

## City of Wolverhampton Council

### Minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum Held at The Willows Campus at 4:00pm on Monday 27 February 2017

#### Present

Mr B Bond – Chair  
 Ms D Clarke – Early Years Representative  
 Ms A Dill-Russell – 16-19 Education Sector representative  
 Mrs C Ferron-Smith – Nursery Sector Representative  
 Mr R Green MBE - Primary Sector Governor Representative  
 Mrs K Jackson – Diocesan School Representative  
 Mr J Hopkins – Primary Sector Headteacher Representative  
 Ms S Llewellyn – Special School Sector Headteacher Substitute  
 Mr J Ludlow – Secondary Sector Headteacher Substitute  
 Mrs G Morris – Academies Sector Representative  
 Mr A Thompson – PRU Sector Governor Representative  
 Mr M Welton – Primary Sector Headteacher Representative  
 Mr P Williams – Academies Sector representative

#### In attendance

Mrs D Boniface – Finance Manager - Education  
 Mrs T Duhra – Clerk  
 Mr M Fox – Finance Business Partner – Place & Education  
 Mr B Hague – Head of School Planning & Resources  
 Mrs N Harris – Personal Assistant to Mr Kramer  
 Ms C Nye – Chief Accountant City of Wolverhampton  
 Ms T Roseblade – School Governance & Workforce Co-Ordinator  
 Mr A Voyzey – Interim Finance Manager – Education

#### Consent to Absence

Mrs L Craig – Academies sector Representative  
 Cllr C Darke – Cabinet responsibility for Schools, Skills & Learning  
 Ms K Elliot - Primary Sector Headteacher Representative  
 Mr G Gentle – Diocesan Sector Substitute  
 Mr J Kramer – Director of Education, CWC  
 Ms S Lacey – Nursery Sector Representative  
 Mrs L Law – Academies sector representative

#### 480 Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

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#### 481 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Craig, Councillor Darke, Mr Gentle, Ms Elliott, Ms Lacey and Mrs Law.

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**482 Declaration of Interest/Confidentiality**

Members were reminded that care should be taken to ensure that items of a confidential nature were treated as such. In addition, they were advised that the clerk would strive to ensure that minutes of their meetings did not include information of a confidential nature as, once approved, these became public documents.

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**483 Minutes of previous meeting – to be approved****RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017 be approved as a correct record.

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**484 Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

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**485 Minutes of the Scrutiny Sub-Group**

It was noted that Mrs A Jones will now attend Schools' Forum on 18 May 2017 to discuss the proposed process for re-allocation of recovered school surplus balances for use by individual schools for school improvement.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting, held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017 be received by the Forum.

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**486 Schools Forum Membership**

The Clerk communicated the membership update as follows:

Primary School Sector – Applications have been received from three candidates for the two vacant Primary Governor Representative positions; ballot papers were distributed on 17 February 2017 and closing date for votes is 3 March 2017.

The Clerk noted various terms had expired or were due to expire shortly, it was noted that the clerk would follow the agreed process and update Schools' Forum on 18 May 2017.

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**487 Growth Fund Update**

Mr Hague presented the paper for Growth Fund Update on behalf of Tom Knott. The paper provided an update on the deployment of the 2016/17 Growth Fund, outlined the anticipated 2017/18 Growth Fund allocations and gave a proposed amendment to the 2017/18 budget.

There is an additional £25,000 spend anticipated from the remaining balance of the 2016/17 Growth Fund. There is an option to carry forward any remaining balance as extra contingency. The current estimated allocation for 17/18 is £683,000 and due to pressures on the High Needs Block it is proposed to reduce the previously agreed allocation to £950,00. There have been offers of an additional 96 Year 7 places, from the City's schools for 2017/18. Further engagement is taking place with City secondary schools in order to uplift school admission places.

Members were asked to reaffirm Growth Fund eligibility criteria in accordance with EFA guidance, as a City Academy had decided to uplift by 40 places and had requested an allocation from the Growth Fund. It was noted that The Director of Education considered that as this uplift had not been proposed by the LA and due to the possible detrimental effects on neighboring schools that the request should not be met but wanted the views of Schools Forum as their express agreement is required to provide funding for additional places to meet basic need.

The chair opened the floor to question.

**A member asked about the uplift within Primary Schools.** Mr Hague explained that the number of additional places being given are within Schedule 2. This also shows pupil led funding within individual schools and is influenced by phasing of the pupil uplift.

**A member enquired about the variance in funding between similar schools.** Mr Hague said he was unable to comment on individual schools but would provide further clarification to members.

**A member asked if Growth Fund is part of DSG.** Mr Fox confirmed Growth Fund is top sliced from DSG as an approved centrally retained sum prior to ISN delegation.

**The Chair asked if this is an increasing sum year on year or is this the rolling figure and how other authorities approached this.** Mr Fox explained this this was an annual allocation to be used to support schools in the period before the additional pupils generated funding. It is the recommended approach of the EFA so other Authorities would be applying this in a similar manner. c130 out of 160 Authorities have a Growth Fund in their funding arrangements.

**The Chair spoke about how other authorities are attracting funds into their budgets and expressed concern that the DfE are not funding additional**

**children coming into system.** Mr Fox shared the concern and as part of the national funding formula proposals for use of lagged growth were being considered which would not necessarily reflect future demand. DfE recognize the increased numbers but do not have a method to address the funding implications.

**A member asked why the schools are getting more than others and if the reasons behind this should be clearer before Schools' Forum agree.**

**Another member agreed that they would want to know the factors for this before agreement was given.** Mr Fox stated that these are only indicative figures and therefore further clarification would be given.

**A member noted that the variation between schools is noticeable to the extent that the fact that questions would be raised should have been preempted, they felt it would have been good to have answers to the questions at this meeting.** Mr Fox replied that while the overall level of funding is to be agreed the allocation of this funding can be clarified at Schools' Forum on 18 May 2017. More details on individual schools and how figures have been established will follow.

A member clarified any unspent would go back to DSG.

A member drew attention to the minutes of Scrutiny Sub-Group and the feelings that the principles of the Growth Fund were clear. It was felt to be important to stick to the original principles of the Growth Fund. The Chair said the Growth Fund is in place to allow growth that is required by the Local Authority and it is their place to assess need, the forum were in agreement with this statement.

#### **DECISION:**

- (i) Forum noted the 2016/17 Growth Fund allocations to date.
- (ii) Forum approved a revised Growth Fund allocation of £950,000 for 2017/18
- (iii) Forum noted estimated 2017/18 Growth Fund deployments known to date.
- (iv) Forum noted the anticipated upturn in demand for both the Primary and Secondary estates and the need for future Growth Funds to support both phases.
- (v) Forum reaffirmed growth fund eligibility criteria in accordance with EFA guidance.
- (vi) Forum requested further details on the calculations behind the indicative school allocations for 2017/18

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#### **488 Services Formerly Funded from Education Services Grant**

Mr Fox presented a paper on services formerly funded from the Education Services Grant, this seeks agreement from the relevant maintained members of

Schools' Forum to make deductions from schools' budget to share the burden of the costs of these services. If an agreement could not be reached at Schools' Forum the matter would need to be referred to the Secretary of State for adjudication. Any school converting to academy would be able to take their remaining budget with them upon conversion.

The Chair opened the floor to questions.

**A member asked about special schools and school improvement costs, it was felt school improvement work was very mainstream led, will this be addressed as costs are high for no specialist support at present.** Mr Hague said that level of expertise is required and this will be reintroduced.

**A member asked about the differences to primary and secondary funding and about how this is currently funded.** Mr Fox stated that guidance in regulations does not allow differentiation.

**A member asked if Council budgets for these services were being reviewed to deliver savings.** Mr Fox replied that the Education service has been asked to make savings in the next year and this has been built in.

**DECISION:**

- (i) Members representing the maintained primary phase agreed to the local authority proposal to deduct resources from DSG for the former Education Services Grant funded services at the rate of £20 per pupil.
- (ii) Members representing the maintained secondary phase agreed to the local authority proposal to deduct resources from DSG for the former Education Services Grant funded services at the rate of £20 per pupil.
- (iii) Members representing the maintained special phase agreed to the local authority proposal to deduct resources from DSG for the former Education Services Grant funded services at the rate of £85 per place, on the proviso that specialist support is put back into place.
- (iv) Members representing the maintained PRU phase agreed to the local authority proposal to deduct resources from DSG for the former Education Services Grant funded services at the rate of £75 per place.

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**489 Schools 2017/18 Budget Allocation**

Mr Fox introduced the paper on School Budget Allocations 2017/18. The paper was the culmination of the activity and reports that had been presented to Forum over the previous 6 months. At the October meeting, a new funding factor for EAL was agreed. Reports on the new National Early Years Funding formula had been presented. There have been continuing issues in High Needs as reported to the last meeting resulting in further revisions to the central items presented at Appendix A. This paper brings together these previously discussed items.

Mr Fox thanked Ms C Lunn and Mr Voyzey for their work on the detailed preparation of schools' budgets. School budget allocations will be provided to schools on 28 February 2017.

Mr Voyzey highlighted the main issues within the report.

Majority of budget accounted for by increased pupil numbers in accordance with consultation last year and have maximised basic entitlement to increase by 0.5%.

The proposal agreed by Forum to restrict viability funding to 60% in year 1, 40% in year 2 and no further funding thereafter has been applied from September 2017.

The top up funding for SEND has been maintained at 2016/17 levels.

The LA are moving quickly to implement the Early Years National Funding Formula. Extended entitlement will be from September this year, along with access to the social inclusion fund and the disability access fund.

**A member noted that this report had only been received by members not giving them adequate time to digest the contents and now agree it at this meeting.** Mr Voyzey apologized for the delay in circulating the report and explained the reasons for this.

Mr Fox reminded members this paper is implementing decisions already made by Schools' Forum.

A member felt that this still needs to be read before a decision is made when it is such an important item.

The Chair gave a reminder that the constitution states reports should be with Schools' Forum 7 days prior to meeting.

**A member stated that while he understands that the report is compiled from decisions already made by Schools' Forum it is still requesting agreement of the outcomes of these decisions.**

Mr Fox said it is a conclusion on what has already been agreed and the report is asking for ratification.

**A member stated that they felt that they had not been given enough time to digest this information and although the deadline was appreciated, time was required to understand the figures. It was asked if this be looked at in future.**

Mr Fox explained some of the reasons for the changes to allocated budgets.

The Chair spoke about how this time had enabled decisions to be made.

**A member asked a question about appendix D and the cuts made, has this been consulted on.** Post 16 places are not included in the total number either is out of City provision. Bandings have been maintained as previously.

Ms Nye asked if Forum would be more comfortable if it was stated that they are agreeing the outcome of decisions previously made.

Mr Fox said a further discussion would take place about how to deal with this in future

A member thanked the team for their work and explanation.

**DECISION:**

- (i) Forum approved the final schedule of centrally retained DSG items and the areas to be funded as set out in Appendix A as an outcome of the decision made previously by Schools' Forum.
- (ii) Forum noted the proposed budget allocations to schools for 2017/18 as set out in Appendix D as an outcome of decisions made previously by Schools' Forum.
- (iii) Forum approved the formal breach in the central expenditure limit noting that on a like for like basis the central DSG has increased less than delegated budgets as an outcome of the decision made previously by Schools' Forum.

**490 Response to the Consultation on the National Funding Formula for Schools**

Mr Fox presented the response to the Consultation on the National Funding Formula for Schools to the Forum. Schools have been asked to input into the Authority's response.

The overall impact in Wolverhampton is favorable.

Mr Fox explained that the methodology used by Central Government has been developed from historic data and what has happened nationally. If this is going forward as a robust national formula, there needs to be a review of this methodology.

Secondly it was noted that the most deprived areas of the city appear to have been disadvantaged. This may be due to the current formula giving a greater weighting to Area Based Deprivation whilst the proposed national formula has a higher weighting for free school meals data It is unclear which is the better proxy indicator as there are issues around both but would welcome comments on which is the better indicator of additional needs.

Mr Fox discussed the robustness going forward of how the formula will work, the future funding for former ESG services, and Growth Fund. Some concerns have been raised but feedback has been generally quite positive. Requests to input further to the consultation will be included in Schools Bulletin, the deadline for the Authority's response is 22 March 2017.

The Chair opened the floor to questions or comments.

**A member raised concerns about the drastic impact on the WV10 side of the city and asked if this could be feedback to the consultation.** Mr Fox said this will be raised.

**A member noted the discrepancy between similar schools and expressed concerns about how these changes will be managed. A member asked for more understanding of how this will work.** When allocations actually come into effect in 19/20 there will be changes to the data that has been collated to inform the formula. Mr Fox said it may be worthwhile to review the Local Funding Formula for 2018/19 to transition some of the changes.

**A member asked how this compares to EAL funding.** The funding levels for the new factor are based on the average national approach based on three years' data.

**A member asked about consultation around the weighting, as it was seen as difficult to respond to this without a bigger understanding. They wanted to know how the consultation would move forward to understand how this will affect schools generally.** The outcome of final weighting would be received in Autumn; this will be aggregated up for schools' 2018/19 budgets but this information could be used to establish figures for 2019/20.

**A member asked if there would be any advice on how to manage these changes.** Mr Fox stated that it was about getting balance and that to base decisions on these indicative figures would not be advisable. The key driver will continue to be pupil numbers for budget planning.

**DECISION:**

- (i) Forum agreed to individually comment on the draft response by the Authority to the consultation on the National Funding Formula to feed into the Authority's response.

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**491 Any Other Business**

The Chair reminded members that this Schools Forum was the last Mr Fox would attend. It was noted that financial information is far more transparent now, That Schools' Forum have a greater understanding of what they can and cannot do.



On behalf of Schools' Forum, the Chair thanked Mr Fox for all his work and wished him well for the future.

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**492 Date of Future Meetings**

- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017

The meeting closed at

Signed: .....  
(Chair of Forum)

Date: .....