



Schools Forum

Date: 17 September 2020

Time: 8.30 am

Venue: Via MS Teams

Item/Paper

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Public

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 25 JUNE 2020 – HELD VIA MS TEAMS

Present

School Forum Members

Bill Dowell (Chair)
Mark Cooper – Secondary Headteacher
Caroline Clode – Professional Association rep.
John Hitchings – Academy Governor
Sabrina Hobbs – Academy Headteacher
Sandra Holloway – Primary Governor
Marilyn Hunt – Primary Headteacher
Kerry Lynch – Primary Academy Headteacher
Michael Revell – Primary Governor
Andrew Smith – 16 -19 Representative
Reuben Thorley – Secondary Headteacher
Alan Doust – Academy Headteacher
Sian Lines – Diocese of Hereford
Stephen Matthews – Primary Governor
Georgia Moss – Academy Business Manager

Members

Cllr Nick Bardsley
Cllr Ed Potter

Officers

Karen Bradshaw
Julia Dean
Gwyneth Evans
Jo Jones
Neville Ward
Stephen Waters
Phil Wilson

Observers

Roger Evans
Charles Thomas

Phil Wilson went through some ground rules in order to facilitate the smooth operation of the meeting:

- Please mute your microphones when not speaking.
- Presenters will briefly present their reports and then open up the item for Forum members to raise questions and/or comments.
- Use the 'Raise your hand' facility if you would like to raise a question or comment.
- Alternatively use 'Chat' to advise the Chair that you would like to speak.
- Turn off your video if bandwidth becomes an issue.
- Please note that this meeting is being recorded but will be deleted once the notes have been captured.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Shelley Hurdley, Alan Parkhurst, Mark Rogers and Guy Verling.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on December 2020 were approved.

ACTION

3. School Finances – Impact of Covid-19

Phil Wilson went through his paper.

He verbally added some additional information (which had been received yesterday) regarding Covid-19 funding, which provided clarification of what could be claimed by schools. Steve Compton had emailed this guidance to schools and the claim process has been clarified. It seems complicated and an online claim form will need to be completed by 21 July. This information also clarified that the following costs will not be claimable:

- loss of self-generated income
- costs of opening of schools for more pupils from 1 June
- cost of any additional staff.

There is an opportunity to highlight exceptional costs which will be considered on a case by case basis. The LA will consider making representation to DfE.

Mark Cooper advised that Thomas Adams School has submitted a furlough claim for boarding and sports centre staff which has been straightforward and successful. However, the loss of boarding school fees is presenting a serious challenge.

4. Updated Dedicated Schools Grant from 2020-21

Gwyneth Evans went through her paper which was for information.

5. School Balances as at March 2020

Gwyneth Evans went through her paper which was for information.

She explained the actions taken with the primary schools that are in deficit.

There had been a significant deficit increase for one special school which did have a small licensed deficit. However, this has grown significantly over the year and officers are working with the school to establish how it has happened.

The confidential paper re maintained school balances was shared.

Alan Doust asked what challenges are being made to those schools who have high levels of surplus.

Gwyneth Evans advised that schools with high levels of surplus all have plans for its use, and some have built this up over time for a purpose. She assured School Forum that LA officers will ensure that it is spent for the benefit of pupils in their schools.

6. Growth Fund Allocations 2019-20 and 2020-21

Gwyneth Evans went through her paper and Schools Forum noted:

- the individual allocations made to schools from Shropshire's Growth Fund in 2019-20 and the use of the 2019-20 Growth Fund underspend to support the on-going pressure on the DSG high needs budget; and
- the current allocations from Shropshire's 2020-21 Growth Fund allocation.

7. Early Years Block Allocation 2020-21

Neville Ward went through his paper which was for information.

He stressed how grateful the LA were to the many settings that had remained open during the 13-week lockdown period.

He added that the demand for childcare in the future may look very different and advised that the LA will need to identify which providers it may be able to support.

The Chair added his gratitude for the incredible work of the early years providers.

8. High Needs Funding Task & Finish Group Update

Julia Dean provided an update.

Shropshire Council had recently been part of a local area inspection of 0-25 SEND. The outcome of this requires a written statement of action by 25 September. Six areas of weakness were identified with the majority around CCG, but, one specific area related to the work of the High Needs Task & Finish Group and concerns the number of exclusions. Continuing work on this will now come under the remit of the 0-25 SEND Board.

Julia Dean confirmed that surveys had been received from Shropshire schools, who had confirmed that they were happy to look at different models for supporting children who are at risk of permanent exclusion. The Task & Finish Group had agreed that TMBSS would provide a new model where pupils would remain in school for two days per week, attend a PRU for two days a week and on the other day, outreach work would be carried out to support schools and pupils. This has been delayed due to Covid-19 but will start in January 2021.

Julia Dean undertook to keep Schools Forum updated.

9. Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring (DSG) 2020-21

Stephen Waters went through his paper.

Julia Dean advised that there had not been as big an overspend on specialist independent out of county places as expected. This is due to more places being made available in hubs at Shropshire schools. The new special school is due to open in September 2022 and will provide a further 120 places. Also, Social Care are working on a Stepping Stones policy which aims to ensure that there enough places for LAC in Shropshire and this will have a further impact.

Julia Dean alerted Schools Forum to the potential impact of Covid-19 on the High Needs Block – there are already increasing numbers of requests for EHCP assessments and there are higher levels of anxiety. Some parents are not returning their children to school and when they have to there may be another increase.

There will be a widening gap between SEN/non-SEN. The SEN team is receiving requests for extensions to Post 16 placements in order to complete programmes – these are being agreed on a term by term and individual basis.

The team is expecting requests for an additional year from parents. There would not automatically be approved and will be considered on a case by case basis.

The Chair went back to paragraphs 21/22 regarding the need for a recovery plan. He requested an emerging recovery plan for consideration by Schools Forum at their next meeting in September and for approval at the December meeting.

Neville Ward advised of the overspend on Early Years in 2020-21 due to Covid-19 which has meant that some places have been double funded.

He also cautioned around the difficulty of creating a recovery plan in these

SAW

uncertain times.

The Chair suggested that any plan may have to contain some 'ifs' and 'maybes'.

Schools Forum:

- noted the report and approved that the £1.368m in-year overspend is added to last year's deficit carried forward of £0.879m and carried forward into 2020-21 financial year to give a cumulative deficit of £2.247m
- noted that the ESFA has updated their DSG guidance in March 2020 to remove the requirement for those local authorities overspent by more than 1% of their gross DSG budget to formally submit a DSG deficit recovery plan to the Department for Education by the of June.

10. Communications

It was confirmed that briefings of headteachers will continue and the Chair and Phil Wilson will keep Schools Forum updated.

BD/PW

11. Future meeting dates:

17 September 2020 via MS Teams

The chair thanked Gwyneth Evans for all her hard work and dedication as this is her last meeting. Schools Forum wished her all the best for the future.

The meeting closed at 10.25 am.