

Attendance

Members of the Schools' Forum

Karen Preston (Vice-Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Rachael Brown	Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher Representative
Louisa Craig	Academies Sector Representative
Fiona Gillespie	Special School Sector Substitute
Trisha James	Primary Sector Governor Substitute
Susan Lacey	Nursery Sector Head Teacher Representative
James Ludlow	Secondary Sector Headteacher Representative
Jeremy Parkes	Academies Sector Representative
Bhaksho Raj	Academies Sector Representative
Stephen Smith	Primary Sector Governor Representative
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

In attendance

James Barlow	Senior Accounting Officer
Emma Bennett	Director of Children's Services
Bill Hague	Head of Business and Support Services
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Terry Shaw	Finance Manager

Item No. *Title*

1 **Welcome and Introductions**

2 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Barry Bond, Ian Browne, Sarah Whittington, Samantha Walker, Lucia Jane Turner, Zoe Rollinson, Jon Dovey and new member Lisa-Anne Westwood. It was reported that Barry Bond had submitted apologies due to being in recovery from medical treatment he had been receiving and it noted that it was the first meeting that he had not attended since becoming a member. It was agreed that Schools' Forum members would contribute to a gift to wish him well in his recovery.

3 **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**

There were no declarations of interest or confidentiality.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 20 January 2020**

Resolved:

That the minutes from the meeting of 20 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 **Matters Arising**

In respect of paragraph 1 of minute 9, a concern was raised in respect of ensuring funding remained in Wolverhampton schools. It was noted that the local authority

could oversee the funding allocated to maintained schools, however academies were more fragmented. It was noted that the local authority had no role where academy trusts were concerned, however they could be held to account by the commissioner and regular audits took place.

6 Schools' Forum Membership 2019 - 2020

The Chair welcomed new members Rachael Brown to represent the Pupil Referral Units and her substitute was named as Stuart Playford. Daryl Asbury was also welcomed and it was noted that Lisa-Anne Westwood had been added to the membership.

It was noted that Louisa Craig was the representative from St Francis and St Clare Catholic Multi Academy Company and it was requested that the Membership be corrected to reflect this.

Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation presented the Schools Forum Membership 2019 – 2020. It was noted that some vacancies still remained however the usual steps were being taken to fill them.

Resolved:

1. That the current Schools' Forum Membership 2019 – 2020 be noted.
2. That the Schools' Forum Membership 2019 – 2020 be corrected to read:
Louisa Craig (St Francis and St Clare Catholic Multi Academy Company).

7 Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2019 - 2020

Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation presented the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2019 – 2020 for noting. It was reported that the new Forward Plan for 2020 – 2021 would be presented at the next meeting of Schools' Forum.

Schools' Forum members were invited to suggest any items they wished to receive at Schools' Forum. It was requested that any suggestions be sent to the clerk of Schools' Forum or Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation.

Resolved:

1. That the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2019 – 2020 be noted.
2. That any suggestions for items for discussion at Schools' Forum be sent to Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation or the clerk of Schools' Forum, Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer.

8 Surplus/Deficit Budget Monitoring Update

Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation provided a verbal update on Surplus and Deficit Budget Monitoring. It was noted that a list of schools with excess balances had been compiled and meetings had been held with all of them to discuss their plans for the surplus funds carried over. It was reported that all these schools had provided robust plans to spend the money, with some schools having already begun to implement these plans. As such, it was noted that there would be no requirements for Arbitration Panels.

Schools which had reported an existing deficit, forecast a future deficit or not provided a plan had been approached and offered advice on applying for a licensed deficit.

In terms of nursery schools, it was noted that there was still some uncertainty around the supplement funding and it was hoped this would be addressed as part of the spending review. It was agreed that an item on the spending review would be scheduled on the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2020 – 2021 for a future meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the update on Surplus and Deficit Budget Monitoring be noted.
2. That the spending review report be scheduled on the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2020 – 2021.

9 **Dedicated Schools Grant - Schools Block 2020-2021**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner presented the Dedicated Schools Grant – Schools Block 2020 – 2021 report and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update on the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2020 – 2021 following agreement to apply the local funding formula and in accordance with the guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

A concern was raised in respect of significant in-year growth and the impact of having to wait until the following year to receive funding. Bill Hague offered assurance that this matter could be raised with the DfE. It was reported that officers had previously attended workshops and often the definition of growth had been difficult to determine. Bill Hague offered to invite affected members of Schools' Forum to a meeting with Bill Hague and James Barlow to analyse figures and go over the specifics.

Resolved:

That Schools' Forum note the individual schools' budget settlement for 2020 – 2021.

10 **Dedicated Schools Grant - High Needs Funding Block 2020-2021**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Funding Block 2020 – 2021 report and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update on the High Needs Block of the DSG 2020 – 2021 and sought approval to allocate the funding in accordance with the guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

In response to a query regarding out of city pupils, it was noted that there were a number of factors as to why Wolverhampton pupils needed to attend out of city special schools, such as from parental choice or oversubscription in Wolverhampton schools. It was reported that additional funding had been allocated and work was being undertaken to identify priorities and increase matrices. It was added that new funding mechanisms were being implemented over the next two years with additional monies being set aside. It was also noted that extensive work was taking place within the Council to cultivate inclusion in mainstream schools within the City. It was hoped that this may also reduce the numbers attending special schools in Wolverhampton therefore reducing the necessity for children to attend special schools outside the City as a result.

It was clarified that net inflow was on a daily basis and operated on a recoupment basis. In terms of resource bases, a consultation had taken place and interest had been expressed. Evaluations had taken place and letters would be sent out by the end of the week.

Resolved:

1. That Schools' Forum agree to note the anticipated settlement for 2020-2021.
2. That Schools' Forum approve the allocation of High Needs expenditure for 2020-2021 shown at Appendix 1.
3. That Schools' Forum approve the revised matrix bands for 2020-2021.
4. That Schools' Forum approve a total per place contribution for maintained pupil referral units and Special Schools to support the delivery of local authority retained education functions previously funded by Education Services Grant.

11 **Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block 2020-2021**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Dedicated Schools Grant – Early Years Block 2020 – 2021 report and highlighted salient points. The report provided a summary of the Early Years funding block of the DSG 2020-2021, as illustrated in the DSG 2020 to 2021 announcement made by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in December 2019.

A query was raised in terms of maintained supplements and it was clarified that there was potential for carry forward as there had been in previous years. There had been some issues around roll numbers and finance officers had been awaiting confirmed of funds from the ESFA. It was agreed that this information would be included in a report to Schools' Forum for a future meeting. It was noted that funding was provided on a monthly basis rather than quarterly and that Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation would confer with Amanda Newbold, Head of School Improvement to clarify this point.

Resolved:

That Schools' Forum agree to the proposed use of the Early Years Block grant for 2020-2021 as recommended to Schools' Forum on 5 December 2019.

12 **Dedicated Schools Grant - Central School Services Block 2020-2021**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner presented the Dedicated Schools Grant – Central Schools Services Block 2020 – 2021 and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update on the Central Schools Services block of the DSG Services and sought approval for a list of items that the Local Authority manages centrally on the behalf of schools and academies.

It was highlighted that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub officer had not been appointed until October 2019, therefore the officer would continue in post until March 2021. Following this, a discussion would take place with Schools' Forum on how to take this forward.

Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre thanked Schools' Forum members and Council officers in attendance for all their hard work.

Resolved:

That Schools' Forum agree the individual lines of the proposed budget allocation of the Central Schools Services Block for 2020-2021.

13 **High Needs Sub-Group Update**

Resolved:

That the High Needs Sub-Group Update be noted.

14 **Any Other Business**

The Chair highlighted the Risk Protection Arrangement report and attached appendix Extending the Academies Risk Protection Arrangement to Local Authority Maintained Schools Sector – Government Consultation Response for noting.

A concern was raised around school closures due to confirmed cases of Coronavirus. It was clarified that guidance was being issued by the Department for Education and schools were advised to ring 111 or take advice from the Authority before taking any action on closures. It was noted that the Authority would be taking advice on any final decision from Public Health England.

Resolved:

That Schools' Forum note the contents of the Department for Education's Response to their consultation on extending the academies Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) to local authority-maintained schools sector and the Council's intended approach.

15 **Dates for future meetings**

The proposed dates for City of Wolverhampton Schools' Forum meetings for 2020 – 2021 were announced as follows:

2 July 2020

1 October 2020

3 December 2020

14 January 2021

25 February 2021

It was agreed that Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer would send the dates around to the Schools' Forum membership. It was requested that any clashes with other meetings or forums be highlighted so alternative dates could be found. It was noted that calendar invites would be forwarded once these dates were confirmed.

Resolved:

1. That Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer share the proposed dates with the Schools' Forum membership.
2. That any clashes with other meetings or forums be highlighted so alternative dates could be found.