

Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday, 13 March, 2019 at 4.00 p.m. at Pelsall Educational Development Centre (EDC), Pelsall Lane, WS4 1NG

Present:-

- Mr. Max Vlahakis (Chair)
- Dr. Alison Bruton (Vice Chair)
- Mrs Cathy Draper
- Mrs Michelle Sheehy
- Mr. Mark Moody
- Mr. Andy Seager
- Mr. Ray Beech
- Mr. Keith Whittlestone
- Mr. Tony Beason
- Mrs Margaret Turley
- Ms Lesley Foster
- Mr. Mike Fox
- Mrs Chris Fraser
- Ms Margaret Turley
- Mr. Steve Pritchard-Jones
- Mr. Anthony Orlik
- Mr. Russ Bragger (Observer)
- Councillor Towe (Observer)

In Attendance:-

- Ms Sally Rowe, Executive Director, Childrens' Services
- Ms Sharon Kelly, Assistant Director – Access & Achievement
- Mrs Anne Birch, Strategic Improvement Lead - SEND
- Mr. Chris Perry, Interim Education Health & Care Plan Manager,
- Mrs Connie Beirne – Head of Educational Standards and Improvement
- Mr. Lloyd Haynes – Senior Finance Manager
- Mrs Dawn Morris, Schools & Early Years Finance Manager
- Mrs Bev Mycock – Democratic Services Officer/Clerk to Schools Forum

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1. 13.03.19	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Chair introduced and welcomed Sharon Kelly, the newly appointed Assistant Director – Access & Achievement. Sharon thanked Schools Forum and said she would be visiting schools in the near future, with a large number of visits scheduled.</p> <p>Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mrs Jenny Garratt, Mr. Sean Davies, Mrs Natalie Boys, Mr. Ian Baker, Ms Jenny Thompson,</p>	
2. 13.03.19	<p>Minutes – 16 January, 2019</p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January, 2019, a copy having been previously circulated to each Member of Schools Forum, be approved and signed as a true record.</p>	

<p>3. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes of 16 January, 2019</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	
<p>4. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Late Items (urgent) to be introduced by the Chairman</p> <p>There were no late items.</p>	
<p>5. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</p> <p>There were no items for consideration in private session.</p>	
<p>6. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Apprenticeship Levy</p> <p>The document entitled Apprenticeship Update for Schools – March 2019 had been submitted.</p> <p>Members noted the report and the Chair requested the Apprenticeship Levy item be removed from the Forward Plan and for Schools Forum to receive updates when available.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>Members noted the update report and that the item be removed from the Forward Plan to be presented when updates were available.</p>	<p>To note</p>
<p>7. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Update on SEND Action Plan</p> <p>Anne Birch, Strategic Improvement Lead – SEND advised that following Schools Forum’s request at its meeting of 16 January, 2019, to amend the SEND Action Plan, the completed tasks section had been removed from the Action Plan and the dates for pertinent timescales had been included, as opposed to RAG ratings. She added that unfortunately the SEND Action Plan had not been forwarded in advance of the meeting and would therefore be sent out to all members the subsequent day. She added the item would be included for further discussion on the agenda for the next meeting, which was scheduled for 26 June, 2019.</p>	<p>Action Plan to be forwarded to all as matter of urgency – AB</p> <p>To be included on agenda of 26.06.19</p>
<p>8. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Proposed High Needs Funding Formula 2019/20</p> <p>Lloyd Haynes, Senior Finance Manager, tabled the updated Proposed High Needs Funding Formula 2019/20 report. He apologised for the lateness of the amendments but stressed they were imperative to enable Schools Forum’s recommendations to be reported to Cabinet on 20th March, 2019, at which time Cabinet would be required to approve the formula that would be utilised.</p>	

	<p>Lloyd highlighted the salient points within the report and explained in detail the respective changes to the Band 3 proposed Top-up rates for Special Schools as contained within Appendix A of the report.</p> <p>Lloyd reported that the Working Group had reviewed the pupil led staffing ratios which had been utilised within the current formula and the way in which overhead costs for special schools are built up and allocated, premises costs, the impact of the funding formula on individual schools and he further added that SEN were also looking into resources and high needs and that until that time, it was recommended that no changes be made to the existing funding formula for 2019/20, in order to continue to offer some protection and consistency to special schools (as top up values would be retained at current levels without any reduction or need for a minimum funding guarantee (MFG)).</p> <p>In response to queries, Lloyd expanded on the proposed 2019/20 top-up rates for special schools as detailed within Appendix A of the report submitted and explained about the cushion costings which should come into play when a special school's pupil numbers exceeded its PAN, and he advised that the next academic year's Working Group would also include members from mainstream schools to enable wider conversations.</p> <p>Anne Birch, Strategic Improvement Lead - SEND acknowledged that the funding formula required more work and emphasised that the majority of children were in mainstream schools and therefore there was a need to overhaul the High Needs Funding to accommodate Walsall's approach to care per pupil dependent upon each individual's needs.</p> <p>Members expressed concern pertaining to the delay in receiving the report, which, as a result, had made it too late to make changes for 2019/20, and as such, they felt they had no option but to approve the recommendations as set out. Anne highlighted the unavoidable reasons for the delay in submitting the report to Schools Forum ahead of it having to be submitted to Cabinet, and she confirmed that from Easter she would lead on SEN and that she would work closely with all colleagues and Special School Heads to ensure future reports to Schools Forum were available for consideration in a timely manner.</p> <p>The Chair asked that both he and the Vice Chair be included on the Working Group.</p>	<p>Chair and Vice Chair to be included on Working Groups</p>
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	<p>Following further debate, Lloyd reassured Schools Forum that special schools budgets should not be at detriment due to the recommendation as there were being no reductions to current rates paid but that each school will need to identify what this means for them as part of their budget setting and where they are unable to meet costs within their likely level of income; governing bodies will need to identify options for reducing costs. Following this review, if individual schools are struggling to reach a balanced budget for 2019/20, then they can seek further input and support from the Council’s education finance team and SEN service.</p> <p>Schools Forum further considered the report in detail and emphasised the need for milestones to be put into place to ensure early outputs are brought forward and provided to enable consideration of various options for the 2020/21 academic year in a timely manner.</p> <p>Members considered the report further and the Chair moved:-</p> <p>That:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Schools Forum note the work undertaken by officers and the working group, and recommends the local high needs funding formula that is proposed for 2019/20 (as set out in detail in Appendix C of the report) to Cabinet; ii. Schools Forum noted that the recommendation would then be reported to Cabinet on 20 March 2019 to seek their approval; iii. the Chair and Vice Chair participate in the respective working party; iv. milestones be put into place to ensure plenty of time to keep checks; v. Governors be included within the working party <p>The Motion, having been put to the vote was declared carried, with:-</p> <p>For = nine Against = 0 Abstain – three</p>	<p>Anne to ensure Milestones are put into place to ensure early outputs.</p>
<p>9. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Scheme for Financing Schools – DfE Directed Revisions and Updated Guidance</p> <p>The Schools and Early Years Finance Manager tabled an amended report at the meeting and highlighted the salient points therein.</p>	

	<p>Dawn Morris, Schools & Early Years Finance Manager, advised Schools Forum of the confirmed DfE directed revisions and updates to the guidance for Schemes for Financing Schools, and she provided a brief background to the report.</p> <p>There then followed a period of questioning by members which included potential contingencies, particularly with regard to redundancies.</p> <p>In response, Lloyd Haynes, Finance Manager advised that should a school make redundancies for its own purpose, then it was the responsibility of the respective school to pay the monies otherwise changes would have to be made and the local authority would pick up. In response to a query pertaining to the Council's level of contingency, Lloyd advised that no figure could be released into the public domain. He further confirmed that the guidance was a National scheme applicable to maintained schools only.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That Schools Forum noted the directed revisions as contained within the report.</p>	<p>To note</p> <p>To note</p>
<p>10. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>The Forward Plan was submitted.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the SENDI and the Apprenticeship Levy be removed as standing items and added as and when updates required. Members noted the amended Forward Plan.</p>	<p>To note</p>
<p>11. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Late Items (if any)</p> <p>There were no late items.</p>	
<p>12. 13.03.19</p>	<p>Correspondence (if any)</p> <p>There was no correspondence.</p>	
	<p>Date and time of next meeting</p> <p>It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Schools Forum was scheduled for Wednesday 26 June, 2019 at 4.00 p.m. at Pelsall EDC, Pelsall Lane, Rushall. WS4 1NG</p>	<p>To note</p>

The meeting terminated at 4.50 p.m.

Signed

Date: