

## **Attendance**

### **Members of the Schools' Forum**

Karen Preston (Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Susan Lacey (Vice Chair)	Nursery Sector Head Teacher Representative
Kirsty Banks	Academies Sector Representative
Stephen Blower	Secondary Sector Headteacher Representative
Ben Davis	Academies Sector Representative
Lorraine Dawney	Special School Sector Substitute
Dan Hartley	Academies Sector Representative
Amandip Lally	Academies Sector Substitute
Nicola Licata	Academies Sector Representative
Bhaksho Raj	Academies Sector Representative
Zoe Rollinson	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Graham Tate	Academies Sector Representative
Lisa Thompson	Diocesan Schools Representative
Samantha Walker	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Lindsay Watson	Pupil Referral Unit Sector Substitute
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

### **Observer Status**

Bill Hague	Head of Business and Support Services
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### **In Attendance**

James Barlow	Finance Business Partner
Peter Green	Finance Manager
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
David Kirby	Service Manager School Organisation and Support
Kully Sandhu	Observer

## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*     *Title*

1            **Welcome and Introductions**

2            **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Schools' Forum members Lucia Jayne Turner, Louisa Craig, Gary Gentle, Samantha Kemp-Marshall, Ant Smith, Trisha James and Sarah Horton.

Lisa Thompson and Amandip Lally attended as substitutes for the Diocese and Academies Sector respectively.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Jacqui Coogan.

3            **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**

There were pecuniary declarations of interest made in relation to item 9 by members Nicola Licata, Bhaksho Raj, Graham Tate, Stephen Blower, Phil Williams and Karen Preston insofar as the schools they represented stood to gain from the Growth Fund. This item was for noting only.

4            **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 7 December 2023**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 7 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

5            **Matters Arising**

Minute 6

In terms of membership, it was clarified that a process has been followed in line with the Constitution in respect of members not attending meetings. In the initial stages, restorative conversations would take place, however the importance of representation of all sectors was stressed. It was noted that the Constitution may need to be revisited to make the process clear.

It was noted that a letter was in the process for being drafted to send to Stephen Smith as thanks for his contributions to Schools' Forum.

Resolved:

That the section of the Constitution be reworded to make it clear.

6            **Schools' Forum Membership and Attendance Update**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services provided a verbal update on Schools' Forum membership and attendance.

It was noted that in a recent call for members, expressions of interest in the Academy sector had exceeded number of vacancies therefore members were asked if there were any objections to increasing the number of Academy Substitutes. Discussions were also being held in relation to other vacancies.

Resolved:

1. That the Schools' Forum Membership and Attendance Update be received.
2. That the Constitution be updated with additional Academy Sector vacancies.

7 **Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2023 - 2024**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2021 – 2022 and highlighted future agenda items.

Schools' Forum members were invited to suggest any items they wished to receive at future meetings by contacting either Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services or Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer.

Resolved:

That the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2020 – 2021 be noted.

8 **Dedicated Schools Grant and School Funding 2024 - 2025**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner presented the report setting out the indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for 2024-2025 and the proposed local funding formula for the Schools block in Wolverhampton. As outlined at the Schools' Forum meeting on 7 December 2023, it will remain the duty of Local Authorities in 2024-2025 to set a local funding formula, in consultation with their Schools' Forum, to determine the allocation of funding from the Schools Block of the DSG to schools in the City.

It was confirmed which members were not eligible to vote for this item.

Following a vote on the recommended option, 12 eligible members voted for Option 1, none voted against and none abstained.

Following a vote on the proposed rates for de-delegation from maintained schools for 2024-2025, three eligible members voted for, none voted against and none abstained.

Following a vote on the proposed rates for maintained schools' contribution to Education Functions and School Improvement for 2024-2025, three eligible members voted for, none voted against and none abstained.

In response to a query around losing maintained schools to academisation and how this would impact the contributions for remaining maintained schools, it was noted that the Authority had factored this in and remaining maintained schools would not be asked to make up for any shortfall.

Resolved:

That members of Schools' Forum agree to:

1. Note the indicative DSG settlement for 2024-2025.
2. Endorse and recommend to Cabinet the agreed local funding formula option (which uses the same factors as the National Funding formula (NFF)). The results of a consultation with all mainstream schools in Wolverhampton on their preferred option will be presented at the meeting.

3. Note the resulting growth fund and budget allocations to schools in Wolverhampton.
4. Agree the proposed rates for de-delegation from maintained schools for 2024-2025.
5. Agree the proposed rates for maintained schools' contribution to Education Functions and School Improvement for 2024-2025.
6. Note that Schools' Forum will receive further reports in February 2024 detailing the breakdown of High Needs, Early Years and Central Services Blocks budgets along with a Schools block report detailing final school budget shares.

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### **Growth Fund Update**

David Kirby, Service Manager School Organisation and Support presented the report updating Schools' Forum on the deployment of the 2022–2023 Financial Year Growth Fund payment and outlines estimated Growth Fund allocations in 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 Financial Year.

It was highlighted that there had been a significant increase in the number of families arriving into the City that require a school place, particularly in year. It was noted that increase in demand was due to several factors. There had been a number of Government asylum schemes and recently there had been a recruitment drive by the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust that has seen a significant increase in families arriving. In addition, it was also linked to outcomes, OFSTED judgements and that it is a fantastic City to educate your child in and this is all really positive.

It was noted that this meant a number of new in year schemes had been implemented to meet demand increasing growth fund expenditure. It was stated that the City of Wolverhampton Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available across the City and must introduce additional places when they are required. Reception and year 7 duties had always been met, however there had been recent unprecedented levels of growth. It was noted that there is a robust and proven set of pupil projections in place and large numbers across the City received their first choice in Reception and Year 7 entry, although in year growth however is not abating.

It was requested by Schools' Forum members that there be regular updates on the Growth Fund as a standing item.

Resolved:

That Members of Schools' Forum agree to:

1. Note the 2022 - 2023 Growth Fund allocations (Appendix 1).
2. Note estimated 2023 - 2024 Growth Fund allocations (Appendix 2).
3. Note potential 2024 - 2025 Growth Fund allocation (Appendix 3).
4. Note requirement that if demand is greater than forecasted then a further report may be required to be submitted to Schools' Forum to request funding for additional in year growth fund payments for 2024-2025.
5. Note the anticipated demand for both the Primary and Secondary estates and the need for future Growth Funds to support both phases.
6. A standing item on Growth Fund being added to the agenda for Schools' Forum meetings.

10 **High Needs Sub-Group Update**

In the absence of an elected Chair for the High Needs Sub-Group Lorraine Dawney provided a verbal update on work undertaken by the group as a member.

Meetings had been set with representatives and substitutes in place and a Terms of Reference drawn up. Priorities had been identified as allocations to the High Needs block and transparency of funding.

Conversations had been ongoing with the Authority's Senior Analyst, Balraj Juss and a dashboard of data had been pulled together as a reference tool to meet need.

It was noted that the increase on the High Needs Block indicative funding for 2024-2025 would not cover the overspend forecast for 2023-2024 and increasing funding pressures forecast for 2024-2025

Resolved:

That the High Needs Sub-Group Update be received.

11 **Early Years Sub-Group Update**

Susan Lacey provided a verbal update in her capacity as Early Years Sub-Group Chair.

In respect of the extension of childcare provision for two- to two-and-a-half-year-olds, it was reported that the Early Years teams were undertaking a mapping exercise to determine need and methodology on how to provide the offer.

In response to a query around the status of the distribution of the underspend, it was noted that the Department for Education had now responded to the Local Authority however had raised some concerns. It had been noted that timing was an issue due to changes in the funding formula and that the distribution was not possible this financial year.

The DfE also raised the issue of distribution methods and a request that it be more targeted rather than a blanket approach. It was also advised that the overall balance position of the Dedicated Schools Grant should be considered. Further discussions are needed although Schools' Forum members noted that the money had accrued from the Early Years Block and not the High Needs block therefore it was felt that it should return to the Early Years settings.

It was added that some PVI settings were at risk of going out of business and this extra money could potentially alleviate this. It was noted further discussions would be held with the Director and Head of Service for Children's Services to work out a way forward.

In terms of Early Years staffing, it was highlighted that recruitment to Early Years was challenging; work was being undertaken with Higher Education settings to stimulate interest in the career path. It was put forward that there did not seem to be any apprenticeship opportunities for early years however it was noted that Walsall College were offering this.

In respect of formalising records for High Needs and Early Years Sub-Groups it was queried who would clerk the meetings and Phil Leivers, Head of Service Educational Excellence agreed to explore this with Democratic Services.

Resolved:

1. That the Early Years Sub-Group Update be received.
2. That Phil Leivers, Head of Service Educational Excellence confirm who would clerk the High Needs and Early Years sub-groups.

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**Any Other Business**

There was no other business raised.

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**Dates of future meetings**

Resolved:

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 29 February 2024 and further meeting dates would be provided in due course.

The Chair closed the meeting at 5:35 pm.