

Minutes of Schools Forum

**Monday 6 November 2023 at 2.30 pm
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: N Toplass (Chair)
J Barry (vice-chair), M Arnull, S Baker, E Benbow, G Faux,
K Featherstone, O Flowers, C Handy, K Hazlewood,
W Lawrence, L Mason, L Moore, M Pickup (substitute) and
J Topham.

Officers: Michael Jarrett (Director of Children's Services and
Education) – (Attended Virtually)
Julie Andrews (Assistant Director - Education Services)
Elaine Taylor (Finance Business Partner)
Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer)

In Attendance: Councillor Hackett (Cabinet Member for Children, Young
People and Education)
Phil Jones (Union Representative)

41/23 **Election of Chair**

Nominations had been sought for the position of Chair of Schools Forum for a period of two years. No nominations had been received. Neil Toplass indicated he was willing to Chair for the duration of the meeting.

Resolved that Neil Toplass is elected Chair for the duration of the meeting.



42/23 **To note the new Academy Secondary Representatives**

The Forum noted Leigh Moore, George Faux, Lisa Mason and Keziah Featherstone as the new Academy Secondary Representatives.

43/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from D Broadbent, D Steen, S Mistry and K Duff (Substitute Member).

44/23 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

45/23 **Minutes**

Forum members requested an update on the concerns raised over the Council moving to the Oracle Fusion system. Conversations had been taking place involving HR and Finance with head teachers and issues raised had been fed back to the Oracle Fusion team. A draft SLA template had been created and was in the process of being reviewed. The Council had heard the concerns raised and details of the next phase would be communicated with heads.

The move to Oracle Fusion had raised concerns around pension administration and the cost of the statutory service. Since it had been raised previously a question and answer brief had been circulated, the Finance team was aware of a number of concerns that had been raised and it was hoped these could be addressed going forward. Forum was advised that decisions on Oracle Fusion take place outside of Forum meetings.

Forum was advised that the number of workstreams was under review and it was acknowledged that reducing the number would be beneficial. Forum had paused its SEND Working Group in light of



the workstreams, and members sought assurance that the work being undertaken as aligned with Forum.

The Director of Children's Services and Education addressed Forum virtually and updated them on a number of issues and concerns Forum had raised regarding the High Needs Block monitoring report. It was accepted that the Local Authority had failed to produce the High Needs Block monitoring report this academic year. Work had been undertaken to address the staffing issues and the Council was confident that a report would be produced for the December meeting. To prevent a similar situation occurring in the future work was underway to ensure multiple officers were trained and confident in compiling and producing the report.

Phil Jones addressed Forum around concerns members had expressed over the use of Union Facilities Time. Forum heard that schools needed to be supported and the funding mechanism allowed the support to be delivered. While individuals paid their subscriptions, this was not sufficient to employ a local representative and therefore the de-delegated funding was required to employ the service. It was also recognised that the service provided was predominantly accessed by the primary schools.

Concerns were raised over the adequacy of the service provided. In response it was noted that all but one policy document on the website had been updated and that if members had had difficulty accessing resources it may be due to the online resources moving to a new platform. All Unions recognised by the Council were funded through the Union Facilities Time and the percentage of the funding allocated to them was dependent on union membership.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.



2024-25 Schools Funding Consultation

Forum considered the 2024/25 Draft Schools Funding Consultation document to be issued to schools and academies.

The Consultation Document for schools for 2024/25 included seven questions.

Question one - would ask schools to indicate the preferred model in calculating school funding for 2024/25:

- Option one – Minimum Transition
- Option two – Accelerated Transition
- Option three – National Funding Formula Factor Values

Description	NFF FACTOR VALUES 2024/25		NFF FACTOR VALUES 2023/24		SMBFC FACTOR VALUES 2023/24		Difference Between v SMBFC 2023/24		MODELLING OPTION 1 1 - (4 X 90%)		MODELLING OPTION 2 1 - (4 X 80%)		MODELLING OPTION 3 NFF	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
EXAMPLE	£1,050.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£600.00	£600.00	£400.00			£690.00		£730.00		£1,050.00	
Primary (Years R-6)	£1,562.00	£1,394.00	£1,394.00	£1,030.00	£1,030.00	£366.182			£3,803.04		£3,776.26		£3,562.00	
Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)	£5,022.00	£4,785.00	£4,785.00	£3,184.44	£3,184.44	£1,837.56			£5,381.50		£5,341.55		£5,022.00	
Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11)	£5,661.00	£5,393.00	£5,393.00	£3,274.34	£3,274.34	£2,386.66			£5,557.05		£5,556.07		£5,661.00	
Additional Needs Funding	Primary amount pp	Secondary amount pp	Primary amount pp	Secondary amount pp	Primary amount pp	Secondary amount pp	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
FSM	£490.00	£490.00	£480.00	£480.00	£216.20	£216.20	£263.80	£263.80	£252.84	£252.84	£278.96	£278.96	£490.00	£490.00
FSM6	£820.00	£1,200.00	£705.00	£1,030.00	£319.49	£587.35	£385.51	£442.65	£473.77	£802.69	£511.59	£845.88	£820.00	£1,200.00
IDAC1 Band F	£235.00	£340.00	£230.00	£335.00	£32.11	£47.16	£197.89	£287.84	£57.02	£81.12	£76.59	£109.73	£235.00	£340.00
IDAC1 Band E	£285.00	£450.00	£280.00	£445.00	£106.43	£377.71	£173.57	£67.29	£128.94	£389.66	£146.14	£396.17	£285.00	£450.00
IDAC1 Band D	£445.00	£630.00	£440.00	£620.00	£498.71	£693.19	£58.71	£73.19	£497.84	£695.87	£491.97	£688.55	£445.00	£630.00
IDAC1 Band C	£485.00	£690.00	£480.00	£680.00	£562.12	£789.22	£82.12	£109.22	£558.91	£788.30	£550.70	£777.38	£485.00	£690.00
IDAC1 Band B	£515.00	£740.00	£510.00	£730.00	£611.03	£869.84	£101.03	£139.84	£605.93	£865.86	£595.82	£851.87	£515.00	£740.00
IDAC1 Band A	£680.00	£945.00	£670.00	£930.00	£661.32	£939.44	£68.68	£94.44	£672.19	£933.50	£673.06	£952.55	£680.00	£945.00
EAL	£590.00	£1,585.00	£580.00	£1,565.00	£579.34	£934.84	£0.66	£640.16	£589.41	£1,009.66	£589.47	£1,072.87	£590.00	£1,585.00
Low Prior Attainment	£1,170.00	£1,775.00	£1,155.00	£1,750.00	£1,240.97	£1,810.11	£85.97	£60.11	£1,247.37	£1,829.10	£1,238.78	£1,823.09	£1,170.00	£1,775.00
Mobility	£960.00	£1,380.00	£945.00	£1,360.00	£112.88	£163.55	£83.12	£1,196.45	£211.59	£309.90	£294.30	£422.84	£960.00	£1,380.00
Lump Sum	£134,400.00	£134,400.00	£128,000.00	£128,000.00	£135,044.95	£135,044.95	£7,044.95	£7,044.95	£140,740.46	£140,740.46	£140,035.96	£140,035.96	£134,400.00	£134,400.00

In relation to question one, the options were presented with an assumption that the Council would allocate £1.60m for the Growth Fund and that Schools Forum and all schools would support the top-slice of the Schools Block to fund the Attendance service to £0.512m.

There was also an assumption that the De-delegated and Education Functions options proposed by Officers would also be accepted.

The Finance Business Partner confirmed that all three options would be shared with schools and Forum was being asked to agree the questions not the outcome.



Question two – would ask if schools agreed (yes/no) to the use of the Brought Forward of a £0.282m to set the Pupil Number Growth Fund at £1.60m?

At the end of the 2022/23 financial year there was a Pupil Number Growth (PNG) Funding carry forward of £0.282m. The PNG required for 2024/25 was estimated to be £1.90m and so it was proposed that the growth funding be set at £1.6m (rounded) within this consultation.

Question three – would ask if schools would agree (yes/no) to the introduction of a Falling Rolls Fund?

Two Falling Rolls Fund modelling options had been presented to the Forum at their meeting of 2 October 2023. The criteria detailed in Option 2 for allocating this fund had been approved.

Forum questioned why schools were being asked to agree to the establishment of the Falling Rolls Fund since Forum had agreed to the proposal at the previous meeting. Some Forum members questioned why Forum had been asked to make a decision originally if the question was going to be posed to schools. Some Forum members thought the question would allow for an understanding of how schools think of the decision to establish a Falling Rolls Fund.

Question four – would ask if schools agreed (yes/no) to the top slice of £512,000 from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Services Block to fund the Attendance Team?

The Attendance Service was a legitimate function that could be funded from the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) and was a statutory service from the Council for all schools.

Question five – asked if schools agreed (yes/no) with the indicative allocation of the Central Schools Services Block funding proposals? (For each proposal).



CSSB1	Statutory/Regulatory/ Education Welfare/Asset M	£1,801,593
CSSB2	Schools Forum	£3,000
CSSB3	Admissions Services	£452,600
CSSB4	Historical Commitment - Pensions Administration	£93,376
	TOTAL CSSB (Provisional - Updated Decemb	£2,350,569
CSSB5	Safeguarding & Attendance (ALL Schools)	£512,000

The provisional 2024/25 funding allocation for the CSSB was announced in July 2023 by the DfE and was £2.350m. This was made up of £2.257m of on-going responsibilities and £0.093m of historic commitment.

Question six – for maintained schools only - asked if schools agreed (yes/no) with the dedelegated proposals.

There were five de-delegated proposals to be considered by maintained schools:

DD1	Health and Safety Licenses and Subscriptions	£5,800
DD2	EVOLVE Annual Licence Fee	£7,300
DD3	Union Facilities Time	£159,000
DD4	School Improvement Services	£150,000
DD5	Schools in financial difficulty	£100,000
	TOTAL DD	£422,100

Question seven - for maintained schools only - asked if schools agreed (yes/no) with de-delegated proposals.

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

EF1	Education Benefits Team	£134,000
EF2	Children's Clothing Support Allowance	£33,000
EF3	Safeguarding & Attendance	moved to CSSB5
	TOTAL EF	£167,000

The Finance Business Partner confirmed that an online briefing session would be held to allow schools to drop in and answer any questions.



It was agreed that the consultation deadline should take into account the primary and secondary partnership meetings and allow for schools to raise any issues or concerns they have on the consultation.

The Finance Business Partner confirmed that the spreadsheet detailing the financial implications to schools of the models option in question one would be accessible via a link within the virtual office.

Resolved that:

(1) Schools Forum approve the 2024/25 Draft Schools Funding Consultation questions one – five;

(2) Maintained schools approve the 2024/25 Draft Schools Funding Consultation questions six and seven.

47/23 **Special School in Financial Difficulty**

Forum members were reluctant to consider the creation of the Special School in Financial Difficulty Fund to be funded from High Needs Block, due to the lack of information on the current High Needs Block expenditure.

Resolved that Special School in Financial Difficulty report be deferred to a future meeting to allow for a detailed High Needs Block Monitoring report to be produced and presented to Schools Forum.

48/23 **Constitution Working Group Appendix**

The Forum Constitution and membership structure had updated and agreed in June 2023. An additional appendix had been created to set out the details around how Working Groups of the Forum would be organised and facilitated.

The appendix reflected DfE guidelines plus suggestions that will allow the Local Authority to facilitate Forum Working



Groups effectively.

Forum asked that provision be allowed for more than one Working Group to be in operation at any one time. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the change would be made, however, administrative support would be required from schools and the Education Service.

Resolved that approval is granted to the Working Group Appendix to be added the constitution.

49/23 **Future Meeting Dates**

The Forum noted the future meeting dates:-

- 11 December 2023
- 15 January 2024
- 18 March 2024
- 1 July 2024

50/23 **AOB**

Forum members considered the establishment of a number of Working Groups as they related to SEND provision and the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Private Finance Initiatives (PFI).

While the Working Group on SEND provision would benefit from additional information on current service workstreams and High Needs Block monitoring, Forum members stressed the importance of BSF/PFI and the need to take action.

Resolved that the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) be established.

Meeting ended at 4.24pm

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