



## Schools Forum

Date: 18 June 2021

Time: 8.30 am

Venue: Via MS Teams

Item/Paper

# A

Public

### MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 18 MARCH 2021 – HELD VIA MS TEAMS

#### Present

##### School Forum Members

Bill Dowell (Chair)  
Alan Doust – Secondary academy headteacher  
John Hitchings – Academy governor  
Sandra Holloway – Primary governor  
Marilyn Hunt – Primary headteacher  
Shelly Hurdley – Early Years representative  
Sue Lovecy – Secondary academy headteacher  
Sian Lines – Diocese of Hereford  
Kerry Lynch – Primary academy headteacher  
Stephen Matthews – Primary governor  
David O'Toole – Secondary academy headteacher  
Alan Parkhurst – Primary headteacher  
Michael Revell – Primary governor  
Mark Rogers – Primary headteacher  
Andrew Smith – Post 16  
Charles Thomas – Professional association representative  
Carla Whelan – Primary academy headteacher

#### Members

Ed Potter  
Nick Bardsley

#### Officers

Karen Bradshaw  
Julia Dean  
Jo Jones  
Neville Ward  
Stephen Waters  
Phil Wilson  
Helen Woodbridge

#### Observers

Roger Evans  
David Vasmer

#### 1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Sabrina Hobbs and Reuben Thorley.  
A later apology was received from John Parr.

#### 2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising which were not covered by the agenda.

#### 3. Schools' Finance and COVID-19

Phil Wilson went through his report which summarised the range of funding available to support schools through the pandemic.

- Emergency Schools Fund – 76 maintained schools secured over £237k for costs incurred in the Summer term 2020 – figure for academies not available

#### ACTION

- Catch-up Premium - £1.75 million for Shropshire schools for Autumn and Spring terms – a further £1 million plus expected in Summer term
- Winter Grant Scheme – underwriting cost of food for disadvantaged families outside of term time – Christmas, February half-term and Easter (5 weeks) – estimated cost of £560k – Council underwriting support for Whitsun half-term – further funding of over £200k going into schools to support purchase of uniforms/shoes for disadvantaged children for the start of the Summer term
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – claims of over £96k has been secured to end of February 2021 for furloughed staff in maintained schools – no information available for academies
- Free school meals – process for reclaiming costs incurred for provision of FSMs to children learning at home from 4 January will be published shortly – supplementary grant funding for 2020-21 financial year of £482k has been allocated to 115 Shropshire schools
- Workforce Fund – to support schools who had high staff absences in November and December 2020 – complex claims process – few schools expected to apply – window for applying was opened on 10 March with closing deadline of 23:59 on 31 March
- National Tutoring Programme - £350 million, plus additional funds announced in February (£100 million) going into programme – no data on extent to which Shropshire schools are either accessing programme and support or the impact it is having
- New Education Recovery Package – details limited at this stage – one-off Recovery Premium of £302 million (average allocations of £6k for primaries and £22k for secondaries) for the summer, and £200 million for secondary schools to deliver face-to-face summer schools, initially suggested for targeting at Year 7s
- National Testing Programme – schools able to reclaim costs associated with testing arrangements in schools during the Spring term – assumed to apply mainly to secondary schools for lateral flow testing of students in line with 8 March reopening

Mark Rogers raised a concern regarding the catch-up premium as there are issues around schools being about to spend this funding before the end of the financial year. This will lead to confusion with schools reporting large year-end balances which may not reflect the true financial position. Phil Wilson agreed to pick this issue up with the DfE.

**PW**

John Hitchings addressed the issue of Schools Forum not being able to easily identify the academy figures regarding extra funding. He suggested that pressure is put on government to persuade them to share academy figures with Schools Forums.

Marilyn Hunt asked about funding gap in pupil premium. Phil Wilson advised that lobbying is going on around this issue (£450k).

Phil Wilson agreed to provide a link to spreadsheet which details what schools with receive. He added that there is also Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme funding available in 2021 and access to IT equipment support

**PW**

disadvantaged pupils, which schools have been able to access.

Charles Thomas thanked Phil Wilson for his report. The trades unions were very grateful for all the work the council and schools have put into dealing with this difficult situation. He was hopeful that some of the additional funding could be used to prevent redundancies.

#### 4. Allocation of Early Years Block 2021-22

Neville Ward went through his report. He reminded Schools Forum that the final amount received is yet to be confirmed as it will depend on NOR/parental take up.

- 2021-22 Early Years Block allocation is indicative subject to January 2021 census
- Indicative allocation is based on January 2020 census
- Increased hourly rates for both 2 year olds and 3 & 4 year olds
- Increased commitment for special needs support
- Continued provision for Early Years Pupil Premium and Disability Access Fund.

He advised that childcare providers have been concerned about the lack of income during the pandemic although most have had access to grant schemes and extra funding made available through the LA discretionary fund. There will be long term impacts of COVID and it will be interesting to see how long-term demand for childcare goes which could impact positively or negatively.

The Chair thanked Neville Ward and his team for his ongoing support to providers. Neville Ward recognised the efforts that have been made over the last 12 months by providers. The Chair asked for the thanks of Schools Forum to be passed on to providers.

NW

#### 5. High Needs National Funding Formula Consultation

Phil Wilson went through this report. He explained that there are only five questions:

**Q1:** Do you agree that we should replace the current lump sum included in the formula calculation with an amount calculated on the basis of actual local authority expenditure, as reported by each local authority?

*Agree/Disagree/Unsure*

**Q2:** Do you think that we should increase the percentage of actual expenditure in 2017-18 included in the funding formula calculation, or leave it at 50%?

*Increase the percentage/Keep the percentage at 50%/Decrease the percentage/Unsure or other*

**Q3:** To what extent do you agree that the funding formula should include factors that reflect historical local demand for and supply of SEND and AP provision?

*Strongly agree/Agree/Neither agree or disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree*

**Q4:** Do you agree with our proposal to update the low attainment factors using data from 2016, and to substitute the most recent 2019 data in place of the missing 2020 attainment data?

*Agree/Disagree – calculate in the same way as last year/Disagree – other/Unsure*

**Q5:** If you wish to offer ideas on factors that could be added to the current formula, or that could replace the current proxies, please provide further details.

He added that the closing date is 24 March 2021 and confirmed that Shropshire Council will be submitting a return.

He had been in touch with f40 and agreed with their views that unfairness may be perpetuated, and that population should be key driver.

Julia Dean was in agreement.

Phil Wilson agreed to circulate the f40 response and all were encouraged to respond to the consultation.

PW

## 6. **Changes to Sparsity Factor Consultation**

Jo Jones went through her report.

The consultation makes the following proposals:

- to begin measuring sparsity distances by road journeys rather than ‘as the crow flies’ distances, to better reflect the actual distance between schools, particularly in rural locations
- to increase the maximum sparsity factor values by £10,000 across all phases in the 2022-23 schools national funding formula (NFF).

She confirmed that Shropshire Council will be responding but schools were encouraged to respond too. It is potentially extra funding for Shropshire of around £1m.

Mark Rogers asked about how routes to schools were mapped and it was confirmed that the DfE produce this information using home postcodes.

Nick Bardsley welcomed this consultation as it had been a concern for some years.

## 7. **Dedicated Schools Grants Recovery Plan Update**

Stephen Waters and Julia Dean presented the report and three appendices.

Three areas where savings could be made were identified. A fourth key area is the increase in top-up funding to mainstream schools but it was felt to target this would be negative and counter-productive.

### **Post 16 - FE College Placements**

- 2021-22 estimated increase in expenditure is 27% (£0.741m) based on current trends
- Increase in numbers with an EHCP:
  - 2017-18 - 129
  - 2020-21 - 226
- Growth reduction target £0.075m (10%)

To be achieved by:

- Reviewing process for ceasing EHCPs prior to transition

- Enhancing transition process

Review of how funding is allocated to secure greater efficiency and value for money.

Chair asked about engagement with FE and it was agreed that he and Phil Wilson would discuss adding an FE representative for Schools Forum.

Chair/PW

### **Independent Specialist Placements**

- 2021-22 estimated increase in expenditure is 2% (£0.104m) based on current trends

Growth reduction target £0.075m (72%)

To be achieved by:

- Increasing local capacity through implementation of high needs provision strategy
- Current social care and health initiatives.

Andrew Smith agreed it would be valuable to have an FE representative on Forum.

### **Alternate Provision**

Projected savings target of £0.070m (23% of anticipated expenditure)

Behaviour support/outreach

Achieved by:

- Supporting early intervention through outreach focus
- Introduction of a contribution to the cost of a placement.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Day Provision:**

Achieved by:

- Investment in centralised support services
- Implementation of priorities identified by the inclusion workstream

The combined growth reduction target from these three strategies is **£0.220m** in the 2021-22 financial year.

### **Financial Modelling**

- Shropshire's High Needs Block allocation is increasing by £3.511m (13%) in 2021-22 from £28.016m to £31.527m. This is a significantly higher increase than the growth between 2019-20 actual expenditure (£27.293m) and 2020-21 projected expenditure (£29.623m), 9%.
- If expenditure was to grow at this level unmitigated, the deficit would reduce by £0.837m just through the High Needs Block allocation increasing by £3.511m and the projected expenditure increasing by £1.910m.
- It is estimated that a further £0.220m anticipated expenditure growth can be reduced through the following high level strategies which means that in 2021-22 the plan is to reduce the projected DSG deficit from £2.573m by £1.057m to £1.516m.
- In the following years, 2022-23 and 2023-24 it is assumed that the High Needs Block allocation will increase by 8% per annum
- The DSG deficit would be brought back into balance in the 2023-24 financial year.
- This assumes that the other blocks of DSG expenditure does not

overspend against their allocation and the 3 mitigations discussed totalling £0.220m in 2021-22 continue to have an effect through the remaining financial years through reducing the baseline expenditure.

Marilyn Hunt asked if the extra funding is confirmed for future. Stephen Waters advised that it may be affected by the high needs consultation. Phil Wilson was optimistic that up to 2022-23 the funding was relatively certain given the Government's three year funding commitment, but as we proceed further into the future funding levels are less certain.

Julia Dean advised of an overarching SEND review which is ongoing.

The Chair summarised that there is cautious optimism but several risks and the position needs to be closely monitored and schools Forum kept advised.

## **8. Communications**

The Chair stressed the importance of as many people as possible responding to the consultations. He asked councillors to include MPs.

**NB**

He also suggested wider circulation of finance and COVID paper to ensure that schools are up to date.

**PW**

## **9. Future meeting dates:**

Thursday 17 June 2021 (MS Teams)  
Thursday 16 September 2021  
Thursday 4 November 2021  
Thursday 2 December 2021  
Thursday 13 January 2022  
Thursday 27 January 2022 (provisional)  
Thursday 17 March 2022  
Thursday 16 June 2022

The meeting closed at 10.10