

**Schools Forum**

Date: 11 September 2025

Time: 08.30 to 10.30

Venue: Face to Face

Paper

**A**

Public

**MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 19 JUNE 2025 – HELD VIA MS TEAMS**

NOTES WERE PRODUCED USING AI VIA COPILOT AS AGREED BY FORUM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING

<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Apologies received from Rachael Williams, Mark Cooper, James Staniforth	
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes and Matters Arising</b>	
	The minutes <u>were / were not</u> accepted as a true record	tbc
<b>3</b>	<b>Opening to Meeting</b>	<b>BD/DS</b>
	<p><b>New member introductions:</b> David introduced new elected members Andy Hall, Portfolio Holder, Neil Bentley, Deputy Portfolio Holder and Roger Evans, Finance Portfolio Holder.</p> <p><b>Meeting protocols:</b> David explained the meeting protocol, including muting microphones when not speaking, using a slide deck for key points, and raising hands for questions.</p> <p><b>Minutes and Matters Arising:</b> David mentioned that the meeting will be recorded and transcribed using copilot AI, and notes will be shared accordingly. David discussed the accuracy of the minutes from the previous meeting, noting amendments made by Sam.</p> <p><b>Updated Constitution listing:</b> Sam circulated the updated list, noting three vacancies in the Academy area and plans to address them in September (see follow up tasks for action)</p>	<b>SB</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Updated Dedicated School Grant 2025-26</b>	<b>CE</b>
	<p><b>DSG Update:</b> Collins provided an update on the dedicated schools grant, noting a £210,000 increase in central school support due to historical commitments. He mentioned that there is no change in high needs block funding, but there are further deductions, resulting in a reduced disposable income for Shropshire by £245,000. The overall high needs settlement figure remains the same, with potential increases in import-export adjustments subject to confirmation.</p>	



	<b>Additional Funding:</b> Collins mentioned additional funding outside the DSG, including National Insurance contributions and the 2025 pay award, which are due in October 2025.	
5	<p><b>National Benchmarking</b></p> <p><b>F40 Findings:</b> Collins presented findings from the F40 Campaign group, highlighting that Shropshire is the 15th lowest funded local authority in terms of high needs block funding per pupil. He compared Shropshire's funding levels to other local authorities, noting that Shropshire's funding is significantly lower than the highest funded London Borough and other boroughs.</p> <p><b>Funding Analysis:</b> Collins provided a detailed analysis of the funding levels, showing that Shropshire's funding is 65% of the F40 group average and 54% of other local authorities' average. He also mentioned that Shropshire's funding is 30% of the highest funded London Borough.</p>	CE
6	<p><b>School Balances as at March 2025</b></p> <p><b>School Balances:</b> Stephen reported that the overall level of school balances held by maintained schools in Shropshire decreased from £6.082 million to £4.701 million, mainly due to Academy conversions. He noted that 16 schools converted to academies in the 2024-2025 financial year, leaving 63 maintained schools as of the end of March.</p> <p><b>Deficit Balances:</b> Stephen mentioned that deficit balances decreased by £48,000 in total, with a £27,000 decrease in the primary sector and a £22,000 decrease in the secondary sector. He highlighted the importance of financial monitoring meetings to address deficit balances and the requirement for maintained schools to submit three-year budget plans.</p>	SW
7	<p><b>Growth Fund Allocations 2024-25 and 2025-26</b></p> <p><b>Growth Fund:</b> Andy provided an update on the Growth Fund allocations, noting that the budget for 2024-2025 is £350,000, with £259,000 allocated, resulting in an underspend of £91,000. He mentioned that the budget for 2025-2026 is set at £300,000, with £142,000 allocated so far.</p> <p><b>Future Budgets:</b> Andy mentioned that they will be asking for a budget of £300,000 for 2026-2027, anticipating a bulge year in the Shrewsbury area. He highlighted the importance of supporting schools with expansion and additional classes, particularly for the new school in Shrewsbury.</p>	AN



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8	<p><b>Early Years Block Allocation 2025-26</b></p> <p><b>Early Years Allocation:</b> Andy discussed the early years block allocation, noting that the block has not changed from the budget presented in January. He highlighted additional grants of 13 pence per hour for nine-month-olds and 17 pence per hour for two-year-olds to support National Insurance costs.</p> <p><b>Funding Lag:</b> Andy mentioned efforts to reduce the funding lag by using termly headcounts instead of census data, allowing for more reactive funding. He emphasized the importance of keeping centrally retained costs below the 4% threshold, aiming for 2.49% to ensure more money goes back to settings.</p>	AN
9	<p><b>Dedicated School Grant Monitoring 2024-25 Outturn</b></p> <p><b>DSG Deficit:</b> Stephen reported an in-year deficit of £15.097 million for the DSG, adding to the previous year's deficit of £2.542 million, resulting in a cumulative deficit of £17.639 million. He highlighted the main pressure areas, including top-up funding to mainstream schools, special schools, and independent providers.</p> <p><b>High Needs Block:</b> Stephen detailed the pressures on the high needs block, noting an overspend of £15.644 million. He mentioned the increase in top-up funding to mainstream schools, special schools, and independent providers, driven by the rising number of education healthcare needs assessments, and plans.</p> <p><b>Independent Providers:</b> Stephen highlighted the overspend on independent special schools, noting a total expenditure of £18.259 million, with a 31% increase in 2024-2025. He mentioned the factors contributing to the increase, including higher placement fees due to increased complexity and more frequent use of independent alternative providers for post-16 children.</p> <p><b>Sen Support Services:</b> Stephen reported an overspend of £2.121 million on Sen support services, driven by additional staffing and increased use of external speech and language therapists.</p>	SW
10	<p><b>Impact of the AP/Inclusion Development Fund</b></p> <p>John reported on the impact of the AP Fund, showing a reduction in permanent exclusions and plans for a primary AP Fund.</p>	JR



11	<b>Communication</b>  David mentioned ongoing engagement with Andy, Neil, and the leader regarding communication and financial settlement updates from central government.  David shared links to articles on DSG funding and statutory override, suggesting weekly updates from the F40 group.	
12	<b>Follow Up Tasks</b>  Expression of interest in joining Schools Forum to be circulated and shared September 2025 meeting  Funding Formula briefing to be set up to explain APT and NFF and mechanics behind the calculations including Growth Funding  HN funding formula and methodology to be circulated with minutes  Weekly newsletter from f40 to be shared with Schools Forum members  Draft letter review to be worked on with Andy and Neil regarding funding challenges and to be circulated to Bill prior to September 2025 Schools Forum meeting for feedback	SB  DS  CE  SB/CE  DS
13	<b>Future Meeting Dates</b>  Thursday 11 September 2025 (tbc) Face to Face Thursday 13 November 2025 (tbc) MS Teams Thursday 11 December 2025 (tbc) MS Teams Thursday 22 January 2026 (tbc) MS Teams Thursday 19 March 2026 (tbc) MS Teams Thursday 18 June 2026 (tbc) MS Teams	
14	<b>Link to recording of Schools Forum Meeting – 19 June 2025</b>  <b>Following email from Web Services, a SharePoint is being set up for ALL to have access to Schools Forum Documentation and Meeting Recordings.</b>	SB

**Commented [DS1]:** @Samantha Bradley action here to review the letter with the new administration following the elections in May.



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