

**Minutes of the Schools Forum**

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 2.30pm  
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Members Present: P Jones (Chair), P Shone (Vice Chair),  
M Arnull, D Barton, K Bickley, R Fisher, D  
Irish, G Linford, J Smallman, N Toplass  
and C Walsh.**

**Officers Present: R Kerr, A Timmins, and J Gill.**

**Apologies: A Burns, A Cysewski, L Howard, R  
Kentish, A Sahota, J Smallman and C  
Ward**

**7/19 Agenda Item 1 – Apologies**

As above

**8/19 Agenda Item 2 – Declaration of Interest**

N Toplass - Agenda item 13 - AOB2 Shenstone Lodge Special  
school report

**9/19 Agenda Item 3 – Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes had been omitted from the papers but were read to  
Schools Forum and were agreed pending any responses once  
fully circulated.

**10/19 Agenda Item 4 – Schools Budget 2019/20 (including Early  
years and High Needs)**

The Schools Forum received a report in respect of school's budget  
2019/20. At its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January, Schools Forum members  
recommended the principles for the allocation of the School Block  
of the Dedicated Schools Grant that the ratio of funding from  
primary to secondary should be maintained at 1:1.23. The  
principles were adopted by Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

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It was also recommended that an options paper be developed by Primary and Secondary schools working through Schools Forum to consider the impact on the educational journey of children of staged movements towards the National Funding Formula model.

Information on Early years, High Needs, Pupil Premium Grant and Devolved Formula Capital grant were also included in school Budget information document that was released.

P Shone remarked that the Secondary Heads had not agreed to the proposal, however the Chair responded that the proposal was voted on at the Meeting in January and agreed.

Schools Forum was asked to note the contents of the report.

11/19

### **Agenda Item 5 - Working Group to be set up – proposals for graduated change in ratio**

Schools Forum was asked to nominate members for a working group. It was suggested that around six people would be required.

The following names were suggested:

- Andrew Burns
- Paul Shone or Mark Arnull
- Richard Kentish
- John Smallman
- James Topham (Chair of Secondary Partnership)
- Andrew Orgill (Chair of Primary partnership)

Members to be confirmed at respective Partnership meetings and names passed to Chair and Finance Officer.

12/19

### **Agenda Item 6 – Schools in Financial Difficulties - Process**

The Schools Forum received a report in response to Schools in Financial Difficulties.

Following the annual funding consultation with schools, it was agreed at Schools Forum that a sum of £250K should be held within DSG to support schools which have reached a financial crisis point which would not be managed through normal budget and staffing measures.

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Schools had indicated that funding was not to be used for the following:

- Academies, PRU's and special schools;
- as a mitigation for weak budget and staffing management by a school;
- as ongoing amount to be claimed to offset annual budget.

The funding would be used for the following:

- for contributing Local Authority maintained schools;
- to support schools when unforeseen additional costs had occurred which could not reasonably be built in to a deficit recovery plan;
- to support schools when a one-year dip in DSG income was expected;
- to support costs where a school in a deficit position was forced into academy status.

There are limits to the support to schools as follows:

- the total annual funding available is £250K. There will be no further funding available;
- schools can only apply for support once in a financial year – except where forced academy conversion may leave a deficit budget;
- the maximum support for a single school was £125K per year;
- unallocated funding would be carried forward to the next financial year.

Applications to be made in writing and must be accompanied by the school deficit recovery plan and current budget information as well as details of all savings including proposed staffing changes.

A sub-committee would be established as indicated in the report as needed.

**Resolved** that the Schools Forum approve the process and criteria outlined in the report for schools in financial difficulties be considered for funding.

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### **13/19      Agenda Item 7 - High Needs Block Budget Monitoring 2018/19**

The Schools Forum received a report in respect of the High Needs Block Budget 2018/19.

The DfE had allocated Sandwell an additional £1,702,844 over two years so the HNB showed an increase in grant of £851,422 in 2018/19.

The current anticipated in year deficit was £903K which would be reduced to £52K deficit after application of the additional grant.

The balance brought forward as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 was nil as the deficit from 2017/18 was dealt with as reported to Schools Forum in June.

The main variances were outlined in the report.

Schools Forum was asked to note the contents of the report in respect of HNB Grant budget monitoring for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019.

### **14/19      Agenda Item 14 - Alternative Provision Report (AOB)**

The Alternative Provision report was tabled to provide Schools Forum with an overview of the findings following a full analysis of the Alternative Provision spend from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

The report showed the analysis of the raw data and did not provide any information on the next steps.

There were currently 231 pupils on the list to receive Alternative Provision and the highest referrals were from the Fair Access Panel and Schools.

A review of the processes and procedure on Alternative Provision placements was currently being undertaken and a future report would be submitted on completion.

Schools Forum expressed significant concerns with the projected £2million overspend.

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### Resolved

- (1) Schools Forum noted the contents of the report;
- (2) Julie Gill would send figures to secondary members to ensure that pupils were not being counted, or paid for, twice;
- (3) that the Group Head attend the next Forum meeting to answer questions regarding the over-spend;
- (4) that any questions from members to be sent to the Chair or Finance Officer.

15/19

### **Agenda Item 8 – Annual Consultation on Arrangements for SEN Pupils, Early Years and Financial Issues.**

The Schools Forum received a report outlining information in respect of the Dedicated School Grant budget planning process and to carry out the annual consultation on financial issues as requested by the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 as follows:

- Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs;
- Arrangement for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school;
- Arrangements for early years provision;
- Administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants.

Schools Forum was asked for views in respect of the financial issues on each of the key areas as below:

- arrangements for pupils with Special Educational Needs;
- arrangement for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school;
- arrangements for Early Years provision;
- administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants.

**Resolved** that Schools forum note the report and forward views to the Director – Education, Skills and Employment.

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### **Agenda Item 9 - Teachers' Pension consultation – LA Response**

Schools Forum received a report in respect to Teacher's Pensions Employer Contributions consultation.

The local authority did respond to the consultation on Funding increases to teachers' pensions employer contributions.

The consultation was a DfE proposal to support certain education institutions with the increase to employer contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) in 2019-20.

The consultation focused on the Teachers' Pension Scheme which provided a pension for teachers in the following sectors:

- state-funded schools;
- further education;
- higher education;
- independent schools.

Members expressed concerns and were not clear if they would be funded after 2020. The DfE had not issued any further guidance.

**Resolved** that Schools Forum noted the report and ensure that schools be made aware of the uncertainties.

17/19

### **Agenda Item 10 - Fair Funding Schemes update**

Schools Forum was informed that the authority would consult with schools on the updates to be made to the scheme for the financing of schools.

Local authorities were required by the DfE to publish schemes setting out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintain.

The Secretary of State may by direction revise the whole or any part of the scheme. In order to make a directed revision the Secretary of State had to consult the relevant local authorities and other interested parties.

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Updates had been made to reflect current policy positions and changes in legislation and these were indicated within the report. Section 13 had changed significantly to reflect changes to the Children and Families Act 2014, a school was no longer required to consult prior to establishing community facilities and there was no longer a need for a school to be mindful of local authority's advice, under section 27 of the Education Act 2002.

**Resolved** that schools would be consulted on the updates to the scheme and will be given a month to respond.

### **18/19      Agenda Item 11 - Schools Forum Forward Plan 2019/20**

Officers outlined the forward plan and noted that reports on Alternative Provision would need to be added.

### **19/19      Agenda Item 13 – Shenstone Lodge Special School Report**

Schools Forum received a report in respect to the proposed budget pressures and potential restructuring at Shenstone Lodge Shenstone Lodge and asked to note the implications of the restructuring for school provision within the borough and the implications for special needs provision if Shenstone Lodge moved to academy status.

As the consultation on staffing re-structure was currently placed on hold, Forum would await a further report on Shenstone Lodge before providing a view. In the meantime, any comments could be passed to the Director via the Chair and the Principal Accountant.

**Resolved** that Comment be forwarded to Director of Education, Skills and Employment through the Principal Accountant for schools and the Chair.

(Meeting ended at 3.50pm)

## Schools Forum – 11 March 2019

Contact Officer: Shane Parkes  
Democratic Services Unit  
0121 569 3190