

## **Schools Forum**

**Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 21 September 2021 at 4.00 pm**

### **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 N. Boys	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mr C. Bury	–	Alternative Provision School Principal
Mr S. Davies	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mr B. Downie	–	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mrs C. Draper	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mr M. Fox	–	Primary Governor
Mrs J. Garrett	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mr T. Hopkins	–	PVI Representative
Mrs H. Keenan	–	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mrs E. Phillips	–	Academy Special School
Mr S. Pritchard-Jones	–	Pupil Referral Unit representative
Mr A. Seager	–	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mrs M. Turley	–	Nursery Head Teacher
Councillor C. Towe	–	Portfolio Holder, Education and Skills (Observer)
Ms S. Guy	–	National Education Union (Observer)
Mr A. Orlik	–	C of E Diocese (Observer)

### **Officers Present:**

Mrs S. Kelly – Director of Access & Inclusion  
Mr S. Hollins – Music Education Manager  
Ms D. Morris – School & Early Years Finance Manager  
Ms T. Pyatt – Head of Inclusion  
Mr R. Thomas – Head of Access  
Mr A. Webley – SEND Team Manager  
Dr P. Fantom – Democratic Services Officer

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1. 21.09.21</b>	<p><b>Election of Chair</b></p> <p>A nomination was made for Mr M. Vlahakis to be appointed as Chair of the Schools Forum for the 2021/22 academic year. The nomination was duly seconded and a vote taken.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That Mr M. Vlahakis be appointed as Chair of the Schools Forum for the 2021/22 academic year.</p>	
<b>2. 21.09.21</b>	<p><b>Election of Vice-Chair</b></p> <p>A nomination was made for Mr A. Seager to be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Schools Forum for the 2021/22 academic year. The nomination was duly seconded and a vote taken.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That Mr A. Seager be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Schools Forum for the 2021/22 academic year.</p>	
<b>3. 21.09.21</b>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Members confirmed they could both see and hear the proceedings.</p>	
<b>4. 21.09.21</b>	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Mr I. Baker, Mr M. Moody, Mrs S. Rowe and Mrs M. Sheehy.</p>	
<b>5. 21.09.21</b>	<p><b>Minutes – 22 June 2021</b></p> <p>The Schools Forum received the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 (see annexed).</p> <p>The Chair put the recommendation to the vote and it was:</p>	

	<p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021, a copy having been previously circulated to each Member of Schools Forum, be approved and signed as a true record, subject to the following amendments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In the list of officers present at the meeting, the inclusion of Ms D. Morris – School &amp; Early Years Finance Manager;</li> <li>2. In the dates of future meetings, the meeting to be held in December 2021 to be amended to read Tuesday, 7 December 2021.</li> </ol>	To note
6. 21.09.21	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes of 22 June 2021</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</p>	
7. 21.09.21	<p><b>Late Item/s (urgent) to be introduced by the Chair</b></p> <p>There were no late items.</p>	
8. 21.09.21	<p><b>Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)</b></p> <p>The Schools Forum noted that there were no items for consideration in the private session.</p>	
9. 21.09.21	<p><b>SEND Improvement Programme Update</b></p> <p>The Schools Forum received a report on the progress being made against the actions in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) document ahead of re-inspection (see annexed).</p> <p>Mr Webley noted that at the Schools Forum's last meeting he had been requested to circulate an updated version of the WSoA. However, as the Local Area Improvement Board was due to be held on 22 September 2021, and the updated WSoA document would be agreed at this meeting, he proposed that it be circulated after this had occurred.</p> <p>Regarding re-inspection, Mrs Kelly advised that inspections had resumed, and local authorities that had not received their first inspection were being prioritised, all re-inspections had occurred in date order. However, it was anticipated that Walsall's re-inspection would be during the autumn term.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	<p>AW to circulate updated WSoA document</p> <p>To note</p>

<p><b>10.</b> <b>21.09.21</b></p>	<p><b>EHCP Timeliness and Performance Update</b></p> <p>The Forum received was a report on the current position regarding EHCP timeliness and performance, which highlighted the mitigating actions being taken to reduce backlogs and areas of improvement (see annexed).</p> <p>In response to a question from the Chair regarding EHCP timeliness, Mr Webley reported that an increase in demand for EHCPs was anticipated because of the pandemic, and whilst additional resource had been approved, the number of applications had exceeded expectation and had an impact on the backlog. This was a nationwide issue, affecting other local authorities, but an appropriate response was being made and Walsall's situation had improved. Councillor Towe also acknowledged his disappointment but assured the Schools Forum that a fully funded plan was in place. Furthermore, Ms Pyatt related the steps being taken to increase the number of SEND caseworkers, with interviews taking place to recruit to the vacant positions.</p> <p>A question having been raised in relation to a questionnaire on educational psychology hours, for which a response from the Council was awaited, further information was requested by Mr Webley so that he could follow this enquiry up and provide an appropriate response.</p> <p>Further to a question regarding the number of EHCPs that exceeded the 20-week timescale, and whether part of the problem had arisen due to schools not providing the information required, Mr Webley pointed out that this was due to the complexity of some cases where specialist provision needed to be arranged. He would re-examine the data and, if this were the case, would share the relevant information.</p> <p>In terms of communication with the SEND team, which it was acknowledged had been problematic and frustrating for head teachers, Mr Webley confirmed that the majority of delayed EHCPs were for children in early years and primary settings. That communications had been an issue was acknowledged by Mrs Kelly, who requested that representatives and head teachers forums provide detail or suggestions that could be used to make improvements. It was noted by Mr Webley that the Council's ICT team had been working to extend telephone migration via Microsoft Teams, as this facility had not been available to all members of the SEND team, and that when completed would improve accessibility and communication.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	<p>AW to investigate and follow up</p> <p>To note</p>
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<p><b>11.</b> <b>21.09.21</b></p>	<p><b>School Music Service: Application for continuation of music funding of £38,000 in 2022/23</b></p> <p>The Schools Forum received the report of the Music Education Manager in relation to the work of the Walsall Music Education Hub &amp; Service in supporting Walsall's schools and young people with music provision and opportunities. The report sought approval from Schools Forum for the continued financial support for the Music Education Hub's activities at Walsall Arena and Arts Centre (see annexed).</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That £38,000 of Schools Forum funding be granted to Walsall Music Education Hub &amp; Service in 2022/23 in line with previous years.</p>	
<p><b>12.</b> <b>21.09.21</b></p>	<p><b>Procurement</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced this item by referring to procurement and the Schools Forum's role and responsibilities, including being consulted on and providing a view on some contracts. It was felt that whilst this had not been done in the past, when procurement matters arose in future the Schools Forum should be consulted in order to be part of the process.</p> <p>Ms Pyatt outlined the corporate procurement processes by which agreements were made with schools and contractors. She noted that there were some long-standing arrangements, which it was now appropriate to review and take through the appropriate procurement route.</p> <p>Further to a question relating to the continuation of a particular service, Mrs Kelly advised that the process had commenced but was at an early stage and a timetable from the procurement team was awaited.</p> <p>In response to an observation from the Chair on the 'Walsall first' approach, Councillor Towe noted that this had been agreed by the Cabinet and was a feature of the Council's procurement policy.</p>	
<p><b>13.</b> <b>21.09.21</b></p>	<p><b>De-delegation letter 2021</b></p> <p>A copy of a joint letter from the NAHT, National Education Union and ASCL regarding the de-delegation of funding for supply cover costs, including for trade union facilities time was submitted (see annexed).</p>	

	<p>The Chair stated that this letter was to be circulated to the respective head teacher forums and Ms Guy informed the Schools Forum that the trade unions were to attend the head teachers' meeting on 5 October 2021.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That the de-delegation letter 2021 be noted.</p>	To note
<p><b>14.</b> <b>21.09.21</b></p>	<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <p>A copy of the Forward Plan was submitted (see annexed).</p> <p>It was noted that the item: Update on Local Government Pension Scheme Charges would be considered at the October 2021 meeting of the Schools Forum.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>	To note
<p><b>15.</b> <b>21.09.21</b></p>	<p><b>Late Items</b></p> <p>There were no late items for consideration.</p>	
<p><b>16.</b> <b>21.09.21</b></p>	<p><b>Correspondence</b></p> <p>There were no items of correspondence.</p>	
	<p><b>Date and Time of next meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting of Schools Forum is scheduled for Tuesday, 12 October 2021, commencing at 4.00 pm.</p>	

The meeting terminated at 4.51 pm.

Signed .....

Date: .....