

## Attendance

### Members of the Schools' Forum

Karen Preston (Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Kirsty Banks	Academies Sector Representative
Rachael Brown	Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher Representative
Louisa Craig	Academies Sector Representative
Ben Davis	Academies Sector Representative
Susan Lacey	Nursery Sector Head Teacher Representative
Carroll McNally	Non-School Member Diocesan Schools Representative
Bhaksho Raj	Academies Sector Representative
Zoe Rollinson	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Andrea Stephens	Secondary Sector Headteacher Substitute
Graham Tate	Academies Sector Representative
Lisa Thompson	Diocesan Schools Representative
Samantha Walker	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Lisa-Anne Westwood	Academies Sector Representative
Sarah Whittington	Special School Sector Head Teacher Representative
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

### Observer Status

Bill Hague	Head of School Business and Support Services
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Work

### In Attendance

James Barlow	Finance Business Partner
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Phil Leivers	Head of Service Educational Excellence
Terry Shaw	Finance Manager
John Wood	Lead Commissioner for SEND

*Item No.*     *Title*

1            **Welcome and Introductions**

2            **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Schools' Forum members Stephen Smith, Daryl Asbury and Lucia Jayne-Turner.

Apologies were also received from Brenda Wile.

3            **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**

There were no declarations of interest or confidentiality.

4            **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 9 December 2021**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 9 December 2021 be approved as a correct record.

5            **Matters Arising**

It was noted that the Early Years item deferred from the last meeting would be a verbal update at this meeting rather than a decision item.

Resolved:

That agenda item 9 would be an information item only.

6            **Schools' Forum Membership 2021- 2022 Update**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Schools' Forum Membership 2021- 2022 Update.

It was reported that Claire Foster had now retired and thanks were extended for her contributions to Forum. Emma Smith was welcomed as the Substitute Representative for the Nursery Sector. It was reported that conversations with ConnectEd were ongoing to fill other remaining vacancies.

Forum also welcomed Lindsay Watson as the Substitute Representative for the Pupil Referral Unit Sector and thanks were offered to Stuart Playford.

Resolved:

That the Schools' Forum Membership 2021- 2022 Update be received.

7            **Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2021 - 2022**

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 2021 – 2022 be noted.

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### **Dedicated Schools Grant and School Funding 2022 - 2023**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Dedicated Schools Grant and School Funding 2022 – 2023 report and highlighted salient points. The report outlined the anticipated Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for 2022-2023 and the proposed local funding formula for the Schools block in Wolverhampton.

It provided indicative DSG settlements for the Schools Block, High Needs Block, Central Schools and Services Block (CSSB), and the Early Years Block.

It was noted that the initial figures had been published by the DfE in December 2022 however there had been a further announcement on 12 January 2022 outlining an additional £1.86m Health and Social Care Levy funding for the High Needs Block. This brought the total DSG High Needs allocation for 2022-2023 up to £52.20 million and the revised figures had been included within the report.

It was noted that the Council was also required to have the local funding arrangements agreed by Cabinet in February 2022, enabling the Council to notify schools of their final budget share by the time of the 17 February 2022 Schools' Forum meeting.

It was noted that the CSSB allocation appeared to have reduced over time however it was clarified that this included historical factors, such as tri-partied funding and severance arrangement costs, would eventually phase out.

There had been a reduction in the Early Years Block allocation since last year and a meeting had been planned with Head of the Early Years Block,

A discussion followed during which it was acknowledged that the information had not been released in a timely enough manner to allow schools to fully absorb and understand the implications. Some members reported they had felt that the consultation had not reached them. Assurances were offered that there had been conversations taking place with School Improvement and support offered to schools in how to manage the implications of the funding allocations. Members expressed appreciation for the Schools Improvement service.

It was clarified that there would be further consultation on funding beyond 2022 – 2023 and this would not be decided upon at this meeting.

A query was raised around whether the information within the report related to maintained schools only or if academies were included. It was noted that further meetings and consultations were required with School Improvement and other education colleagues to discuss that the implications were. It was agreed that the implications for academies would be included in this and feedback would be provided.

Concerns raised by Forum members were acknowledged and it was noted that a detailed analysis of budgets going forward had been requested by the Chief Executive and was in the process of being drafted.

Schools' Forum welcomed an offer from Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre to advocate on a political level on behalf of Wolverhampton schools for the Department for

Education to address the timescales for releasing information and the need for thorough consultation and engagement with schools.

It was noted that Schools' Forum had opposed the de-delegation during consultation. It was agreed that the recommendations made in the report would be approved subject to the provision of further information to individual schools around what the settlements would mean for them.

Resolved:

1. That Schools' Forum note the anticipated DSG settlement for 2022-2023.
2. That Schools' Forum endorse and recommend to Cabinet the proposed national funding formula.
3. That Schools' Forum note the resulting growth fund and budget allocations to schools in Wolverhampton.
4. That Schools' Forum agree the proposed rates for de-delegation from maintained schools for 2022-2023.
5. That Schools' Forum agree the proposed rates for maintained schools' contribution to Education Functions for 2022-2023.
6. That it be noted that Schools' Forum will receive further reports in February 2022 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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### **Early Years - Options for Future Use of Underspend**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services provided a verbal update on the position for the Early Years Underspend.

It was acknowledged that there was much to consider in terms of need and promotion around early years education. It was noted that provision had been impacted by the pandemic and that early years education in all settings should benefit from the underspend.

It was reported that draft proposals would be submitted to internal Scrutiny once fully formed. A workshop was planned for 4 February 2022 to which Schools' forum members would be invited to provide their feedback on proposals.

It was acknowledged that the impact of COVID had not just been on pupil numbers but had affected staffing levels and budgets in terms of providing personal protection equipment and handwashing supplies. It was noted that there had previously been no COVID relief funding for early years settings.

Predominantly, though, there were concerns around the impact on emotional resilience and missed education for which support was needed. There was a plea to include even the very youngest children in strategic planning.

Assurances were offered that robust proposals would be explored to ensure the greatest impact with the money.

Resolved:

That the update on Early Years - Options for Future Use of Underspend be received.

10 **Budget Monitoring Update**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner provided a verbal update on Budget Monitoring. It was reported that there were no new issues with deficits though reports of surplus balances had doubled. This was thought to be as a result of COVID therefore was an unusual situation.

It was clarified that budgets were monitored by the Authority and schools reporting a surplus were required to submit plans on how the money was to be allocated. The returns received so far for these recent underspends had been considered robust following review and had included plans to improve school environments.

Due to increased pressure already faced by schools in addressing COVID-related matters, the Authority were maintaining monitoring processes as was appropriate but awaiting February's outturn before taking any further action.

Once the situation had begun to return to some semblance of normality, there would be an exercise to examine 2022 – 2023 surpluses in greater detail to monitor any recurring surpluses and discuss any action to be taken.

It was acknowledged that this was a sensible approach as funding was intended for the cohort moving through the school at that time.

It was noted that challenges had been experienced in spending the money in time due to factors beyond schools' control, such as work completion delays caused by building contractors.

Resolved:

That the Budget Monitoring Update be received.

11 **High Needs Sub-Group Update**

In her capacity as Chair of the High Needs Sub-Group, Sarah Whittington provided a verbal update on work undertaken by the group.

The last meeting of the High Needs Sub-group had taken place on 6 January 2022.

The agenda had included a Budget Monitoring update and the group had been advised of the increase in terms of the High Needs block. The 2021 – 2022 outturn was due to be presented at the next High Needs Sub-group meeting following Cabinet.

It was noted that the Health and Social Care levy and how this would be allocated would be raised; it was requested that further clarification on this be provided and shared with Schools' Forum.

A commissioning update had been provided by John Wood, SEND Commissioning Lead and it was reported that meetings had been held with schools. Out of City placements sufficiency with the City, designations, special school or resources bases, etc were now being worked through.

It was confirmed that there was no update on Penn Hall School Residential as yet however Bill Hague, Head of Service School Business and Support Services agreed to provide this at the next High Needs Sub-group meeting.

The matrix review had been delayed although bandings had been agreed. A Council Officer task and finish group had been established to examine weighting and funding and will provide Schools' Forum with an update once available.

It was noted that due to staffing changes, the Terms of Reference for the High Needs Sub-Group was in need of refreshing and would be presented to the next High Needs Sub-group meeting.

It was confirmed that the outturn position for 2021 – 2022 and DSG allocations for the High Needs Block 2022 - 2023 including the additional allocations from the Health and Social Care Levy funding would be reported on at the next High Needs Sub-Group meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the High Needs Sub-Group Update be received.
2. That the Terms of Reference for the High Needs Sub-Group be refreshed and presented at a future Schools' Forum meeting following approval from High Needs Sub-group.
3. That an update on Penn Hall School Residential be provided at the next meeting of High Needs Sub-Group.

12 **Any Other Business**

Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre wished to record his thanks and admiration to all school colleagues for their hard work and support during what had been an incredibly challenging time and that this be communicated to staff through the usual appropriate channels.

Resolved:

That Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre's thanks be communicated to all school colleagues.

13 **Dates for future meetings**

The next meeting was confirmed as 17 February 2022.

Proposed dates were as below and Forum members were asked to contact Democratic Services if there were any known clashes:

- **30 June 2022**
- **29 Sep 2022**
- **1 Dec 2022**
- **19 Jan 2023**
- **16 Feb 2023**

The Chair closed the meeting at 17:22.