



Schools Forum

Date: 17 March 2022

Time: 8.30 am

Venue: Via MS Teams

Item/Paper

A

Public

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 27 JANUARY – HELD VIA MS TEAMS

Present

School Forum Members

Bill Dowell (Chair)
Caroline Clode – association secretaries
Mark Cooper – Secondary academy headteacher
John Hitchings – Academy governor
Sandra Holloway – Primary governor
Marilyn Hunt – Primary headteacher
Shelly Hurdley, Early Years Representative
Sian Lines – Diocese of Hereford
Sue Lovecy – Secondary academy headteacher
Kerry Lynch – Primary academy headteacher
Stephen Matthews – Primary governor
Georgia Moss – Academy (MAT) representative
David O’Toole – Secondary academy headteacher
John Parr – Secondary academy headteacher
Alan Parkhurst Primary headteacher
James Pearson - TMBSS
Michael Revell – Primary governor
Mark Rogers – Primary headteacher
Andrew Smith – Post 16
James Staniforth – Post 16
Reuben Thorley – Secondary headteacher
Carla Whelan – Primary academy headteacher

Members

Kirstie Hurst-Knight
Gwilym Butler

Officers

Jo Jones
Stephen Waters
Phil Wilson
Helen Woodbridge

Observers

Nick Bardsley
Roger Evans
Charles Thomas
David Vasmer

The chair welcomed all to the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Nathan Jones and Neville Ward. Marilyn Hunt, Reuben Thorley, Nick Bardsley and James Pearson had advised of partial attendance.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2021 were considered and agreed as a true record. (The clerk had omitted Kirstie Hurst-Knight in error as she had been in attendance at the meeting.)

Phil Wilson confirmed that the decisions taken at the last meeting had been communicated to schools.

ACTION

Stephen Waters advised that he had investigated the Monkmoor issue and had accessed a Cabinet paper from February 2006. He explained that the project already had significant funding in place but there had been a requirement for around £4m of prudential borrowing for 2007/08 and the revenue costs of this needed to be included in the Children and Young People's revenue budgets from 2007/08 onwards. The final figure for prudential borrowing would be £3.58m with financing costs of £295k to be met from the dedicated schools budget which would benefit from £130k of net savings due to the additional places provided by Severdale school rather than out of county placements. The commitment is until 2035/36 as the first costs were not taken until 2021/11.

The chair asked about Shire Services. He was advised that a paper had gone to Cabinet on 5 January 2022. Cabinet had approved the plans so they are moving forward. Managers are meeting with the 60 schools involved, however, staff absences have delayed the process. Janet Croft had advised that two schools had given notice and so far, six schools had signed up.

Kirstie Hurst-Knight advised that although this was not her paper, she and her colleagues had advised the lead of the need to account for the academic rather than the financial year.

The chair was pleased that there is more time for schools to make their decisions.

Mark Rogers and Marilyn Hunt were still unclear as staff cover has been removed from the management fee but don't know how cover could be provided. Worried that some kitchens will go.

Phil Wilson agreed to feed comments back to managers.

3. **School Revenue Funding Settlement and School Arrangements 2022-23**

Jo Jones presented the paper.

There had been an increase to the Schools Block of £6.432m from 2021-22 to 2022-23:

- Increase of 229 funded pupils
- National Funding Formula (NFF) core factors increased by 3%, every school will have a minimum 2% increase per pupil

There had been a decrease to the Early Years Block of £0.219m (provisional) from 2021-22 to 2022-23:

- Increase in hourly rate to £4.61 for 3 & 4 year olds and £5.36 for 2 year olds
- Will be updated in July 2022 and July 2023 based on January 2022 and January 2023 census data

There had been an increase to the High Needs Block of £2.885m from 2021-22 to 2022-23:

- Increase of at least 8% per head of 2-18 population from 2021-22
- Provisional import/export adjustment is a loss of £0.936m

There had been a decrease to the Central School Services Block of £0.211m from 2021-22 to 2022-23:

- Historic commitments funding reduced by 20%

School Funding Arrangements 2022-23:

- Schools have been fully funded in line with the NFF
- 0.5% (£0.949m) of the remaining Schools Block will be transferred

to the High Needs Block

- £0.366m has been retained for the Growth Fund
- Technical issue of how School Improvement deductions from schools should be shown – waiting for clarification from ESFA which is causing a delay to release of school budgets

Phil Wilson thanked Jo Jones for the hard work she had carried out. He warned that budgets are likely to be sent to schools slightly later than usual but should be sent out in February.

He advised that regarding the schools supplementary grant, he had attended an f40 meeting which had proved very useful. He undertook to share the slides with Schools Forum members.

PW

He provided an update on the Schools Supplementary Grant 2022-23

- £1.2 billion is being allocated nationally to schools in 2022-23 which is additional to the funding they are receiving through the funding formula
- A further £325 million additional high needs funding is being provided
- Finalised allocations will be published at school level this Spring
- Indicative allocation for Shropshire in December is around £5 million (final figures will be based on latest FSM6 data)
- Local authorities will receive and distribute maintained school funding, while academies will be funded direct
- Intended to provide support for costs of pay awards, costs associated with Health and Social Care Levy, and wider costs and inflationary pressures (eg energy costs)
- From 2023-24 this funding will be rolled into the schools national funding formula (NFF)
- Schools will have flexibility to prioritise their spending of this grant to best support needs of pupils and staff and address cost pressures.

For mainstream schools – the 5-16 funding rates consist of the following three elements which are based on factors already in the schools NFF:

- a basic per-pupil rate (primary - £97, key stage 3 - £137 and key stage 4 - £155)
- a lump sum of £3,680 paid to all schools
- a per-pupil rate for pupil who are recorded as having been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years (FSM6) (primary - £85, secondary - £124)

Indicative allocations for primary schools range from £9,000 to £50,000

Secondary school allocations range from £85,000 to £220,000

For local authority high needs budgets – increased local authorities' high needs DSG funding:

- Distributed as a percentage uplift to the original amount calculated in 2022-23 high needs NFF
- Local authorities decide how to allocate additional funding to special schools and alternative provision

James Staniforth asked about Post 16 high needs.

Phil Wilson agreed to find out more about this and will provide more detail on the distribution of the high needs funding at the March meeting.

PW

He advised that post 16 in schools would be £35 per student.

The chair acknowledged the growth in Post 16 high needs and asked that James Staniforth also undertook information finding.

JS

4. **Shropshire Schools Forum Constitution**

Phil Wilson presented the report.

- Annual formal assessment of Schools Forum membership, to apply from April 2022
- Only one mainstream academy conversion between October 2020 and October 2021 means that there is no requirement to re-apportion membership
- Membership: 3 primary headteachers, 3 primary governors, 1 secondary headteacher, 12 academy places, 1 special school place and 1 PRU place
- Issues:
 - secondary maintained school place remains on Schools Forum despite pupil numbers being low
 - a number of terms of office need reviewing and extending
 - currently 3 vacancies for academy representatives – views sought from Schools Forum in general, and academy colleagues in particular, on how to address this
- Updated version of the Constitution is appended to the report and will be reviewed each year in line with any changes in statutory guidance

Schools Forum unanimously approved the proposed membership, to apply from April 2022

Phil Wilson undertook to correct Caroline Clode's union.

PW

5. **Allocation of Early Years Block 2022-23**

Phil Wilson presented the paper due to the absence of Neville Ward.

- Increase in all funding rates for the new academic year
- Aim to pass as much of the increase as possible on to settings through the hourly funding rates
- Need to retain some additional funding to meet increasing costs of 1:1 provision for SEND children
- Settings very concerned at level of increasing costs
- Shropshire remains in group of lowest funded local authorities in the country.

Shelly Hurdley was able to confirm that the levels of SEN in Early Years are increasing. She added that recruitment is very difficult and costs are rising.

Phil Wilson wondered where there is any additional funding for Early Years. He will watch out for further news on this.

PW

The chair passed on best wishes to Neville Ward for an early recovery. He also thanked him for the provision of the detailed paper. Lobbying needs to continue

to support Early Years.

6. **Dedicated School Grant Monitoring 2021-22**

Stephen Waters presented his paper.

- The 2021-22 forecast outturn position for the DSG is a £0.906m in-year surplus.
- This surplus needs to be added to the £0.870m DSG deficit carried forward from 2020-21 resulting in a projected cumulative DSG surplus of £0.036m as at the end of 2021-22.
- The final DSG deficit carried forward figure from 2020-21 has been revised to £0.870m from £0.659m.

Early Years Block

- A small overspend of £0.018m is forecast on the early years SEND support budget.
- The demand placed on the early years SEND support budget continues to grow as Shropshire is seeing a growing number of children presenting with a range of development and emotional difficulties which require support.

High Needs Block

- Shropshire's High Needs Block DSG allocation has increased by £3.781m from £28.016m in 2020-21 to £31.797m in 2021-22
- In-year surplus forecast of £0.982m.
- Main variances summarised on next slide.
- On budget lines 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, shown in the Appendix, there is a forecast underspend of £0.784m. This accounts for the majority of the £0.982m projected in-year surplus on the High Needs Block DSG. The largest underspend relates to the Post 16 college placements budget (£0.442m).
- Important to note that despite the underspends being reported, actual expenditure is increasing across all 3 large budget headings, reflecting the national picture.

De-Delegated Items

- £0.098m forecast overspend on de-delegated maternity pay for schools where forecast expenditure is £0.330m but the de-delegated value from schools based on £19.27 per pupil is £232,000.

Summary

- Given that the overall DSG position is forecast to move from a revised deficit carried forward of £0.870m to a cumulative DSG surplus of £0.036m, this is positive in terms of the Council meeting the Department for Education's requirement to reduce or manage down the deficit.
- It is important to note that this projected removal of the deficit is as a result of forecast less growth in expenditure in 2021-22 compared to growth in High Needs Block DSG allocation rather than any reductions to High Needs Block DSG expenditure itself.

Mark Rogers acknowledged the good news story in terms of the reducing deficit.

He checked where any surplus in the High Needs would go. Stephen Waters advised that any surplus would roll forward to next year but is not necessarily ringfenced.

Mark Rogers added that it is important to note that the spend is rising but that the funding rose too.

He was worried about the rise in SEN in other phases for the future.

Phil Wilson noted that the SEND Review (due in spring) is long awaited.

He also advised that other LAs have sizable High Needs deficits.

An update on staffing changes was provided:

Karen Levell - SEND and Inclusion Manager 21/2/2022

David Shaw – Assistant Director for Education and Achievement 1/3/2022

7. **Schools Forum Work Programme 2022-23**

Phil Wilson went through the work programme

- Outline programme for Schools Forum through to the end of the Spring term 2023
- Highlights the timetable for the standard reporting that Forum members will be familiar with
- Scope for adding topical issues and/or reports commissioned by Schools Forum
- Areas where reports are expected in 2022-23 include:
 - the SEND review is due out this spring and Forum will want to consider any financial aspects within this
 - the formal response to the first phase of the National Funding Formula consultation last summer is due out shortly, with further phases planned which will need to come to Forum
 - any further in-year funding announcements from the Department
- Schools Forum members are invited to suggest any other areas of work they would like to commission from officers over the programme period

Phil Wilson asked Schools Forum members to advise of any other areas they would wish to cover.

Alan Parkhurst asked about the effectiveness of the Graduated Support Pathway (GSP), reminding colleagues that a report on this had been requested from Nathan Jones. He asked for this to be chased up as the fear is that they are EHCPs via the back door. Phil Wilson agreed to do this.

PW

Andrew Smith asked about the 2019 Alternative Provision Task Group work. Phil Wilson and Alan Parkhurst advised that an Inclusion Task Force has taken over this work. An Outreach programme from TMBSS is up and running (although COVID may have delayed) in primary. James Pearson from TMBSS confirmed that this is now in place in primary from January 2022.

The chair suggested that Karen Levell will need to review the working groups. Phil Wilson advised that there are lots of strands/issues in this area to be pulled together.

Kirstie Hurst-Knight intends to have weekly meetings with David Shaw and Karen Levell and is involved in SEND Partnership Board about which she will feed back to schools.

The chair raised the need for more focus on and raising of the profile of Early Years. Phil Wilson undertook to talk to Neville Ward about this.

PW

8. **Communications**

The chair suggested the need for Neville Ward to continue to lead on lobbying for Early Years funding.

David Vasmer had been asked about ventilation/energy costs and wondered if there was anything he could feed back to parents.

Phil Wilson advised of communications from WM Energy re rise of 33 - 38% Gas, 18-22% electricity. Only 7% had been allowed for in school budgets. In maintained schools this will cost £75k more and £167k more respectively. Although there is now more funding in the system there is an estimated total increase of around £500k when academies are included.

Mark Rogers was environmentally uneasy regarding the balance of heating/ventilation. Air cleaning units are being ordered but more research is required. Kirstie Hurst-Knight had met with Rachel Robinson (Shropshire Public Health lead) and will ask her about any research.

Phil Wilson explained about the air cleaning units which are coming from the DfE. CO2 monitors have also been provided.
(Mark Rogers clarified that the units are free if needed but can also be paid for.)

KHK

Mark Cooper reported that he had received 45 CO2 monitors which show that things are very affected by opening windows as they are very sensitive. Adherence to uniform policy is being surrendered for warm coats. Schools Forum agreed to revisit as more information/advice becomes available.

9. **Future meeting dates:**

Thursday 17 March 2022

Thursday 16 June 2022

The meeting closed at 9.50 am