

MINUTES of the meeting of Herefordshire Schools Forum held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Friday 23 October 2015 at 10.30 am

Present:	Mrs J Rees (Chairman)	Locally Maintained Primary School
	Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins (Vice Chairman)	Locally Maintained Secondary School
	Mrs S Bailey	Special Schools
	Mr P Barns	Pupil Referral Unit
	Mrs W Bradbeer	Academies
	Mr P Burbidge	Roman Catholic Church
	Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins	Secondary Maintained Schools
	Mrs J Cohn	Special School Governor Representative
	Mr A Davies	Academies
	Mr J Docherty	Academies
	Mr J Godfrey	16-19 provider representative
	Mr N Griffiths	Academies
	Mr T Knapp	Academies
	Ms T Kneale	Locally Maintained Primary School (Nursery)
	Mr C Lewandowski	Trade Union Representative
	Mr M Lewis	Local Authority Maintained Primary School
	Mrs S Lines	Church of England
	Mrs A Pritchard	Trade Union Representative
	Mrs J Rees	Local Authority Maintained Primary School
	Mr K Wright	Local Authority Maintained Primary School

In attendance: Councillor WLS Bowen, Mr T Edwards and Mr S Grist.

214. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Mrs J Rees be elected as Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing year.

(Mrs J Rees in the chair.)

215. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Miss C Elsey (formerly Mrs C Woods), Mr M Farmer, Ms A Jackson, Mrs R Lloyd and Mr P Whitcombe.

216. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

217. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

218. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins be elected Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing year.

219. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

220. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED: That Mr N Griffiths be elected as Chairman of the Budget Working Group for the ensuing year.

221. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Forum received an update on Membership.

The Forum was informed that the review of its membership was almost complete. It was noted that a confusion had arisen over the appointment of maintained school governors and it was intended to resolve this before the next meeting. There was one maintained Primary School vacancy to be filled. However, the principal matter for the Forum to consider was how it wished to amend its membership following the disbandment of the 14-19 Partnership.

A view was expressed that the Forum's membership was too large in number and a reduction to 26 members should be agreed.

The Assistant Director, Education and Commissioning suggested that the work of the task and finish groups appointed to examine service areas might benefit from seeking specific representation from other bodies, for example, in the High Needs area, representation from sixth forms. There might therefore be advantage in keeping the matter under review pending feedback from this work.

A motion to reduce the membership to 26 was lost.

RESOLVED: That consideration of a permanent reduction in the Forum's membership be reviewed in the light of the work of task and finish groups.

222. REPORT OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP

The Forum considered the report of the Budget Working Group (BWG) on the following matters: results of the schools budget consultation and submission of provisional school budget to the Education Funding Agency (EFA), forecasts of high needs expenditure for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and the use of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) balances.

The Chairman of the Budget Working Group thanked members of the Group for their work and officers for their support. He commented that the Group continued to support the Forum's strategy of moving towards the expected National Funding Formula. Whilst some schools considered the pace of change was too fast others thought it too slow. It needed to be acknowledged that every school could make a case for more funding but that was not realistic.

An observation was made that the most recent consultation exercise with schools on the National School Funding Formula 2016/17 had not generated a large response. It was

noted that the BWG could only assume that those who had chosen not to reply were broadly supportive of the strategy.

The School Finance Manager presented the report. He highlighted the following points on the National School Funding Formula (NFF):

- He commented on the response to the questions in the consultation exercise in turn. He noted that, whilst the responses were overall in support of the proposals, there had been opposition by some maintained primary schools to the reduction in the primary lump sum as part of the move towards the national average primary:secondary funding ratio.
- It was of concern that more schools had not responded to the consultation exercise and attended the consultation meetings. However, no alternative proposals had been advanced either in the written responses or at the consultation meetings.
- The DfE continued to advise that authorities should benchmark their funding values as part of the move to a national funding formula. He drew attention to the benchmarking statistics for basic per pupil entitlement at key stage 3 and key stage 4, deprivation funding and prior attainment funding and the primary:secondary funding ratio. He outlined how the budget proposals were moving the authority towards the average NFF values. In relation to funding on deprivation, which was higher than the DfE's fair funding assessment, he commented that consideration might be given in 2017/18 to transferring some funding to basic pupil funding in order to help those schools that received little extra funding other than the basic minimum.
- In terms of the primary lump sum he noted that this was higher than five of the authority's statistical comparators.
- The BWG had considered that the consultation response required no amendment to the budget proposals.

A member of the Forum commented that of twelve maintained primary schools who had responded to question 1 in the consultation paper relating to the change in the primary:secondary funding ratio, seven schools had supported the change and five had opposed it. The authority had traditionally recognised the need to provide support to small rural schools acknowledging that they had higher running costs. The move to the NFF values was making small schools unviable. A wider debate and consultation within the County was needed on the implications of this change. Other authorities were opposing the NFF because of its effects.

The Assistant Director commented that the authority had been encouraging small schools to collaborate as one way of reducing costs. The authority was mindful of the importance of focusing on the quality of education. The authority, supported by local MPs, also continued to work with the f40 group, comprising lower funded authorities, to seek fairer funding and recognition of the issues caused by sparsity of population. The DfE was expected to consult in summer 2016 on the NFF which would doubtless provide an opportunity to consider a number of issues. However, there had to be an awareness too of the impact on the public sector, including the Council, of the national austerity measures alongside the budget pressures that had been and would continue to be felt by all schools.

Councillor Bowen was invited to speak, as Chairman of the Council's General Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He noted the concerns about the impact of the move to the NFF on school budgets. He offered the Committee's input where it was identified that that would be helpful.

The School Finance Manager then commented on the High Needs Budget Forecasts. He reported that the projected overspend for 2015/16 was £179k. This would be met from existing DSG balances. Although further work needed to be undertaken on the forecast budget for 2016/17, the initial estimate was that expenditure would be £800k higher than this year's current budget. This was of concern and had been referred to the high needs task and finish group to consider savings options and report back to the BWG and the Forum in January 2016. The DfE had advised that there would be no increase in high needs funding for 2016/17.

Finally the School Finance Manager reported on the Dedicated Schools Grant balances and their proposed use. In summary it was proposed that the underspend of £890k of unused 2 year old grant should be referred to the early years task and finish group to consider options for using this sum, reporting back to the Forum with proposals, and that the remaining underspend of £409k should be retained in balances as a contingency.

He informed the Forum that following the Secretary of State's approval for the allocation of a sum from DSG in 2015/16 to support the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub it was intended to seek Secretary of State's approval for permanent support from DSG in 2016/17 and thereafter.

The School Finance Manager clarified that the underspend on grant for 2 year old education of £890k had been a consequence of delayed take up of two year old places. The DfE appeared to have overestimated take up nationally but decided not to claw these sums back. This meant there was a one off underspend and it was proposed that the early years task and finish group make proposals to the Forum for its use.

RESOLVED: That the proposals for the local application of the National Funding Formula for 2016/17 as set out in the consultation document and as below, be approved for recommendation to the Director for Children's Wellbeing as follows:

(i)

1.	Basic entitlement per primary pupil	£2,875
2.	Basic entitlement per secondary Key stage 3 pupil	£3,843
3.	Basic entitlement per secondary key stage 4 pupil	£4,436
4.	Deprivation per primary ever-6 free school meals pupil	£2,192
5.	Deprivation per secondary ever-6 free school meals pupil	£1,419
6.	Low Prior Attainment per primary pupil	£615
7.	Low Prior Attainment per secondary pupil	£1,099
8.	Primary lump sum	£87,000
9.	Secondary lump sum	£143,000
10.	Looked after children, primary and secondary	£1,300
11.	Primary sparsity, on a taper basis, over 2 miles and less than 105 pupils	£42,000
12.	English as Additional Language per primary pupil	£505
13.	English as Additional Language per secondary pupil	£1,216
14.	PFI contract	£242,500
15.	Business rates	At cost

(Only school and early years members were eligible to vote on the above matter (resolution i).)

(ii) it be noted that consultation on the budget 2017/18 would include consideration of the amount allocated for deprivation;

(iii) the de-delegation in 2016/17 of the funding for Trade Union facilities (primary schools only), ethnic minority support, free school meals

administration and software licence costs for financial planning software be approved;

(Only local authority maintained school members voted on the above matter (resolution iii), with the approval of dedelegation for funding of trade union facilities at primary schools only being voted on by maintained primary schools.)

- (iv) the early years task and finish group be asked to make proposals for spending the £890k early years underspend to Schools Forum by the end of May 2016; and the remaining underspend of £409k be retained as a balance.**

223. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE - TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Forum's agreement was sought on the proposed terms of reference for the "looking to the future" task and finish groups

The groups had been established in response to pressures on the education provision and funding streams in Herefordshire.

The report invited the Forum to consider how best to involve school governors in the task and finish group process. The School Finance Manager suggested that interim proposals from the groups could be sent to Herefordshire Governors Association for comment and governor representatives on Schools Forum could be invited to contribute to the work of relevant Groups as appropriate.

A suggestion was made that a fifth task and finish group should be established to consider small rural schools. The majority view was that a separate group was not required and that the task and finish groups would consider issues faced by all schools.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the terms of reference for the task and finish groups as set out in the report be approved; and

- (b) interim proposals from the groups be sent to Herefordshire Governors Association for comment and governor representatives on Schools Forum be invited to contribute to the work of relevant groups as appropriate.**

224. WORK PROGRAMME

The School Finance Manager highlighted the report due on special needs funding in January 2016, the review of school budget plans identified for March, to be preceded by a third letter on the "looking to the future" theme inviting the submission of budget plans and savings proposals; the scheduling of reports from the looking to the future task and finish groups in May/June and the DfE consultation on the National Funding Formula expected in summer 2016.

The Forum noted its work programme.

225. MEETING DATES

It was agreed that the Forum's meeting scheduled for 4 December 2015 should be cancelled due to lack of business.

The meeting ended at 11.16 am

CHAIRMAN