

Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 9 March, 2021 at 4.00 p.m.

Digital Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulation 2020; and conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Schools Forum Members Present:

Mr. M. Vlahakis (Chair)	-	Primary Head Teacher
Dr. A. Bruton (Vice Chair)	-	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mrs M. Sheehy	-	Primary Head Teacher
Mrs C. Draper	-	Primary Head Teacher
Mrs J. Garrett	-	Primary Head Teacher
Mr. M. Moody	-	Primary Academy Representative
Mrs S. Bowen	-	Secondary Head Teacher
Mrs H. Keenan	-	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mr. A. Seager	-	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mr. B. Downie	-	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mrs L. Foster	-	Primary Governor
Mr. C. Bury	-	Alternative Provision School Principal
Mr. S. Pritchard-Jones	-	Pupil Referral Unit Head Teacher
Mrs M. Turley	-	Nursery Head Teacher
Councillor C. Towe	(Observer) - Portfolio Holder Education and Skills	(Observer)
Mr. A. Orlik	(Observer) – C of E Diocese	
Ms S. Guy	(Observer) – National Education Union	

Officers Present:

Mrs S. Kelly – Director, Access & Inclusion
 Mr. L. Haynes – Corporate Finance Manager
 Mr. A. Webley – SEND Team Manager
 Mr. R. Walley - Tech Acc, Treasury Management & Education Finance Manager
 Mrs B. Mycock – Democratic Services Officer/Clerk to Schools Forum

		Action
1. 09.03.21	Welcome The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining and rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information System (CMIS) webpage.	

	Members confirmed they could both see and hear the proceedings.	
2. 09.03.21	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies had been received on behalf of Mr. S. Davies, Mrs N. Boys, Mr. M. Fox, Mr. I. Baker and Mrs C. Fraser.</p>	
3. 09.03.21	<p>Minutes – 12 January, 2021</p> <p>The Clerk put the recommendation to the vote by way of a roll call of Forum members and it was:</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2021, a copy having been previously circulated to each Member of Schools Forum, be approved and signed as a true record, subject to page 6 of the minutes that should have read 'AWPU'.</p>	To note
4. 09.03.21	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes of 12 January, 2021</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</p>	
5. 09.03.21	<p>Late Item/s (urgent) to be introduced by the Chairman</p> <p>There were no late items.</p>	
6. 09.03.21	<p>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</p> <p>The Forum noted that there were no items for consideration in the private session.</p>	
7. 09.03.21	<p>EHCP Performance Framework</p> <p>The report of the SEND Team Manager, Mr. Webley had been submitted (see annexed).</p> <p>The report provided an update to Schools Forum on the current position regarding EHCP timeliness and performance, highlighting the mitigating actions taken to reduce backlogs and areas of improvement.</p>	

	<p>A query was raised as to whether there had been any impact on timeliness for annual reviews due to the capacity that had been taken-up on EHCPs. Mr. Webley advised that contingency plans had been put into place in relation to capacity and evidence that the gaps were closing would be provided in due course. The data would be collated and provided to future School Forum meetings.</p> <p>The Director - Access & Inclusion, Mrs Sharon Kelly stated that the annual review concerns had been raised and additional resources had been approved for a three-month plan to address the backlog due to Covid. The numbers in relation to Covid related late paperwork or reviews not yet carried out was 839. The total may potentially be between 1200 and 1400 annual reviews.</p> <p>A member enquired as to whether there was any comparative data in relation to EHC plans from other local authorities with a similar make-up to Walsall. In response, Mr. Webley confirmed that Walsall did have comparative data from other local authorities and this was being monitored. Nationally Walsall was in line with its neighbouring authorities. He stated that the comparative data would be included in future reports to the Forum.</p> <p>Further to a question in relation to when the postponed local area SEND assurance visits would be rescheduled, Mrs Kelly advised that the local authority had received no indication at that time as to when or if the visits would continue. Currently discussions were being held with returning schools and with Ofsted as to how they develop going forward. Should further information be received, it would be forwarded to members.</p> <p>In closing, Mrs Kelly reiterated that with regard to the Annual Review and the increase in EHCPs, the local authority was preparing a business case for the increase to the EHCP Assessment Team. When the new plans become live there was an awareness that increased support would be required going forward.</p> <p>A SEND Improvement Programme update and an EHCP Timelines and Performance Update report to be separate standing items on the forward plan. Mr Webley advised he would provide a SEND Improvement update to members prior to the next meeting.</p> <p>Resolved (by assent):</p>	
--	--	--

	That Schools Forum noted the contents and developments shown within the report.	
8. 09.03.21	<p>Proposed Early Years Funding Formula for Two, Three and Four Year Olds 2021/22</p> <p>The report of the Service Manager-School & Early Years Finance was submitted to the Forum. The report set out the allocation of the Early Years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding that the Council receive to the early years providers in Walsall (annexed).</p> <p>The Chair received confirmation that members had read the report. He then opened up the item for discussion.</p> <p>A query was raised in relation to the proportion of the Disability Access Fund and the SEN Inclusion Fund that was spent? The Corporate Finance Manager, Mr. Lloyd Haynes advised that the Disability Access Fund (DAF) had always been spent in full. The DAF funding would be provided to the individual schools to support their respective children. The SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) was a new requirement that had been introduced around two years ago and that within the funding formula overall, Walsall had tracked how much to allocate each year and all of the funding had been allocated. Over last few years, the local authority had been allocating to providers and schools to support children with additional needs in full. So much so that in the first year we had to try and support the call on that area from the High Needs Block for two year olds as an overprovision against the High Needs Block.</p> <p>The Chair enquired whether the impact upon standalone nurseries was mapped. Mr. Haynes advised ongoing work was being carried out with maintained nursery schools for 2021/22. The local authority received a definitive amount of money specifically to support maintained nursery schools from within the early years block as detailed in Table 1 of the report. Ongoing discussions at Government level had advised that the funding would continue after 2021/22. Mr. Haynes further added that the local authority was working with nurseries to look at their 3 year funding position and a wider meeting with all maintained nursery schools to look at future options would be arranged in due course.</p> <p>With regard to contingency funding for two year olds having missed their nursery provision due to Covid difficulties, the Director, Access & Achievement, Mrs Kelly advised that potential catch-up funding would be available for the children who did not meet the criteria for SEN funding.</p>	

	<p>Mr. Haynes advised members that SENIF funding of £70k for 3 & 4 year olds and £20k for 2 year olds was to target children with lower or emerging levels of SEN prior to an EHCP request and therefore in totality there were smaller amounts of money compared to High Needs Block. Should more money be required than had been assumed within the funding formula, there may be the flexibility to seek further funding from the High Needs Block.</p> <p>A member referred to section 4.12 of the report and the £500k retained budget previously approved by Schools Forum to provide central services in support of the early years entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. In response to whether the Forum should be advised on where the money would be spent, Mr. Haynes stated that the £500k level for those central services had remained at the same level for around six years and no increase in the funding had been requested. The funding was mainly utilised on staffing related costs and ensuring the adequacy of provision. A report providing a breakdown of spend in relation to the services team provides and work carried out in terms of co-ordinating places to be provided for next meeting.</p> <p>Resolved (unanimous by roll-call)</p> <p>That Schools Forum:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Noted the work undertaken by officers and recommends the Early Years Funding Formula that is proposed for 2021/22 to cabinet. Noted that the recommendation would then be reported to Cabinet on 17th March, 2021 to seek their approval. 	<p>Quality Assurance Team Manager to provide a report to the next meeting giving details of the work that is provided by this funding.</p>
<p>9. 09.03.21</p>	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>Resolved (unanimous by assent)</p> <p>That the following items to be added to the Forward Plan for future meetings:-</p> <p><u>Meeting June 22nd, 2021</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Years – report to provide details of the work that is provided by the Central Expenditure on Early Years Entitlement funding. <p><u>Forward Plan Standing Items:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEND Improvement Programme Update EHCP Timelines and Performance Update 	

10. 09.03.21	Late Items There were no late items for consideration.	
11. 09.03.21	Correspondence There was no items of correspondence.	
	Date and Time of next meeting The next meeting of Schools Forum is scheduled for Tuesday 22 June, 2021 commencing at 4.00pm.	

The meeting terminated at 16.30pm.

Signed

Date: