

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