

Warwickshire Schools Forum

Minutes of the Meeting on 5 December 2019

Northgate House Conference Centre, Warwick, 13:00 – 15:30

Attendance

School Forum Members	
Peter Reaney (Vice Chair)	Rugby High School (Academy)
Alison Bardsley	Communities Academies Trust (Academy)
Alison Davies	The Avon Valley School (Maintained)
April Gold	Coventry C of E Diocese Representative
Christine Marshall	Exall Grange Special School (Maintained)
Fergus Durrant	Campion School (Academy Governor)
Martin Davies	Telford Junior School (Maintained Governor)
Nicci Burton	Atherstone & Bedworth Heath Nursery Schools (Maintained)
Philip Johnson	Whitestone Infant (Maintained Governor)
Rebecca Harrison	Thorns and Park Hill (Maintained)
Sarah Bromley	PVI representative
Officers/Observers	
Cllr Colin Hayfield	Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools
Purnima Sherwood	Service Manager for Finance
Virginia Rennie	Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)
Hayley Good	Education & Early Years Strategy & Commissioning Manager
Jane Carter	SEND 0-25 Strategy & Commissioning Manager
Neill Butler (Clerk)	Schools Funding & Strategy Manager
Emma Basden-Smith	School Organisation & Planning Manager
Becky Robinson	Principal Accountant

1. Apologies & Resignations

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Mark McGillicuddy	Woodlands School/Unity MAT (Special Academy Governor)
Nick Wylie	Cubbington Primary School (Maintained Governor)
James Higham	Henry Hinde Infant/Junior School (Academy)
Simon Lomax	Nuneaton Academy (Academy)
Clive Sentence	Alcester Grammar (Academy)
Chris Atkins	Chetwynd Junior School (Maintained Governor)
Jane Burrows (Chair)	Myton School (Academy)
Amy Woodward	North Leamington School (Academy)
Julie Forshev	Nathaniel Newton Infant School (Maintained)
Matthew Bown	St. Paul's CofE Primary School (Maintained)
Steve Jefferies	Henley-in-Arden School (Academy)
Sybil Hanson	Coventry C of E Diocese Representative
Tricia Wellings	PVI representative

Apologies were received from the following Officer/Observers:

Ian Budd	Assistant Director – Education Services
Richard Ennis	Assistant Director (Interim) - Finance

The following members did not attend and did not give their apologies:

Adam Hardy	Catholic Church Archdiocese
Eileen Hunter	Teachers' Union Representative

Peter Reaney chaired the meeting in the absence of Jane Burrows.

Peter Reaney informed members that Purnima Sherwood would need to leave the meeting at 2:00 pm.

Since the October 2019 meeting Andrew Smith - Bishopton Primary School (Maintained) has resigned from Schools Forum.

Peter Reaney confirmed that we would continue to hold elections in March 2020 for Schools Forum members rather than undertaking elections now for the vacancies.

Peter Reaney asked if it was possible to get a schedule of which members have or have not attended recent meetings.

Action: Neill Butler to produce a list for next Schools Forum.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

One amendment to the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting on 17 October 2019.

The word 'no' was inserted into the line 'Also, this is one-off funding with **no** guarantees for the future, so important that the T&F group presses on' which is on page 7 of the minutes.

Action: Neill Butler to amend the minute.

3. Update on Matters Arising

Neill Butler went through the update.

The following issues were raised on item 6.2 the movement of 0.5% funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

Alison Bardsley noted that there should be a process to be adhered to.

Virginia Rennie confirmed that a paper is going to Cabinet 16 December 2019. A provisional disapplication has been put submitted to the ESFA. There will be consultation with schools and the January Schools Forum. If the Local authority and Schools Forum agree to the 0.5% movement then it will place. If the Local Authority still propose to go ahead with the movement of 0.5% without Schools Forum agreement then it will be up to the Secretary of State to make the final decision. Plans are in place to consult with schools and this should start before Christmas

Peter Reaney noted that did this 2 years ago and Schools Forum were unanimous is saying no to the 0.5% movement. Consultation with Schools wasn't unanimous. Only 38 responded. 18 for and 20 against.

Jane Carter provided some background to this issue. DfE did consultation on this, but due to purdah we don't know outcome. Means that Local Authority won't be able to bail out High Needs deficit in the future and therefore the Schools Block could be used to support this deficit. The High Needs Block is already in deficit to the tune of £4.3m and the forecast for next year is £8.2m. Jane also said that for 2019/20 the Local Authority has only been allocated an additional £4.8m rather than the £7m we were hoping for.

Alison Bardsley and Rebecca Harrison both stated that the planned consultation would need to be before 17 January. They both asked when is there the time to do this? Alos low response rate from last time suggests won't get much response.

Peter Reaney said he was surprised by low response rate from 2 years ago and would emphasise how important it is to vote on such a big movement of funds

Rebecca Harrison said Government needs to see the size of the issue and movements between blocks will mask this.

Peter Reaney said if we move the funds, pupil rate will need to change and will be moving away from National Funding Formula which goes against Schools Forum earlier decision.

Alison Bardsley stated that for maintained schools this would affect them from April 2020 and does not give them much time to manage any fall in funding. Alison went on to say this would impact the growth fund and would squeeze that further.

Peter summarised that it appears unlikely that Schools Forum would move from the position 2 years.

Alison Bardsley stated is it better that we are forced to do Deficit Recovery Plan to address the High Needs shortfall.

Cllr Hayfield asked who in the meantime would fund the High Needs deficit? County Council can't keep funding the deficit.

Alison Bardsley said either the funding is efficiently spent or Government needs to provide more funds.

Nicci Burton asked what was grounds that WCC got lower than anticipated amount.

Jane Carter replied the only thing in our favour in the allocation is DLA payments.

Peter Reaney said we can't have situation where DfE gives schools funding with one hand and then takes away from other. Already 32 LAs with Deficit Recovery Plans and this likely to increase and we are very close to the 1% threshold.

7. 2019/20 DSG Monitoring Report

Purnima Sherwood presented the report.

Purnima explained the changes since the last report was presented to Schools Forum in October 2019.

Rebecca Harrison was surprised at the overspend on the Early Years block when it was showing an underspend last time.

Purnima said she would be able to give an update on this at the next meeting, but it would be a first call on the £162,000 underspend from 2018/19.

Action: Purnima Sherwood to bring more clarity around the early years position to next Schools Forum.

4. De-delegation of Schools Block budget 2020/21

Neill Butler presented the report.

Neill noted that the per pupil rates have not changed since last year; but anticipate that the numbers on roll will increase; therefore, income received by the de-delegated services is expected to go up by a small amount.

There were 3 maintained primary school representative and 1 maintained secondary school representative who were eligible to vote.

The votes were as follows:

Primary Schools

Free School Meal Eligibility – Yes 3
English as an Additional Language -Yes 2 & No 1
Trade Union Facility Time Funding - Yes 3
School Improvement – Yes 3
Gypsy and Romany Travellers – Yes 3
Behaviour Support Services – Yes 2 & No 1
Medical Referrals for Employees – Yes 3

Secondary Schools

Free School Meal Eligibility – Yes 1
English as an Additional Language -Yes 1
Trade Union Facility Time Funding - Yes 1

Therefore de-delegation for all services would continue for 20120/21.

5. Special School Funding 2020/21

Neill Butler presented the report.

Neill said that historically the authority had used 2 Census points and it was now proposed to use just 1 census point. So for 2020/21 budgets we would use October 2019 census data.

There are only 3 maintained Special Schools.

Neill explained the modelling in the paper benefits those schools with increases in pupil roll and decrease in pupil roll would mean less funding

Rebecca Harrison asked for confirmation that the consultation would start tomorrow.

Schools Forum unanimously vote in favour of going to consultation with the 3 maintained Special Schools.

Neill Butler confirmed that consultation will start with 3 maintained SS

Action: Neill Butler to consult with all 3 maintained special schools.

6. Growth Fund 2020/21

Emma Basden-Smith introduced the report.

The report covers Growth for pupils and pre and post opening costs of new schools.

Changed criteria throughout the different methods.

Changes are in response to feedback, especially in relation to additional in-year additional classes and agreeing to fund classes for the length of time the pupils in the age cohort in the school.

Funding will only be provided if the school does not fill the class. Applies to all age groups and for new schools and increases the number of classes.

Rebecca Harrison raised a query regarding underwriting of costs and whether we are subsidising costs the DfE should be meeting.

Second change is to deduct the DfE grant for new schools off our allocation of pre-opening costs

Estimated costs in 2020/21 £1.9m which is an increase from 2019/20 as there is secondary growth we are having to pay for – 10 secondary schools will receive funding.

Estimates are conservative for protection funding for in-year classes this year but would help this is not needed.

Alison Bardsley said she would abstain from the vote as her trust currently receiving significant amounts of this funding and will apply for more funding.

Jane Burrows in an email had queried recommendation d and a reply will be sent to explain that the growth Fund is not a top slice of the Schools Block DSG so any funding would have to come after the National Funding Formula had been calculated.

April Gold was concerned about the impact of limiting the growth fund on schools.

Rebecca Harrison raised concerns that she did not understand what is being voted on. Would like to understand before voting on what is a critical issue.

Emma Basden-Smith went through the proposals again to explain the figures and why the costs had increased from 2019/20.

Sarah Bromley queried why has the budget gone up.

Emma Basden-Smith explained that it was because on increased need.

Various members raised concerns about the interaction between the Growth Fund and moving 0.5% from the schools block to the high needs block.

Voting took place on the four recommendations.
The numbers are in the order of Yes, No and Abstentions

- a. Proposed revision to the pupil growth funding criteria - 8/0/2
- b. Proposed revisions to the new school pre-opening funding – 7/0/2
- c. Estimated growth funding required for 2020/21 to support pupil growth in existing provision and the opening of new provision – 5/0/5
- d. Where there is insufficient funding to support allocations described in this report, the level of protection funding for schools will be scaled back accordingly – 3/0/7

8. SEND Capital Update

Jane Carter presented this report.

Jane said this was a positive report as it is about additional money.

The plan was to expand specialist resourced provision. It was a slow start but is now speeding up. 70 children now educated in such provision. Peer review is very positive about the special resource provision.

Rebecca Harrison said that due to issue with a washdown facility at one of her schools someone from Jane Carter's team needed to come back on sight more frequently to check what has been do.

Jane commented that she was not happy with some contractors doing this work any more. Work will in future all be done by a single contractor with experience in this area.

Philip Johnson asked if we have estimates of the cost saving/Return On Investment for this type of work?

Jane Carter said no, but we do know it would be significant given the headline costs.

Rebecca Harrison said the work was very good as provision can be extended to more than one pupil.

Jane Carter said investment is for mainstream schools and academies but when is complete the facility should be maintained.

Nicci Burton enquired if this only applies to schools age children. Jane Carter said they were looking to extend provision to the early years sector.

9. Warwickshire Schools Admission Service

Hayley Good went through the report

Report is from meeting just before Schools Forum October meeting. Another meeting planned before January meeting

Two working groups – Schools Forum WG on Admissions and Internal WCC WG to look at internal processes.

Significant improvements to on-line access via website and smart phone interaction.

Focus of the introduction was on the next steps

Highlighted that our Legal Advisor is off sick and therefore there has been no response in relation to the legal position and taking the rebate further.

Alison Bardsley highlighted 2 aspects for the service. LA responsibility and then where the service is provided to other bodies responsible for admissions. Alison suggested there should be an SLA to ensure deliver on performance measures.

Hayley – strategic level meetings with most of those who have their own admissions responsibility. Not specifically focussed on admissions but does focus on catchment areas which is linked

Philip Johnson ask if there been consultation with parents about new arrangements

Hayley said no but will take that suggestion away. Hayley said she would also look at the split between those who move schools in September and those who transfer in year.

Action: Hayley Good to look at consultation with parents over the new arrangements.

10. Assistant Director's Update

Hayley Good said the only issue was that Ian Budd was absent from the meeting as he was presenting Education Service restructure proposals to the Transformation Board this afternoon.

Hayley said once it was in place an organisation chart with brief roles would be circulated to Schools Forum.

Action: Hayley Good to circulate an organisation chart once the Educations Services reorganisation had been completed.

11. Forward Plan

Neill Butler presented the forward plan.

Neill has taken the comments from Schools Forum and the May meeting is now in and still gives time for Schools Forum to be consulted on a DSG Deficit Recovery Plan by the end of June if required.

The October meeting is now much early in the month so it is not so close to the December meeting.

12. Chair's Business

There were no additional items of Chair's business.

Time and Date of the Next School's Forum

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, Thursday 16th January 2020, Northgate House Conference Centre, Warwick