future paper re capital funding to enable Schools Forum to understand the bigger picture.

PW

John Hitchings asked about 5/6 years' time and the impact on secondary places. Phil Wilson responded that this has already been flagged up in a Cabinet paper and discussions with secondary schools are underway.

Stephen Matthews asked to what extent does the Section 106 funding relate to local need. Phil Wilson confirmed that it is specific to area. However, the ability to target this funding at specific schools is more difficult in some areas than others – it is easy in Shifnal where there are two schools but harder in Shrewsbury where there are significantly more schools.

Mark Rogers cautioned that although there is a bulge in pupil numbers, the numbers are beginning to drop.

Phil Wilson suggested that the forecast is for growing numbers but that there are some 'blip' years.

Phil Adams was concerned about when the bulge disappears.

Sandra Holloway also confirmed their Reception year is at 73% and known children in the area are dropping.

## **5. Consultation on Central Retention of Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2019**

Phil Wilson presented the paper.

Maintained primary school representatives on Schools Forum unanimously agreed to de-delegate funding from maintained primary school budgets for a pupil growth contingency for maintained primary schools in 2019-20.

Maintained school representatives unanimously agreed to de-delegate funding from maintained primary and secondary school budgets for a centrally managed maternity budget in 2019-20.

Charles Thomas asked if paternity is covered too – Stephen Waters undertook to clarify this.

SAW

Maintained school representatives on Schools Forum unanimously agreed to de-delegate funding from maintained primary and secondary school budgets for a centrally managed trade union duties budget in 2019-20.

Maintained school representatives on Schools Forum unanimously agreed to de-delegate funding for school improvement support from maintained primary on a 50% fixed and 50% variable element basis, and secondary school budgets on a per capita basis in 2019-20.

Maintained school representatives on Schools Forum unanimously agreed to top-slice a centrally held redundancy budget from maintained primary and secondary school budgets in 2019-20.

Mark Rogers requested more analysis of the redundancy spend to ascertain if it could be due to poor governance. It was confirmed that Gwyneth Evans and the HR officers do monitor and control this fund.

Neville Ward pointed out that if any overspend is carried forward it will be difficult as the pool of maintained schools is reducing.

Gwyneth Evans confirmed maintained schools that make redundancies prior to academisation are closely scrutinised.

Maintained school representatives on Schools Forum unanimously agreed to top-slice a centrally held statutory school finance budget from maintained primary and secondary school budgets in 2019-20.

Maintained school representatives on Schools Forum unanimously agreed to top-slice a centrally held statutory HR and health and safety budget from maintained primary and secondary school budgets in 2019-20.

Maintained school representatives on Schools Forum unanimously agreed to top-slice a centrally held budget for Education Access Services from maintained primary and secondary school budgets or to fully delegate and offer buy-back arrangements.

## **6. Central Schools Services Block 2019 -20**

Stephen Waters presented the paper.

Maintained and academy school representatives unanimously agreed to contribute £852,110 to combined budgets as outlined in Appendix C to the report.

Maintained and academy school representatives unanimously agreed to contribute £972,920 to fund a portion of the ongoing pension commitments.

Maintained and academy school representatives unanimously agreed to continue to contribute £295,350 to fund the ongoing revenue costs of funding prudential borrowing for the Monkmoor Campus Project.

Maintained and academy school representatives unanimously agreed to the increased charge of £228,340 for the provision of School Admissions Team.

Maintained and academy school representatives agree to the budget of £10,000 for the servicing of Schools Forum.

Maintained and academy school representative unanimously agreed to the increased charge of £214,440 for the annual copyright licensing fees.

Jo Jones advised that in the Summer term there is to be an external audit of selected schools covering a period of 50 days.

Maintained and academy school representatives agreed to continue to contribute £587,307 to ongoing responsibilities that the local authority provides for maintained schools and academies as per the detail provided in Appendix D to the report.

The Chair stressed the ongoing concern re funding for high needs. He advised that a paper providing the full picture on high needs funding will be presented to Schools Forum in the Spring term and confirmed that work is in hand and ongoing.

**7. Control on Surplus Balances**

Gwyneth Evans presented the paper.

Schools Forum unanimously agreed that the control on surplus balances mechanism should be removed from Shropshire's Scheme for the Financing of Schools with effect from April 2019.

Gwyneth Evans was asked to communicate this decision to schools following the meeting.

**GE**

**8. Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring**

Stephen Waters presented the paper which was for information only.

He confirmed that officers will bring a financial plan to deal with the budget situation to Schools Forum.

**SAW**

**9. Communications**

The f40 paper was discussed, which highlighted that the NFF is still not delivering fairness.

Lobbying continues – Sabrina Hobbs, Kerry Lynch and the North West Headteachers have all been meeting with representatives of national government and not much hope is being given. There does seem to be an awareness of the double funding of deprivation.

Andrew Smith reported that a recent National Post 16 Conference provided the same sort of picture.

Neville Ward added that it was positive to see early years mentioned in the f40 paper.

Schools Forum said farewell and gave their thanks to Chris Mathews for his contributions to Forum over the years he had been involved in its work.

**10. Future meeting dates:**

|                               |         |                |
|-------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| 17 January 2019               | 8.30 am | STDC, Monkmoor |
| 31 January 2019 (provisional) | 8.30 am | STDC, Monkmoor |
| 21 March 2019                 | 8.30 am | STDC, Monkmoor |
| 6 June 2019                   | 8.30 am | TBC            |

The meeting closed at 10.45 am.