

Walsall Council Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 18 October 2022 at 4.10 pm

(start delayed from 4.00pm due to technical reasons)

Digital Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Schools Forum Members Present:

Mr M. Vlahakis	Primary Head Teacher, Cadmus Family of schools
Mrs C. Draper	Primary Head Teacher, Short Heath Federation
Mr M. Moody	Primary academy Representative, Goldsmiths and Rivers Academies
Mr A. Seager	Secondary Academy Head Teacher, Bloxwich Academy
Mrs L. Foster	Primary Governor, Short Heath Federation
Mr I Baker	Secondary Academy Governor, Grace Academy
Mr C. Bury	Principal, The Ladders School, Alternative Provision
Ms M. Turley	Nursery Head Teacher, Ogle Hay Nursery
Mr T. Hopkins	PVI Representative

Officers Present:

Mrs S. Kelly – Director of Access and Inclusion
Mr R. Walley – Technical Accounting, Treasury Management & Education Finance Manager
Mr L. Haynes – Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional
Mrs H. Owen – Democratic Services Officer

Observers Present: None

		Action
1. 18.10.22	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. A roll call was taken of those members present who confirmed they could both see and hear the proceedings. During the roll call, Mr Seager and Mr Baker indicated that they may need to leave the meeting early. The Democratic Services officer advised that the meeting would become inquorate at that stage.	

<p>2. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from the following members: Mrs J. Garratt, Mr S. Davies, Mr W. Downie, Mr M. Fox.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>3. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Minutes – 26 September 2022</p> <p>It was noted that the minutes were not yet available and would be submitted for approval to the next meeting.</p>	<p>Included on the agenda for the December meeting</p>
<p>4. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes of 18 January 2022</p> <p>Not applicable (see minute 3 above)</p>	
<p>5. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Late Item/s (urgent) to be introduced by the Chair</p> <p>There were no late items.</p>	
<p>6. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)</p> <p>There were no items for consideration in the private session.</p>	
<p>7. 18.10.22</p>	<p>School Improvement Working Group</p> <p>The Chair gave a verbal update. He said that the Group had been formed to manage the schools element of the pooled budget funding, the Lamb Grant, and said that he would discuss the way forward with the Director of Access and Inclusion.</p>	<p>Chair to discuss further with Sharon Kelly.</p>
<p>8. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Walsall Learning Alliance</p> <p>Mrs Draper gave a verbal update providing a brief overview of the Alliance which had superseded the Strategic Education and Inclusion Board. She reported that the launch had now taken place with representations from all sectors in attendance and that a first formal meeting had taken place which had reviewed workstream progress; had shared priorities; received input from the Department for Education around academisation; received an update from Ofsted on its changes to the handbook; and received an update from the school nursing team about services the team provided.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the report be noted. 2. That an update be scheduled for once per term starting with Spring term 2023. 	<p>Added to work programme</p>

<p>9. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Proposed Mainstream Schools Local Funding Formula 2023/24</p> <p>A report was submitted</p> <p>(see annexed)</p> <p>The Education Finance Manager, Mr Walley, responded to questions during which time he confirmed that the potential additional funding to schools set out in paragraph 4.7 equated to around 2% and said that he would include this clarification in the consultation document.</p> <p>Members voted on the recommendations in the report and it was:</p> <p>Resolved (unanimously)</p> <p>That Schools forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. notes that as there is a requirement to utilise all allowable factors in the local formula for 2023/24, a full consultation exercise with all mainstream schools in Walsall will be required (as there is a need to include the two factors that are not currently utilised – Free School Meals 6 and Pupil Mobility). 2. notes the work undertaken by officers and the working group containing members of Schools Forum, and agrees the recommended list of funding formula options to be consulted on with all mainstream primary and secondary schools in Walsall. 3. notes that (2) above will be reported to Cabinet on 18 October 2022 to seek its approval to enter in to formal consultation with the list of funding formula options set out. 4. notes that, if Cabinet is supportive of the consultation, the outcome of the consultation will be reported back to Schools Forum at their meeting on 6 December 2022 to allow them to make a final recommendation to Cabinet at its meeting on 14 December 2022 to determine the formula that will be utilised to distribute funding to mainstream schools and academies within Walsall for 2023/24. 	<p>Cabinet advised of decision.</p>
<p>10. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Maintained Schools De-delegation</p> <p>A report was submitted</p> <p>(see annexed)</p>	

At this point, it was noted that the sole Maintained Secondary School representative, Mrs Bowen, was absent and therefore recommendations 2.2 through to 2.7 could not be determined at this meeting. The Chair proposed that, given that the deadline for reporting the decisions to the Education and Skills Funding Agency was end of October, decisions be sought independently via e-mail to Mrs Bowen and the outcome reported back to the next meeting of the Forum. This was agreed unanimously via a roll-call of members present.

The Chair proceeded to take a vote individually on each of the remaining recommendations.

During the discussion on recommendation 2.12 – Behavioural Support Service, Mrs Draper and Mrs Foster (primary representatives eligible to vote) voted in support of de-delegation. The Chair questioned this course of action given that the Primary, Nursery, Special Forum (PNS) had voted not to approve de-delegation. Mrs Draper commented that the responses received from schools had been low, around one third, which was a concern. She said that she had received feedback on the proposed service during consultation on its development which had been positive, with many recognising that this was a much needed and cost effective service having regard to the increasing number of permanent exclusions in this sector and the costs of specific outreach services. Mrs Draper went on to say that whilst the schools were concerned about the impact on their budgets, they were struggling to meet the need and potentially, schools are likely to see an increase in their budgets.

In response to a question from the Chair whether or not Mrs Draper and Mrs Foster should declare an interest as they were both from the same school which had developed the service, the Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional, Mr Haynes, advised that the guidelines for de-delegation decisions required a majority vote from the eligible members, being the primary maintained school representatives, and that it did not distinguish any further.

Mrs Draper stressed that the funding was de-delegated to the Local Authority for the Local Authority to commission the arrangements in line with the proposal in the report and that the service would be held to account for both financial and impact.

The Chair said that he remained of the view that representatives should carry through the majority vote of the PNS Forum and therefore he would be voting against.

The Chair then put the recommendation to the vote and it was resolved, 2 members voting in favour and 1 against, to approve the de-delegation of the service (*set out in the decision below*).

With regard to recommendation 2.13 – Additional School Improvement Services: The Chair commented that the PNS Forum had voted not to approve de-delegation. The Education Finance Manager, Mr Walley, referred members to paragraph 6.1 and 6.2 of the report which explained the implications of not supporting de-delegation. Members eligible to vote on this issue said that whilst they noted the advice, they felt that they had no real choice and decided not to approve de-delegation. (*set out in the decisions below*)

Resolved

1. That Schools Forum note the insurance options available under the DfE’s ‘Risk Protection Arrangement’, and the work that has been undertaken by the council to seek to be able to offer a comparative insurance package.
2. That, in the absence of the representative of maintained secondary schools, and to comply with the Education and Skills Funding Agency deadlines, the recommendations at 2.2 through to 2.7 be put to the Secondary School representative separately via e-mail and that the outcome be reported back to the forum at the next meeting.
3. That Maintained Primary School members approve de-delegation of Free School Meal Eligibility Service (estimated at £19.08 per free school meal eligible pupil).
4. That Maintained Primary School members approve de-delegation of Insurance services (estimated at £22.00 per pupil).
5. That having regard to decision at (4) above, Maintained Primary School members of Schools Forum do not approve utilisation of the DfE’s risk protection arrangements for insurance cover (set at £21 per pupil for the 2022/23 financial year but subject to potential increase for 2023/24).
6. That Maintained Primary School members approve de-delegation of Staff Costs – Teaching Union and Public Duties (estimated at £4.99 per pupil).

Decision:
2.2, 2.3, 2.5
approved
2.4, 2.6, 2.7
not approved

	<p>7. That Maintained Primary School members of Schools Forum approve de-delegation of Behaviour Support Services (estimated at £11.00 per pupil).</p> <p>8. That Maintained Primary School members of Schools Forum do not approve de-delegation of Additional School Improvement Services (estimated at £7.00 per pupil).</p> <p>9. That Maintained Primary members recognise that library services, maternity support and contingency are not being offered under de-delegation and they will have to purchase individually any service they require.</p> <p>10. That that the recommendation at 2.14 of the report (i.e. as (9) above) be put to the Secondary School representative separately via e-mail and that the outcome be reported back to the forum at the next meeting.</p>	<p>Not supported</p>
<p>11. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Review of Maintained Schools Balances</p> <p>A report was submitted (see annexed)</p> <p>The Chair questioned whether the total uncommitted balances was featured around a certain few schools or across the whole of the borough as he was concerned that there may be a perception that there was significant surplus in the system. The Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional, Mr Haynes, advised that the Local Authority monitored maintained schools’ forecast balances on a termly basis and confirmed that there were only a handful of schools at the upper end of the balance control mechanism limit. Mr Haynes agreed that it would be useful context for average balances to be included in future reporting and that in the meantime, he would arrange for a briefing note providing more clarification to be sent to schools forum members. He assured members that officers follow up with any schools having high balances as well as those at risk of deficits.</p> <p>Resolved That the contents of the report be noted.</p>	<p>Briefing note circulated to Schools Forum members 31.10.22</p>
<p>12. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Review of Dedicated Schools Grant – update on 2022/23 forecast position</p> <p>A report was submitted. (see annexed)</p>	

	<p>Resolved: That the updated position set out in the report be noted</p>	
<p>Quorum 18.10.22</p>	<p>At this point the Democratic Services officer, Mrs Owen, advised the Forum that the meeting was inquorate as Mr Seager and Mr Baker had now left. This was confirmed via a roll call. Mrs Owen advised that that the constitution of the forum provided for meetings to proceed but decisions could not be taken.</p> <p>The Forum was advised that the remaining reports were for noting with the exception of item 13 which sought a view on whether or not to support a disapplication request. Mrs Owen confirmed that the constitution of the Forum allowed for an inquorate meeting to respond to the Authority on consultation and give its views.</p> <p>The quorate meeting concluded at 4.42pm.</p> <p>Proceedings continued as follows.</p>	
<p>13. 18.10.22</p>	<p>‘Exceptional Circumstances’ disapplication Request for 2023/23</p> <p>A report was submitted (see annexed)</p> <p>Following a discussion, the Schools Forum unanimously supported the proposal to apply to the Secretary of State for a disapplication for a period of up to 6 years, which (if approved) aimed to ensure that appropriate funding continued to be allocated to support the premises rental costs of the school concerned, minimising uncertainty and the financial impact that would otherwise be placed upon that schools budget.</p>	
<p>13. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>None</p>	
<p>14. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Forward Plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Items scheduled for future meetings were noted. 2. The Chair mentioned that a request had been made at a previous meeting for a report which explained the impact of the Lamb Grant to inform future de-delegation decisions. It was noted that the Director, Access and Inclusion, Mrs S. Kelly, had circulated this report through the primary network. 	

	<p>At this point, Mrs Kelly advised that following the decision not to de-delegate additional school improvement services, the next steps would be to formally write to the secretary of state to request overturn. She undertook to keep members informed on this matter.</p> <p>3. It was noted that Strategic Education and Inclusion Board had been replaced by the Walsall Learning Alliance and therefore the item should be removed from the Schedule.</p> <p>4. Termly updates on the Walsall Learning Alliance to be included in the Forward Plan commencing spring term.</p>	<p>Item removed</p> <p>Item added</p>
<p>15. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Late Items</p> <p>There were no late items for consideration.</p>	
<p>16. 18.10.22</p>	<p>Date and Time of next meeting</p> <p>It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 13 December 2022 at 4.00pm</p>	

The meeting terminated at 4.58 pm.

Signed

Date: