

Minutes of the meeting of Herefordshire schools forum held at The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Friday 25 October 2019 at 9.30 am

Present: Mrs J Cohn (Academy Special School Representative) (Chairperson)

Mrs S Bailey	LA Maintained Special Schools
Ms C Bryan	Academies
Mr P Burbidge	Archdiocese of Cardiff
Mr A Evans	Mainstream Academies
Mr S Fisher	Academies
Mr J Hedges	Primary Governors
Mr M Henton	LA Maintained Secondary Schools
Mrs S Jenkins	Local Authority Maintained Primary School
Mr T Knapp	Academies
Mrs R Lloyd	Early Years
Ms R Rice	Secondary Governors

In attendance: Councillors Carole Gandy and Felicity Norman

Officers: Chris Baird, Malcolm Green, Les Knight and Ceri Morgan

39. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

The outgoing chair, Mr Andy Evans, opened the meeting and called for nominations for the post of chairperson.

Mrs Julie Cohn was proposed and unanimously supported by members of the forum.

Resolved: that Mrs Julie Cohn be elected chairperson of the Forum for the ensuing year.

Thanks were given to the outgoing chair for his contribution to the forum over the previous two years of his chairmanship.

Mrs Julie Cohn took the chair.

40. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON

It was noted that in the customary rotation of positions among the school phases, it was for the primary phase to nominate a vice-chair for the forum.

Mrs Kathy Weston was proposed and unanimously supported by members of the forum.

Resolved: that Mrs Kathy Weston be elected Vice-Chairperson of the Forum for the ensuing year.

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from: Paul Deneen, Kimberley Harley, Steve, Kendrick, Tracey Kneale, Chris Lewandowski, Norman Moon, Julie Rees and Kathy Weston.

42. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

The following substitutes were noted:

Mr Martin Harrisson for Mr Lewandowski
Dr Stephen Baker for Mr Deneen

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

44. MINUTES

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

45. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP

It was noted that in the customary rotation of positions among the school phases, it was for the secondary phase to nominate a chair for the budget working group. The Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads (HASH) had nominated Mr Paul Jennings. The nomination was unanimously supported by members of the forum.

Resolved: that Mr Paul Jennings be elected as chair of the budget working group for the following year.

46. LOCAL AND NATIONAL SCHOOL FUNDING UPDATE

The SFM introduced the report and highlighted the key points:

- National announcements on school funding had introduced a minimum funding level of £3,750 per primary and £5,000 per secondary pupil for 2020/21;
- In total Herefordshire would see approximately a 3.8% increase per pupil but this would not be shared equally across all schools, those schools considerably lower than the minimum funding values would see a significant increase;
- This increase would not make up the ground lost since 2010 but was encouraging news;
- The draft consultation paper set out a proposal to pass through the funding increases from the government and implement in full the national funding formula, including the new mobility factor;
- The new mobility factor had more appropriate thresholds and would better reflect the situation in Herefordshire;
- Herefordshire had received a £0.3m share of the national growth fund in 2019/20, a similar sum was expected for 2020/21 but would not be confirmed until December;
- The consultation paper set out proposals to share the growth funding between supporting future growth, a slight increase to per pupil values for mainstream schools and supporting and extending the SEN protection scheme;
- The indicative Herefordshire share of the additional funding for high needs was £2m, this was a little more than had been expected and left only a small funding gap of £0.2m to be addressed for 2020/21 based on the projected budget;

- The forum would be asked for recommendations in January 2020 as to how to fund this gap, this could include a modest transfer from the schools block subject to the forum's consent;
- The projected outturn for 2019/20 was an overspend of £1m, this had been taken into account in the proposed budget for 2020/21 along with potential growth in complex needs places of £0.5m;
- The proposals for the high needs budget included increases to tariff funding to replicate the inflationary increase for mainstream schools in the special schools, changes to the tariffs to better reflect medical factors and an investment in initiatives designed to reduce future demand;
- A proposal to extend the SEN protection scheme to include secondary schools was also included in the consultation.

The SFM commented that Herefordshire had done well to avoid going into deficit on its dedicated schools grant and that many other councils were struggling with significant funding gaps. The projected overspend for 2019/20 would reduce reserves to £0.7m so it was important to continue to scrutinise budgets to ensure Herefordshire did not go into deficit.

It was noted that concerns had previously been expressed regarding repeated transfers from the schools block but the importance of the SEN protection scheme was also recognised. The scheme was intended to meet additional costs of schools that had admitted a higher than average number of SEN pupils. It was requested that additional details be included in the consultation paper on the proposals to extend the scheme to include secondary schools.

The SFM reported on a briefing held by the Department for Education at which it was confirmed that there would be a 4% increase to the lump sum and all other factors would increase by 4% except for the free school meals factor, which would be 1.8%. It had been confirmed that there would be an increase in the hourly rate for early years but the figure had not yet been published. The council's intention was to pass on in full any increase received.

In discussion of the report, it was noted that:

- the purpose of the growth fund allocation was to help meet additional revenue costs of schools undergoing an expansion, this would only be for basic need growth and could not support provision of additional school places to meet parental preference;
- the forum would need to agree a set of criteria for use of the growth fund and proposals for this were set out in the consultation paper;
- some discussions had taken place with selected schools about potential future growth but it was unlikely that any expansions would be in place for 2020;
- housing growth would be factored in to pupil number projects as far as possible, broadly speaking growth was expected in Hereford city centre, Ross-on-Wye and Ledbury but this would be over a number of years;
- the revised SEN matrix had been agreed, although the intention had been that the new system would be cost neutral testing showed that it could result in a small increase on costs, it was felt that it was reasonable to proceed with the new matrix;
- responses to the consultation were requested by 2 December, the budget working group would meet on the 6 December to consider responses and final confirmation of allocations was expected around the 18 December;
- members of the forum were asked to encourage all schools to respond to the consultation.

Finally, it was confirmed that the forum would meet on 17 January 2020 to make recommendations on the budget allocation. The final decision on the funding formula would rest with the cabinet member for children and families. Any transfer of funds from the schools block would require the consent of forum members.

It was agreed that subject to the feedback received from the forum, the consultation with schools should proceed after October half term.

47. FEEDBACK FROM WORKSHOP EVENT

The chair summarised the workshop event that had been held in June and felt that the discussion had been fruitful. A follow up letter had been sent to Jesse Norman MP as requested identifying three key priorities for change where it was felt his input could be valuable. A copy of the letter has been shared with all members of the forum and the budget working group.

The three priorities identified were:

- ensuring that pay and pension increases were fully funded in future and that the Teachers Pay Grant and Teachers Pension Grant continue to meet the additional cost of future pay and pension increases in schools;
- ensuring that the national funding formula provides more fairly for the low funded and mostly rural authorities; and
- reform of the apprentice levy for schools.

Mr Norman had expressed a desire to continue a dialogue with the forum. The chair stated that the chair of the budget working group would act as the key point of contact and that members would be advised of any response to the letter.

Thanks were expressed to all those who contributed to the workshop.

48. WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The contents of the work programme and dates for future meetings were noted. No additional items were proposed to be added to the programme.

The meeting ended at 10.08 am

Chairperson