

Schools Forum

Date: 13 November 2025

Time: 09.00 to 11.00

Venue: Face to Face

Paper

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Public

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2025 – HELD VIA MS TEAMS

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

1	Apologies	
	Apologies received from Marilyn Hunt and Sian Lines	
2	Minutes and Matters Arising	
	The minutes from 19 June 2025 were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting.	
3	Opening to Meeting	BD/DS
	Chair Elected: David introduced the meeting and confirmed no other nominations had been received for Bill Dowell to be Chair. David asked for a show of hands and all representatives voted yes to Bill Dowell being Schools Forum Chair for the next year. Bill was then invited to the meeting. Vice Chair Elected: Whilst waiting for Bill to join, David no other nominations had been received for John Hitchings to be Vice Chair. David asked for a show of hands and all representatives voted yes to John Hitchings being Schools Forum Vice Chair for the next year. Minutes and Matters Arising: Communication of financial statement: Draft letter being prepared by Collins, to be shared with lead portfolio holders and forum Current Vacancies: EOI confirmed can be circulated to seek nominations for 3 vacancies on the forum (2 Academy, 1 Diocese) NFF Briefing: John advised a funding formula briefing for early December planned; additional briefing for maintained schools on DE delegation and central retention.	
4	Shropshire Council Financial Position	JR



	John updated forum on the Council's financial emergency of a £35m overspend, stringent controls in place and risk of Section 114 notice. Maintained school budgets and high needs block funding are not directly affected, but indirect impacts possible due to interconnectivity of services. HR and Payroll mentioned. Communication to schools and post-16 providers to continue for reassurance and clarity.	
5	School Library Service (SLS) John shared information provided by Sarah Browne regarding SLS. Advising the service remains under pressure; moved to pay-as-you-go model. Schools urged to buy in to ensure sustainability. Feedback to be gathered from heads on service value and needs. John further highlighted a flexibility in offer and value for money under new plans and further engagement planned.	JR
6	Final Dedicated School Grant 2024-25 • Final 24/25 Early Years Block allocation increased by £73k; cumulative DSG deficit reduced to £17.566m. • 25/26 DSG: £3.8m reduction in Schools Block, £400k increase in Early Years, £300k reduction in High Needs. Revised DSG: £133.8m. • High Needs Block remains under significant pressure; forecast cumulative DSG deficit of £36.888m by end of 25/26. • Main pressures: top-up funding to mainstream and special schools, and independent placements. • Statutory override for DSG deficit extended to March 2028	SW
7	Updated Dedicated Schools Grant 2025-26 • A further Recoupment of £3.810m in Schools Block Funding • No Change in CSSB from March 2025 update • An increase of £0.399m in Early Years Funding from Jan count • Overall HNB allocation reduced by £0.313m due to £0.243m import/export adjustments & £0.070m reduction in Special Free School funding. • Further import/export adjustment to be confirmed in November • National Insurance Contributions (NICs) grant not part of DSG • 2025 pay award not part of DSG but due in Oct 2025	CE



8	Schools Revenue Funding Update 2025-26 • Shropshire Council adopted national formula locally from 2018–19. • ESFA published 2025–26 funding guidance in December 2024. • 2026–27 guidance pending; minimal changes expected. • PUF £5,661 and SUF £6,829 based on October 2024 census pupil numbers. • Split site funding must follow national formula. • Growth and falling rolls now formula-driven. • Teachers Pay Additional Grant (TPAG), Teachers Pension Employers Contribution Grant (TPECG) and Core Schools Budget Grant(CSBG) all consolidated into baseline. • Confirmed NFF Funding actors (2025–26): 73.6% Basic Entitlement, 10.7% Deprivation, 5.9% Low Prior Attainment (LPA), 1.1% English as an Additional Language (EAL), and 0.18% Mobility. • Up to 0.5% transfer allowed with Schools Forum approval. • Disapplication needed for transfers above 0.5%. • NFF structure unchanged.	CE
9	Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26 • Forecast and Financial Position: ◦ The 2526 forecast out term position for the DSG is a £19.3 m in-year deficit. ◦ The forecast cumulative deficit at the end of 2526 is £36.888 m. ◦ The high needs block is forecast to have an in-year deficit of £19.404 m. • Capacity and Placements: ◦ The aim is to reduce reliance on independent specialist placements, which are more costly than LA special schools. ◦ Feedback indicated that efforts to reduce permanent exclusions and build capacity within stern hubs and hubs attached to mainstream schools are on the right track. • Funding and Mitigations: ◦ There is no expectation of emergency funding increases for the high needs block. ◦ The government has extended the statutory override to keep Council spending deficits off their books until March 2028. ◦ The DSG management plan includes several mitigations to improve the funding position for the high needs block. • Expenditure and Variances:	SW



	- Expenditure for 2526 is forecast to be 21% higher than 2425 levels, reaching £22.134 m. - There are variances in post-16 FE College placements and independent specialist provision. - The increase in expenditure is driven by factors such as the national living wage increase and price inflation. Overall Position: - The overall position reflects continued pressure on the high needs budget as expenditure continues to rise sharply. - The narrative is a continuation from the previous two financial years, with large percentage increases in expenditure.	
8	High Needs Block (HNB) Monitoring Group John invited forum members to email Sam if interested in joining a working group in relation to monitoring HNB. This will be brought back to next meeting for oversight.	JR
10	Communication Bill mentioned draft letter for funding as detailed above. John further discussed HNB monitoring group and an initial meeting to be scheduled once participants agreed.	
11	Follow Up Tasks Broader communication to all schools and colleges to be circulated in relation to Shropshire Council financial position Draft letter to be shared with Andy and Neil for their input and review before sending. Expression of interest in joining Schools Forum to fill vacancies confirmed to be sent out. Will add on weekly Schools update email. HNB Monitoring Group interest to be shared at next Forum meeting for meeting to be scheduled	JR CE/JR SB/JR SB/JR
13	Future Meeting Dates Thursday 13 November 2025 (tbc) Face to Face 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 Thursday 10 September 2026 (tbc) MS Teams	
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