

Schools' Forum – Extraordinary Meeting

30 November 2023

Time 4.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Partnership Boards

Venue Hybrid / Committee Room 5 - Ground Floor, Civic Centre

Membership

Kirsty Banks	Academies Sector Representative
Stephen Blower	Secondary Sector Headteacher Representative
Rachael Brown	Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher Representative
Vivienne Bunce	Special School Sector Governor Representative
Kate Charles	Primary Sector Substitute
Louisa Craig	Academies Sector Representative
Ben Davis	Academies Sector Representative
Lorraine Dawney	Special School Sector Substitute
Louise Fall	Deputy Principal, City of Wolverhampton College
Gary Gentle	Diocesan Representative Substitute
Trisha James	Primary Sector Governor Representative
Susan Lacey	Nursery Sector Head Teacher Representative
Samantha Kemp-Marshall	Early Years (PVI Sector) Representative
Carroll McNally	Non-School Member Diocesan Schools Representative
Karen Preston	Academies Sector Representative
Bhaksho Raj	Academies Sector Representative
Zoe Rollinson	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Emma Smith	Nursery Sector Headteacher Substitute
Stephen Smith	Primary Sector Governor Representative
Graham Tate	Academies Sector Representative
Laura Thackaberry	Special School Headteacher Substitute
Lisa Thompson	Diocesan Schools Representative
Lucia Jayne Turner	Nursery Sector Governor Representative
Samantha Walker	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Lindsay Watson	Pupil Referral Unit Sector Substitute
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

Observer Status

Councillor Jacqui Coogan	Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Education
Bill Hague	Head of Business and Support Services
Alison Hinds	Director of Children's Services
Brenda Wile	Deputy Director of Education

Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact:

Contact Shelley Humphries
Tel/Email 01902 554070 shelley.humphries@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Copies of other agendas and reports are available from:

Website <http://wolverhampton.cmis.uk.com/decisionmaking>

Email democratic.support@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Tel 01902 555043

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Some items are discussed in private because of their confidential or commercial nature. These reports are not available to the public.

Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Welcome and Introductions |
| 2 | Apologies |
| 3 | Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
[To elect and appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair of Schools' Forum for Academic Year 2023 - 2024.] |
| 4 | Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality |
| 5 | Minutes of Previous Meetings - 29 June 2023 and 5 October 2023 (Pages 1 - 10)
[To approve the minutes of 29 June 2023 and 5 October 2023 as a correct record.] |
| 6 | Matters Arising
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on xxxx] |

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION OR DECISION

- | | |
|----|---|
| 7 | Early Years Distribution
[To approve proposals for the distribution of the Early Years overspend.] |
| 8 | Schools' Forum Meeting Format
[Discussion item on the current format of meetings.] |
| 9 | Any Other Business |
| 10 | Dates of future meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 December 23• 25 January 24• 29 February 2024• 27 June 2024 (tbc) |

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<p>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</p>	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Schools' Forum</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">Minutes - 29 June 2023</h3>
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Attendance

Members of Schools' Forum

Karen Preston (Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Susan Lacey (Vice Chair)	Nursery Sector Headteacher Representative
Stephen Blower	Secondary Sector Representative
Louisa Craig	Academies Sector Representative
Ben Davis	Academies Sector Representative
Lorraine Dawney	Special School Sector Substitute
Samantha Kemp-Marshall	Non-School Member PVI Early Years Representative
Zoe Rollinson	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Stephen Smith	Primary Sector Governor Representative
Graham Tate	Academies Sector Representative
Lisa Thompson	Non-School Member Diocesan Schools Representative
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

Observer Status

Brenda Wile	Deputy Director of Education
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In Attendance

James Barlow	Finance Business Partner
Peter Green	Finance Manager
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Phil Leivers	Head of Service Educational Excellence
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 Vivienne Bunce, Amarjit Cheema, Bhaksho Raj, Kirsty Banks, Lucia Jayne Turner and Lindsay Watson.

Apologies were also received from Emma Bennett and Bill Hague.

3 **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**

There were no declarations of interest or confidentiality.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 16 February 2023**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 16 February 2023 be approved as a correct record.

5 **Matters Arising**

Minute 11

In response to a query around teachers' pay awards, it was confirmed that conversations were ongoing between Finance and Education colleagues within the Council to establish a basis to make the payments. It had been hoped to top-slice and pay out to school nurseries as had happened previously however on closer inspection, it was found it would need to be paid on a supplement basis. Further information was awaited on how this would be implemented before making a decision and an update would be provided once available.

In response to another query, it was confirmed that as per the arrangement outlined in the Scheme for Financing Schools, the LA still paid interest to maintained schools and nurseries on surplus balances attached to a school. Interest was not currently charged on deficit balances. The current Early Years balance was not attached to specific schools, although grant balances were typically spent in-year and this occurrence was unusual. Once the funds were allocated to specific settings, these would then gain interest in the usual way.

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

Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer provided a verbal update on Schools' Forum membership and attendance. It was noted all terms coming to an end were being reviewed and the usual steps were being taken to fill vacancies.

It was also requested to undertake a review of members who had not attended three consecutive meetings without a substitute.

It was noted that Schools' Forum members Sarah Whittington, Amarjit Cheema and Daryl Asbury would be stepping down and Carroll McNally would be retiring at the end of August. The Chair expressed thanks to all for their contributions to Schools' Forum during their respective terms. It was agreed to establish who would be chairing the High Needs Subgroup going forward.

It was also reported that Special School Headteacher Substitute Lorraine Dawney would be moving into the Representative role, whilst Laura Thackaberry would be joining Schools' Forum as the Special School Headteacher Substitute.

In terms of vacancies, a discussion followed around how to promote and raise awareness of Schools' Forum and its functions to governors and headteachers during which it was suggested to communicate vacancies in bulletins and to add a Schools' Forum overview to headteachers inductions. It was considered how to widen the scope of the Forum and involve other officers to offer further perspective.

Resolved:

1. That a review be undertaken of Schools' Forum attendance.
2. That an update be provided on the new Chair arrangements for High Needs Sub-Group.
3. That methods of raising awareness with education colleagues of Schools' Forum and its functions be explored.

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

The Chair presented the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2023 – 2024 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 2023 – 2024 be noted.

8 **Surplus and Deficit Budget Monitoring**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner presented the Surplus and Deficit Budget Monitoring report and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update to Schools' Forum on the Local Authority processes of monitoring schools having or forecasting a deficit balance and schools carrying excess surplus balances as well as the balances held within Wolverhampton maintained schools as at 31 March 2023.

It was noted that surplus balances had reduced although not as much as originally forecast in budget plans. Only three schools reportedly held deficit balances at the end of 2022-2023, which was positive. 33 schools held excess surplus balances and letters were going out to schools to request plans for these surpluses.

It was highlighted that the range of surpluses seemed wide and a query was raised around why this might be. This was acknowledged and it was noted that this would be examined further and narrative provided within the next report should there be any outliers or emerging trends.

A concern was raised around schools with deficit balances and if these may affect certain schools in the future in terms of budgeting, financing staff, etc. It was noted this was beginning to show already and assurances were offered that cost pressures were being monitored by the Authority who would work with schools wherever possible to provide support.

Concerns were raised around this year's funding being spent on children in this year's cohort.

Resolved:

1. That the level of balances in maintained schools as at 31 March 2023 be noted.
2. That the approach to challenging schools around the level of their balances and their plans for those resources be noted.
3. That the monitoring and reporting methodology be noted.
4. That an analysis be undertaken of the range of surpluses and explanatory narrative incorporated into future reports.

9 **Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2022-2023**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner presented the Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2022-2023 report and highlighted salient points. The report sought to inform Members of the Schools' Forum on the final expenditure against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2022-2023.

It was noted that there was still another update to follow in July 2023 from government on the Early Years block funding figures based on census figures which may potentially result in a clawback.

In terms of the High Needs block, it was highlighted that the overspend had reduced by £300,000 by the end of the year.

In terms of the additionality overspend, it was noted that the education colleagues were aware this may be the case as there was a steadily increasing number of children with EHCPs and additional needs in the City currently attending mainstream school who may need to be in a special setting. The Chair requested that members share this discussion with colleagues.

A concern was raised around the impact of inflation on future budgets and schools' balances. It was acknowledged that the current financial climate was very changeable however officers were working hard to manage Schools Block excess surplus balances, passporting as much additional funding as possible through the High Needs Block as well as the uplift to matrix banding.

A query was also raised around a rise in energy costs as a large unplanned increase had been received at one nursery and whether this had been experienced across the board or if it was just an isolated case. James Barlow, Finance Business Partner and Peter Green, Finance Manager agreed to investigate the matter and provide feedback.

Resolved:

1. That Schools' Forum note the latest 2022-2023 DSG allocation published by the Department for Education.
2. That Schools' Forum receive the report on the final outturn against the DSG in 2022-2023.
3. That the query on increased energy prices be investigated and feedback provided.

10 **Agreed Schools' Forum Meeting Formats**

The Chair led on a verbal decision item and invited Schools' Forum members to vote on the format of meeting going forward.

The options presented were either:

1. to continue to meet in the hybrid format with members mainly attending in person and the option to dial in

or

2. to return to fully face to face with no option to dial in.

Members felt that the hybrid option often meant not all members were fully engaged and sometimes technical issues disrupted the meeting.

Following a vote, it was unanimously agreed that the meetings return to fully face to face going forward.

Resolved:

That Schools' Forum agree to return to fully face to face meetings with no option to dial in.

11 **Early Years Subgroup Update**

Phil Leivers, Head of Service Educational Excellence provided the verbal update on the Early Years Subgroup. It was reported that Susan Lacey had agreed to chair the Early Years Subgroup and there had been some interest expressed from other Schools' Forum members to join. Discussions had taken place with Subgroup members and Phil Leivers and a Terms of Reference document had been drafted. It was noted the funds had been sitting for some time therefore there was a call to determine how to allocate the funds as soon as possible.

The Chair extended thanks to all who had volunteered to participate.

Resolved:

That decisions on Early Years funding allocations be driven forward and an update provided at the next meeting of Schools' Forum.

12 **High Needs Subgroup Update**

Resolved:

That the High Needs Subgroup Update be deferred.

13 **Any Other Business**

A query was raised around a possible Early Years Supplementary Grant and if there was any update on this. It was noted that an additional Schools grant had been announced after the budget had been set, which was being passported out at school level, as well as an additional grant for Special Schools. James Barlow agreed to clarify this outside of the meeting and provide an update.

Resolved:

That James Barlow, Finance Business Partner establish what new funding was available and provide an update.

14

Dates for future meetings

Dates for future meetings were confirmed as:

- 5 October 2023
- 7 December 2023
- 25 January 2024
- 29 February 2024

The Chair closed the meeting at 17:21 pm.

Schools' Forum – Informal Meeting

Minutes - 5 October 2023

Attendance

Members of the Schools' Forum

Karen Preston (Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Susan Lacey (Vice Chair)	Nursery Sector Headteacher Representative
Kirsty Banks	Academies Sector Representative
Stephen Blower	Secondary Sector Representative
Stephen Smith	Primary Sector Governor Representative
Lisa Thompson	Non-School Member Diocesan Schools Representative
Samantha Walker	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative

Observer Status

Bill Hague	Head of School Business and Support
Councillor Jacqui Coogan	Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Work

In Attendance

James Barlow	Finance Business Partner
Peter Green	Finance Manager
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Welcome and Introductions**

It was noted that the meeting was inquorate and agreed by those members present that the meeting proceed on an informal basis with decisions ratified at the next quorate meeting.

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services proceeded to take the Chair on this occasion and began by welcoming Councillor Jacqui Coogan as the new Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Education.

2 **Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

Resolved:

That the election of Chair and Vice Chair be deferred.

3 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Schools' Forum members Lorraine Dawney, Louisa Craig, Ben Davis, Trisha James, Louise Fall, Graham Tate, Phil Williams and Samantha Kemp-Marshall.

Apologies were also received from Peter Merry.

4 **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**

There were no declarations of interest or confidentiality.

5 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 29 June 2023**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 29 June 2023 be approved as a correct record, subject to ratification at the next quorate meeting.

6 **Matters Arising**

Concerns were raised in terms of the increasing number of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and how they would be funded. The concerns were acknowledged and it was noted that it was a complex matter, although similar increases were being seen in other areas and Wolverhampton was in a better position than many with a deficit of £80,000 in the High Needs Block. The next High Needs Subgroup meeting was planned for 17 October 2023 where forecasting was high on the agenda and the usual update would be brought to Schools' Forum following this.

In respect of minute 10, it was considered whether the format of Schools' Forum needed to be revisited as the meeting was inquorate due to lower attendance than usual.

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner provided an update on the energy costs query raised at minute 9 and it was noted that communications were being cascaded out to schools, although the internal Energy Team could be contacted directly with any queries. It was noted that a Business Manager Forum was forthcoming, to which a member of the Energy Team had been invited and who would then feed any updates back to schools.

Resolved:

That the format for Schools' Forum be revisited.

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

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Schools' Forum Membership 2023 - 2024 Update and highlighted membership updates.

Resolved:

That the Schools' Forum Membership 2023- 2024 Update be received.

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

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2023 – 2024 and highlighted future agenda items. Members were encouraged to forward any suggestions for agenda items to Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services or the Chair.

Resolved:

That the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2023 – 2024 be received.

9 **Draft Schools' Forum Constitution 2023 - 2024**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Draft Schools' Forum Constitution 2023 – 2024. It was noted that a risk may be posed to debate should the maintained representation be reduced any further, therefore no changes had been made to ensure all functions would be met.

The Draft Schools' Forum Constitution 2023 – 2024 was approved, subject to ratification at the next quorate meeting.

Resolved:

That the Draft Schools' Forum Constitution 2023 – 2024 be approved, subject to ratification at the next quorate meeting.

10 **Devolved Formula Capital and School Budget Update**

Peter Green, Finance Manager presented the Devolved Formula Capital and School Budget Update report and highlighted key points. The report provided Members of the Schools' Forum with the Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) balances held at 31 August 2023, and the balances held within the Local Authority's maintained schools.

In response to a query around whether approval was needed to spend excess DFC balances, it was noted that schools were usually approached to discuss and agree plans to spend this money first.

Resolved:

1. That members of the Schools' Forum note the evolved Formula Capital balances held in schools at 31 August 2023.
2. That members of the Schools' Forum note the update on school budget balances.

11 **High Needs Sub-Group Update**

There was no representative present as Chair of the High Needs Subgroup.

Resolved:

That the High Needs Sub-Group Update be deferred.

12 **Early Years Subgroup Update**

Susan Lacey provided an update in her capacity as Chair of the Early Years Subgroup and highlighted the proposal that had been discussed at the last meeting in relation to the distribution of the Early Years overspend.

It was proposed to distribute £1 million of the total amongst nursery settings as soon as possible whilst retaining £781,000 as a contingency fund, should the hourly rate drop for example. This was approved by members present however it was noted that the meeting was inquorate and the decision would also be subject to ESFA final approval. It was noted that there were no clear regulations on how to deal with such an underspend.

Resolved:

That £1 million of the total underspend be distributed amongst nursery settings whilst retaining £781,000 as a contingency, subject to ratification at the next quorate meeting and final approval from ESFA.

13 **SEND Forecasting and Place Planning**

Resolved:

That the item be resolved with the High Needs Sub-Group.

14 **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

15 **Dates for future meetings**

Dates for future meetings were confirmed as:

- 7 December 2023
- 25 January 2024
- 29 February 2024

Resolved:

The Chair closed the meeting at 16:50