

Minutes of Schools Forum

**Monday 7 November 2022 at 2.30 pm
at Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: N Toplass (Chair).
M Arnall, S Baker, J Barry, D Barton, E Benbow, K Berdesha,
C Handy-Rivett, D Irish, W Lawrence, S Mistry, B Patel and J
Topham.

Officers: A Asimolowo, S Moore, M Tallents, E Taylor, A Timmins and
F Hancock.

49/22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from J Bailey, L Bray, E Pate and D
Steen.

50/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

51/22 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th
September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

Matters arising:

E Benbow thanked Officers for the recent Forum Training, which
she had found useful.



52/22

To confirm J Barry's resignation from the position of Vice-Chair on the Forum and to elect a new Member to this position.

Agreed that: -

- (1) J Barry's resignation from the position of Vice-Chair on the Forum be noted;
- (2) That the appointment to the now vacant position of Vice-Chair on the Forum stand deferred until the next meeting.

53/22

School Blocks - De-delegation update (ET/AT)

The Forum received a report seeking approval for a request for 2023-24 de-delegated funding from maintained schools, for Schools in Financial Difficulty. In addition, the report also provided an update on the 2021/22 Union Facilities time Impact Report, as requested at the last meeting.

Appendix 1 to the report contained the 2021/22 impact report for schools in financial difficulty for consideration.

Appendix 2 to the report contained the funding request and details of the proposal for schools in financial difficulty.

Appendix 3 to the report contained the update to the impact report to the Union Facilities time.

Members queried whether the amount specified to cover schools in financial difficulties was adequate.

A Timmins replied that, historically, the figure specified within the report had been adequate, and that this could be reviewed each year to ensure it would still be adequate.

M Arnall queried what the reported concerns about the LADO were in relation to the Union Facilities Time at Appendix 3.

A Timmins advised that he would need to seek clarification on this matter and would send out a response in due course.

Agreed that the report be noted.

54/22

Movement of Funds from the Schools Block (SB) to the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) - New Request (ET)

The Forum received a report which detailed that at the September Forum meeting, a question had been raised regarding the Attendance and Safeguarding funding in the de-delegated part of the Schools Block (Educations Functions) and to find out if this had been used for the maintained sector only.

After investigation, it was discovered that the service could not identify this separately and that Safeguarding, and Attendance was indeed a matter for all schools and that all schools should pay for this service / not just the maintained sector.

The Central School Services Block (CSSB) provided funding for LA's to carry out central functions on behalf of all schools.

The CSSB were for LA statutory functions and the Schools Operational Guide stipulated that the Attendance Service was a legitimate function that should be funded from the CSSB.

Failure to agree to this change would result in a significant impact on the Council's capacity to support schools to effectively maintain high levels of school attendance.

J Barry queried why this particular issue had been proposed when Guidance stated that schools should not be paying.

A Asimolowo advised that the Regulations stated otherwise and that the Regulations held higher regard compared to the Guidance.

S Moore advised that each year the Forum would be consulted on this matter.

J Barry requested that the consultation document be updated to clarify specifically where this money was being moved from / to, as well as any associated implications.

Agreed that: -

- (1) approval be given to consult with schools on the top-slice of funds from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Service Block;
- (2) approval be granted for a further question to be added to the consultation document, depending on the level of service required, that the top-slice be considered under options 2 and 3 only, as set out in the report / appendix, and that option 1 be completely discarded due to it being unviable.

55/22

2023 - 24 Schools Funding Consultation

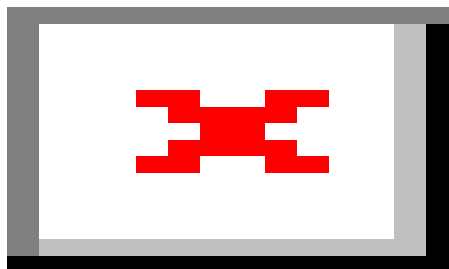
The Forum received a report which sought approval of the 2023/24 Draft Schools Funding Consultation document to be issued to schools and academies.

The National Funding Formula (ALL Schools)

Three options have been modelled at the request of Schools Forum at the last meeting allocating schools budgets as follows: -

- OPTION 1 – Minimum Transition
- OPTION 2 – Accelerated Transition
- OPTION 3 – National Funding Formula Factor Values

The table below detailed these three options factor by factor: -

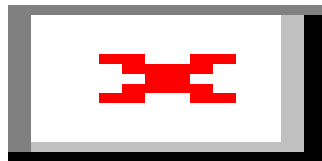


There was an assumption at this stage that we would allocate £1.664m for Growth Fund (refer to 3.7 for full explanation) and that

Schools Forum and all schools would support the top-slice of the Schools Block to fund the Attendance service to at least the minimum of £0.375m, as explained in the previous agenda item. With these assumptions in mind, the results of the modelling had further implications that the Schools Forum needed to be aware of:-

- OPTION 1 – This option was currently “unaffordable”. Using 0% Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) there was a shortfall of approximately £1.768m;
- OPTION 2 – This option was also “unaffordable” and using 0% MFG there was a shortfall of £1.594m;
- OPTION 3 – This option was also “unaffordable” using 0% MFG there was a shortfall of £1.320m.

It was worth noting that the total DSG funding of £322m used in these modelling options was an indicative figure given to us by the DFE and was likely to increase in December based on past experience. The table below detailed the % change from the indicative September DSG figures to the Final figure in December in previous years.



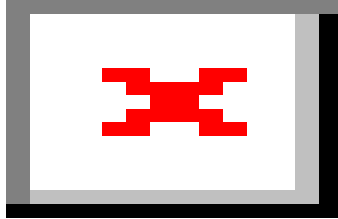
It was anticipated, from past experience, that the final funding in December (but this was certainly not guaranteed) would be sufficient so that each option would be affordable when final modelling was complete. If it was not, then Schools Forum would be informed of other available option(s) accordingly.

Pupil Number Growth Fund (ALL Schools)

TWO options had been proposed for consideration: -

- OPTION 1: to continue with the current criteria of funding LA agreed PAN / Bulge class increases, new and growing schools and mid-year admissions with the expected 2023-24 fund of £2.000m being proposed.
- OPTION 2: to utilise Brought Forward funding and to model the Pupil Growth Funding to take this in account when

calculating the requirements for 2023-24, as set out in the following table with the fund of £1.664m being proposed.



CSSB proposals (ALL Schools)

Including the proposal outlined at 55/22, there were 5 proposals to be considered by all schools.

Schools Block - De-delegation proposals (Maintained Schools Only)

There were 5 de-delegated proposals to be considered by maintained schools.

Schools Block - Education Functions (Maintained Schools Only)

There were 2 Education function proposals to be considered by maintained schools.

Responses

The Draft Schools Funding 2023/24 Consultation document was attached to the report. The modelling Options and responses would be available on the below link in due course: -

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/schoolsfundingconsultation>

The deadline for stakeholders to respond was noon on Thursday 1st December 2022 (subject to change).

Arising from a discussion around the timescales involved, the Chair sought agreement from the Forum that the papers for the next Forum meeting be sent out a day later than usual to assist

with the tight timescales involved. The Forum agreed to this proposal.

J Barry enquired what would happen with the spending review in December if it was still unaffordable at that point.

A Asimolowo advised that he didn't think this would be the case, but if it were he would report back to the Forum with some options for consideration.

E Benbow requested historical data to be provided to help schools understand what they had done previously.

Agreed that the Schools Funding 2023/24 Consultation document be issued to schools and academies and other interested stakeholders.

56/22 Schools in Financial Difficulty - Request for Funding

The Forum received a report which sought approval to grant assistance of £29,000 for a Primary in financial difficulty, from the Schools in Financial Difficulty fund.

A meeting had been held by a Schools Forum Sub-Committee on 19th October 2022 to consider an application made by a Primary School for financial assistance from the Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund.

The attendees were as follows: -

Members in attendance:	
James Topham	Headteacher of Wood Green Academy High
Mark Arnull,	Headteacher of Q3 Academy High
Lucy Bray	Headteacher of Mesty Croft Primary
Wendy Lawrence	Headteacher of Hanbury Primary
Officers in attendance:	
Abi Asimolowo	Head of Finance Business Partner (People)
Sara Baber	Early Years Lead
Elaine Taylor	Business Partner Children's Services

After consideration of the difficulties experienced by the school in question, and the plans put in place to mitigate a future deficit, it was unanimously agreed by the Sub Committee to recommend approval by the Forum for this funding request.

Agreed that the request to fund £29,000 from the Schools in Financial Difficulty fund be approved.

57/22

AOB

Future Meetings

The dates of future Forum meetings were noted, as set out below:-

- 12th December 2022
- 16th January 2023
- 20th March 2023
- 19th June 2023

The Next Meeting of Schools Forum: 12th December 2022 @ 2.30pm.

Location: Oldbury Council House.

Meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk