



## Schools Forum

Date: 3 December 2020

Time: 8.30 am

Venue: Via MS Teams

Item/Paper

# A

Public

### MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2020 – HELD VIA MS TEAMS

#### Present

##### School Forum Members

Bill Dowell (Chair)  
Mark Cooper – Secondary academy headteacher (left 9.00)  
Alan Doust – Secondary academy headteacher  
John Hitchings – Academy governor  
Sandra Holloway – Primary governor  
Marilyn Hunt – Primary headteacher  
Donna Lewis – Academy representative  
Kerry Lynch – Primary Academy Headteacher  
Stephen Matthews – Primary governor (left at 9.56)  
David O’Toole – Secondary academy headteacher  
Alan Parkhurst – Primary headteacher  
John Parr – Secondary academy headteacher (left 9.49)  
Michael Revell – Primary Governor  
Mark Rogers – Primary headteacher  
Andrew Smith – 16 -19 Representative (left 9.31)  
Charles Thomas – Professional Association Rep.  
Reuben Thorley – Secondary headteacher (left at 9.51)

#### Members

Cllr Nick Bardsley (left 9.56)  
Cllr Ed Potter

#### Officers

Karen Bradshaw (left at 9.27)  
Julia Dean (left at 9.30)  
Jo Jones  
Neville Ward  
Stephen Waters  
Phil Wilson  
Helen Woodbridge

#### Observers

Roger Evans  
David Vasmer

Phil Wilson went through the protocols for the meeting.

#### 1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Sabrina Hobbs, Shelly Hurdley and Sian Lines.

#### 2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September were agreed as a true record.  
Marilyn Hunt clarified Page 3 – where it stated that she agreed the need to increase the high needs budget. She had acknowledged the work of the SEN team in streamlining and achieving savings but recognised that the deficit remains.

#### ACTION

### **3. Schools' Finances and COVID-19**

Phil Wilson presented his paper.

Several meeting participants advised that their schools had not yet received any payments for their claims.

Sandra Holloway added that her school had received reimbursement for three areas of the claim but not for the 'other' claim (which was for £900 - supply cover for a shielding teacher).

Charles Thomas asked for clarification and it was confirmed that there seems to be two different sets of schools. So far, 53 Shropshire schools have recovered the costs they claimed.

Reuben Thorley advised that his school had received an email confirming that £30k will be reimbursed but that claims made under 'other' are under review. No actual funding has been received by his school at this stage.

Phil Wilson advised that the criteria for making claims were very limited and supply cover was not included. Neville Ward added that despite the efforts of LA officers passing information to the DfE, they are not getting information back to enable support of schools and settings.

The Chair asked that LA officers continue to push for this support.

Phil Wilson alluded to the f40 letter circulated to Schools Forum members which covered these issues.

Mark Rogers observed that it will be a mixed position. The areas of concern are increased costs (mainly cleaning and staffing) and loss of income eg after school clubs (although he acknowledged that there could be some savings too). Some schools will face financial difficulties.

The Chair encouraged officers to keep an open dialogue with schools.

Charles Thomas passed on thanks from the education unions to headteachers and the LA for all the efforts being made.

### **4. Dedicated Schools Grant Recovery Plan**

Stephen Waters presented his report which was for information only.

Stephen Matthews asked when the outcome of the financial modelling would be available. Phil Wilson confirmed that the finalised recovery plan will be available for the next meeting.

The Chair congratulated Stephen Waters and Julia Dean for the work undertaken on this.

### **5. Central Retention of DSG from April 2021 Consultation**

Phil Wilson presented his paper.

A consultation document will be sent to all maintained schools following the meeting with a deadline for responses of the end of November.

A report will be brought back to the next meeting when voting will take place.

Schools Forum colleagues were encouraged to remind maintained colleagues to respond.

## 6. **Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring (DSG) 2020-21**

Stephen Waters presented his report which was for information only. Neville Ward commented regarding early years and added a caveat on the overspend. He was confident of the Summer term expenditure but the impact on Autumn term funding is not yet fully known. Demand for provision is less and short-term measures to protect providers have been taken.

Mark Rogers highlighted that the Schools Block 0.5% contribution to the deficit each year is supported. However, the Schools Block does not include post 16 and post 16 are benefitting. An ethical issue is emerging. Phil Wilson advised that the whilst the High Needs Block covers ages 0-23, the Schools Block covers statutory education age. The bottom line is that there is a need for more funding in the base for high needs. The Chair requested further information/work on this.

PW/JD/SAW

## 7. **Communications**

The f40 letter had been shared.

## 8. **Future meeting dates:**

Thursday 3 December 2020  
Thursday 14 January 2021  
Thursday 28 January 2021 (if required)  
Thursday 18 March 2021

The Chair asked about free school meals in holiday time which had been highlighted recently in the media.

Phil Wilson and Ed Potter explained the approach in Shropshire. Shropshire Council had decided to implement a system quickly. They provided additional support to foodbanks and distributed food parcels to most vulnerable families.

Moving forward Shropshire Council had decided to provide free school meals over the Christmas holidays via a combination of food parcels and vouchers. There are currently around 5,500 children eligible.

The initiative may change if the government change their policy.

Phil Wilson stressed that schools' role in this will be critical. Intelligence is being gathered via meetings and through EWOs in schools. The provision will also include other vulnerable children identified by schools. A briefing note will be sent to schools shortly and the LA will need early information regarding the requirement for any food parcels.

The Chair thanked Ed Potter and the Cabinet for this.

Charles Thomas once again recorded the thanked of the education unions. He reminded colleagues not to forget small cafes/retail outlets that may like to be involved.

Marilyn Hunt expressed her thanks. Good to hear of Shropshire's commitment. Message needs to go to school headteachers were also pleased with the proposed response and encouraged information to go out to headteachers as soon as possible.

Phil Wilson agreed to bring an update to the next meeting.

**PW**

The meeting closed at 9.58 am.