Shropshire Council

Schools Forum	Paper
Date:22 January 2026 Time: 08.00 to 10.30 Venue: MS Teams	**A** Public

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

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

1	**Apologies**	
	Apologies received from Stephen Matthews (stepped down), Neil Bentley (at Council). Forum expressed gratitude to Stephen Matthews for his long service. Samantha Bradley to update and circulate vacancies after Stephen Matthew's departure.	
2	**Minutes and Matters Arising**	
	The minutes from 11 September 2025 were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting.	
3	**Opening to Meeting**	
	Minutes and Matters Arising: The draft letter regarding structural change in SEND funding deferred until more detail is available from the DfE and after the next DSG management subgroup meeting in spring. Ongoing appeal for members to join the High Needs Monitoring Group, which will focus on strategies to address the £41 million high needs deficit. Noted that the group is open to all forum members and has been promoted through the Education Partnership Board and SEND/AP Partnership Board.	
4	**National Funding Formula (NFF) and School Block Allocations** John Rowe presented an update on the NFF for 2026-27:	**JR**

	DfE delayed publication of the funding formula until autumn 2025; allocations for schools and Central School Services Block announced, but high needs allocations are still pending. Shropshire's primary unit of funding: £5,963 per pupil; secondary: £7,196 per pupil, both increased from previous year. School block allocation will be determined using these units and the 2025 census data; expected to be affordable but subject to confirmation after running the local formula. Forum approved the outlined funding arrangements for NFF, with the caveat that if the formula proves unaffordable, a further meeting will be convened in January. Voting eligibility clarified: all forum members except local authority and observers. Quorum confirmed with 13 eligible voters.	
5	**Block Transfer to High Needs Block** John Rowe and Samantha explained the context and options for transferring up to 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block: Shropshire faces a £41 million high needs deficit, driven by increased EHCPs, top-up funding, and independent special school placements. Last year, 0.28% (£620k) was transferred after school allocations; this year, the proposal was to consider transferring the full 0.5% (£1.1m) either before or after allocations. Discussion highlighted the complexity of the Authority Pro Forma Tool (APT) and the importance of understanding the impact on individual schools, especially those protected by the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG). Concerns raised about the disproportionate impact on smaller schools and the need for transparency before making a decision. Decision: Defer final decision until January, when the APT is available and modelling can be shared. Forum agreed to transfer up to 0.5% of any remaining balance after fully funding schools, as in previous years. If the formula is affordable and a surplus remains, it will be transferred to high needs without the need for another meeting; otherwise, a special meeting will be convened.	**JR/SB**

6	**Delegation and Top Slicing of DSG for Maintained Schools** Samantha presented the results of the maintained schools' consultation on de-delegation and top-slicing: 52% response rate, more than double the previous year. 21 Mark Rogers (Head Oxon) was the only eligible voter present and voted in line with the majority for each item. Results: • Pupil growth contingency: 57% for, 43% against (closest vote). • Maternity: 89% for. • Trade union duties: 86% for. • School improvement: 93% for. • Redundancy: 82% for. • Statutory school finance: 96% for. • HR/Health & Safety: 96% for. • Education access: 82% for. Approach to consultation deemed successful and to be repeated next year. .	**SW/JR**
7	**Central School Services Block (CSSB)** Stephen Waters presented the CSSB allocations and context: CSSB funds central functions for all state-funded schools, including historic commitments (termination of employment, prudential borrowing) and ongoing responsibilities admissions, forum servicing, copyright licences, statutory duties). Historic commitments provisionally reduced by 20% but expected to be protected at previous levels after appeal to ESFA. Ongoing responsibilities increased by 10.9% but offset by rolled-in grants, resulting in no real increase. Forum approved all proposals for both historic and ongoing responsibilities. Noted that if forum did not approve, funds could not be repurposed and would remain in DSG balances; statutory duties would still need to be delivered by the authority	**SW**
8	**Communications and Next Steps**	**JR**

	John Rowe to circulate a date for the next DSG management subgroup and to co-produce a letter to the DfE regarding Shropshire's needs. 29 Officers to monitor national developments on high needs and funding, especially in light of possible changes to deficit management. 30 Next meeting planned for January (date to be confirmed based on APT release and DfE deadlines) to finalize the block transfer decision. 31 Additional detail to be provided at next meeting on other funding streams supporting schools (e.g., GSP, inclusion grants).	
11	**Follow Up Tasks** **Update and Circulate Vacancies** –to update the list of forum vacancies (and circulate for expressions of interest after Christmas. **High Needs Monitoring Group Recruitment** – to continue appealing for members to join the High Needs Monitoring Group and add to relevant board agendas. **Model Block Transfer Scenarios** –to model the impact of transferring 0.5% of the Schools Block to High Needs both before and after allocations, using the APT when available. **Schedule January Meeting** – to confirm and circulate the date for a special Schools Forum meeting in January to finalize the block transfer decision, based on APT release and DfE deadlines. **Notify Forum of APT Receipt** – to notify forum members as soon as the APT is received and provide a timeline for modelling and decision-making. **Provide Additional Funding Details** – to prepare a breakdown of additional funding streams (e.g., GSP, inclusion grants) for the next meeting. **DSG Management Subgroup** – John to circulate a date for the next DSG management subgroup meeting and coordinate co-production of a letter to the DfE. **Monitor National Developments** – to keep forum updated on national policy changes regarding high needs and DSG deficits.	 SB JR SB SM/JR SB JR JR JR/DS

	Repeat Consultation Approach – to repeat the successful approach to maintained schools' consultation for de-delegation/top-slicing next year.	JR/SB
13	**Future Meeting Dates** 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 Thursday 12 November 2026 (tbc) Face to Face	