

Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 6th December, 2016 at 4.00 p.m. at Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Road, Blakenall, Walsall

Present:- Dr. A. Bruton (Vice Chairman) in the Chair
Mrs C. Draper
Mrs M. Sheehy
Ms T. Coles
Miss H. Keenan
Mrs C. Fraser
Mrs B.E Westwood
Mrs G. Healy
Mr F. Hodgkinson
Mr. S. Pritchard-Jones
Mr R. Bragger
Mr. A. Orlik

In Attendance:- Mrs. L. Poole – Assistant Director - Access & Achievement
Mr. L. Haynes - Education Finance
Ms D. Morris – Education Finance
Mrs J. Bonner – Children's Services
Ms C. Goss – Head of SEND and Inclusion
Ms I. Vanderharan – Children's Services
Mrs C. Guest –
Mrs K. Mann – Children's Services
Mrs N. Hart –
Ms P. Paul – Human Resources
Mrs B. Mycock – Legal and Democratic Services

		Action
35. 06.12.16	Minutes – 11th October, 2016 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 th October, 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.	
36. 06.12.16	Matters arising from the minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reference 22 – Universal School Meals information request included as item 11 on this agenda• Reference 22 - a letter of appreciation was signed by the Vice Chair to be sent to the previous clerk, Glenys Ensor• Reference 28 – Apprenticeship Levy and Balance Control Mechanisms information requests included as items 7 & 15 on this agenda• Reference 29 – Early Help in Walsall information request included as item 9 on this agenda• Reference 32 – CLEAPSS information request included as item 8 on this agenda	

37. 06.12.16	Apologies Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. M. Vlahakis (Chair), Dame M. Brennan, Mr. S. Davies, Miss L. Emery, Mrs M. Yates, Mr. B. Powell and Mr. I. Baker	.
38. 06.12.16	Late Items (urgent) to be introduced by the Chairman There were no late items.	
39. 06.12.16	Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended) There were no items for consideration in private session	
40. 06.12.16	Apprenticeship Levy A report was submitted to provide an update on the Council's position in respect of the Apprenticeship Levy, which is due to come into fruition from April 2017, and how it would be administered locally. Ms Paul outlined the contents of the report and highlighted the Government's recently published draft funding rules and the stipulations imposed in accessing the funding, which the Government was aiming to finalise by December, 2016. Ms Paul advised that a representative from the Schools Forum was sought for the Council's Apprenticeship Levy Working Group to determine how schools are affected and how they would be able to access the levy. The Chair enquired of the time commitment required of a representative. In response, Ms Paul stated it was unclear at that present time but she would report back at the next meeting. Resolved i) to note the report; ii) to await further information with regard to the approximate time requirement of a Schools Forum representative onto the Council's Apprenticeship Levy working group.	Ms Paul to provide clarity re: time commitment expectations

<p>41. 06.12.16</p>	<p>Council Budget Saving Proposals 2017/18 – Cessation of Retirement Awards</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Ms Paul outlined the report which sought feedback to the proposed cessation of the Retirement Award Scheme by 9th January, 2017 as detailed within the report. A discussion ensued and it was recognised that only a small number of staff would be affected by the cessation of their retirement award compared in comparison with the total savings which equated to approximately £26,000 or a salary and it was:-</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That Schools Forum was in agreement to the proposed cessation of the Retirement Award Scheme with effect from 1st April 2017.</p>	
<p>42. 06.12.16</p>	<p>SEN Update</p> <p>Ms Goss gave a verbal update and advised Forum Members of the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Statements of Special Educational Needs (SENs) to be transferred to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) before 21.03.18 - 820 statements still to be carried out • Timescales – up to 35% and rising in the right direction and hopefully reaching National Average by new year • Almost 100% response to requests • Walsall Plan long and complicated – met with parents and SENCO cluster to share plan and hope to consult wider in the new year to reflect young people’s needs • Commission Special School Places – all Special Needs Heads along with Primary and Nursery Heads met before consultation. Likely will need to commission special school places – looking at existing schools for places • Special Assessment Management Post plus Education Psychologists posts to be advertised in the New Year. Utilising agency staff at present but concerns raised regarding a National shortage of EP staff, of which the DfE had been made aware of <p>Mr Orlik expressed concern in relation to the high turnover of EP’s in Walsall. The Chair confirmed the issue was not unique to Walsall.</p>	

<p>43. 06.12.16</p>	<p>CLEAPSS</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mrs Bonner outlined the background to CLEAPSS and the implication of schools choosing not to de-delegate the DSG License Budget that funded annual membership of CLEAPSS on behalf of Walsall Schools. Mrs Bonner reported that subsequent to the publication of the agenda papers, a third recommendation has been added. The recommendations for consideration were:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Walsall Council administers CLEAPSS membership for all Walsall schools and academies but absorbs the administration cost of raising invoices and re-charging schools by charging a rate mid way between the lower and higher rates (estimated at 18p per pupil) 2) Each school subscribes to CLEAPSS independently, paying more than twice the current per pupil rate. The Council believes this option could lead to significant risk if some schools choose not to subscribe 3) A small budget was available to pay for the Council's schools for one year only; all other primary academies, voluntary aided or foundation schools to finance from their own budgets. <p>Mrs Bonner expressed concern with regards to academies who had not taken up CLEAPSS membership and she added that should any academy, voluntary aided or foundation school wish to join CLEAPSS through Walsall Council's membership, the Health and Safety Team would honour and charge the reduced cost of 18p per pupil as compared to the 25p per pupil charge if schools subscribe separately.</p> <p>Mr Bragger also expressed concern in terms of risk and that all schools needed to obtain the best advice. This was echoed by the Chair who added the importance of using CLEAPSS, and she confirmed that WASH members already subscribed to the service.</p> <p>In response to a number of questions raised, Mrs Bonner reported that she would request the report author to include a detailed note on 'The Link' website.</p>	<p>Mrs Bonner to include item on The Link</p>
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	<p>Resolved</p> <p>That Walsall Council administers CLEAPSS membership for all Walsall schools and academies but absorbs the administration cost of raising invoices and re-charging schools by charging a rate mid way between the lower and higher rates, estimated at 18p per pupil.</p>	
<p>44. 06.12.16</p>	<p>Early Help in Walsall</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Ms Vanderrharan outlined the key points within the report to provide School Forum with the progress and impact to date on the development of an effective locality based Early Help approach aligned to school cluster arrangements, which included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the pilot had provided an opportunity for 10 schools to undertake training • 95 schools are in regular contact with Early Help Advisors and leaflets are available to those that are not • The development of 4 Integrated Partnership Panels to identify families in need of help working well • Unspent monies to be profiled to continue role and support until July 2018 • Planning greater focus of supervision support and locality panel discussion around early identification of children at risk of exclusions • All schools to be visited during January 2017 to ascertain needs. <p>The Chair stated she hoped Early Help would provide additional capacity to teachers</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the information be noted.</p>	
<p>45. 06.12.16</p>	<p>Responding to Increasing School Exclusions</p> <p>Ms Guest gave a verbal presentation on the above titled item, which had been omitted from the agenda. Ms Guest advised Schools Forum their views were sought on the proposal to align resources using the capacity available in the high needs block and enable a multi-agency response designed to recognise risk factors early on for an early response, which was designed to address the increasing trend of permanent exclusions. She advised Schools Forum the report would be forwarded to them as part of the consultation.</p>	

	<p>The Chair enquired when the consultation period ended. Mr Haynes (Finance Manager) informed Schools Forum the consultation needed to be completed quickly to enable the Council to utilise the surplus funding from the Higher Needs budget.</p> <p>The Chair requested that the report be included as an item on the January agenda for further discussion.</p>	<p>The Clerk to forward report to Schools Forum members.</p> <p>Ms. Guest to bring item to January meeting</p>
<p>46. 06.12.16</p>	<p>Admissions Service Update</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mrs Mann outlined the key functions of the team contained within the report and emphasised a number of key developments as highlighted within the report which included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i). a 'Parents Guide to Online Admissions' booklet (using screen shots) has been produced which would be reviewed on an annual basis; ii) Fair Access Protocol – the secondary school protocol had been Implemented albeit was still under development; the primary protocol would be published in the next week iii) the publication of the Council's 5 year strategy document which illustrates the demand for pupil places across the borough and outlines the Council's plans / solutions to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet the projected demand. <p>Mr Orlik stated the 5 year strategy was positive but it highlighted schools were suffering from a lack of school places. In response, Mrs Mann clarified there were difficulties nationwide due to the unprecedented and un-projectable need for primary places, due to both a rise in the birth rate and also the significant migration into the Black Country, particularly over the last twelve months, with the demand for mid-year places a particular issue.</p> <p>In response to a query from Mrs Poole as to the end date of the consultation period, Mrs Mann confirmed the consultation period would end mid January with publication during the spring term.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the contents of the report be noted.</p>	

47. 06.12.16	Universal Infant Free School Meals Mrs Poole informed Schools Forum of £34k remaining in the Universal Infant Free School Meals budget and that to date she had received 2 x formal expressions of interest and 2 x possible expressions of interest. She advised the date for last bids was early next week and that the money should be allocated early in the new year.	All
48. 06.12.16	Update on Early Years Funding Formula Review This item to be included on the January agenda	Dawn Morris
49. 06.12.16	Update on High Needs Funding Formula Review This item to be included on the January agenda	Dawn Morris
50. 06.12.16	Review of Current Balance Control Mechanisms A report was submitted. Mr Haynes outlined the contents of the report regarding the current position for the level of maintained schools balances in comparison to the existing balance control mechanism, making particular reference to section 4 of the report entitled 'Current Position'. He highlighted the average levels of uncommitted balances to the end of 2015/16 and reported there were only 2 maintained schools which had breached the 8% level and had seen funding clawback. Discussions ensued around the information pertaining to Academies. In response, the Chair stated all information should be accessible on either the individual schools or academy's websites or on the multi academy chains websites. Resolved i) The Schools Forum noted that given the information set out in the report, there does not currently appear to be any evidence to support a need to amend the existing balance control mechanism levels ii) The Schools Forum noted that, as set out in the EFA's document 'Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities', any changes to the scheme should be proposed by the local authority, however given the lack of evidence to support the need for a change the Local Authority does not currently seek to propose any changes.	

<p>51. 06.12.16</p>	<p>Review of Local Government Pension Scheme Past Service Pension Costs Allocation</p> <p>A report and a supplementary paper containing worked examples of past pension charges was submitted.</p> <p>Mr Haynes outlined the current position for past service pension costs relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) only, and the potential approaches for allocating these costs to individual schools and he highlighted section 4.5 of the report which referred to the current allocation method plus two potential, alternative options for allocation, along with their comparative costs to the current allocation methodology :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) a revised method based on a level allocation per school against the total in budget (assuming a charge of 3.63% of income budget per school) ii) a revised method based on a differing level of allocation per school against the total in budget based on a sliding scale allocation for differing incomes. <p>Mr Haynes explained how the current method placed a proportionally higher burden upon Nursery and Special schools due to their higher staffing per pupil ratios compared to their overall budget than on primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>The Chair stated she did not feel she was in a position to make judgement due to her school's differing staffing policies and needs but she felt a fuller picture was required.</p> <p>Mr Haynes stated the costs would have to be passed on to schools but he added there was no immediate deadline in which to make the decision before the 2017/18 school year and therefore the report and supplementary paper could be deferred until the January meeting to include additional information relating to differing school sizes, ie. small primary school compared to a large primary school.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the report be deferred to the January meeting.</p>	<p>L. Haynes</p>
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52. 06.12.16	Forward Plan The Forward Plan was submitted. Resolved That the Forward Plan be noted.	
53. 06.12.16	Late Items Mrs Poole advised the School Forum that Walsall had been named positively in Ofsted's 'Education and Skills Annual Report 2015/16' report as highlighted in the Walsall Children's Services Update Link and she asked Forum members to pass on the positive comments to all their colleagues.	All
53. 06.12.16	Correspondence There was no late correspondence.	
	Date and time of next meeting It was NOTED that the next meeting of Schools Forum would be held on Tuesday, 10 th January, 2017 at 4.00 p.m. at Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Road, Blakenall, Walsall.	
	The meeting terminated at 5.55 p.m.	
	Signed:	Date: