

## Attendance

### Members of the Schools' Forum

Karen Preston (Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Daryl Asbury	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
Andrea Stephens	Secondary Sector Headteacher Substitute
Graham Tate	Academies Sector Representative
Lisa Thompson	Diocesan Schools Representative
Samantha Walker	Primary Sector Headteacher Substitute
Lisa-Anne Westwood	Academies Sector Representative
Sarah Whittington	Special School Sector Headteacher Representative
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

### Observer Status

Emma Bennett	Director of Children's and Adult Services
Bill Hague	Head of School Business and Support Services
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Work

### In Attendance

Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Stephen Larking	Children's Commissioning Transformation Lead
Alison Shannon	Chief Accountant
Terry Shaw	Finance Manager
Brenda Wile	Deputy Director of Education

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

*Item No.*     *Title*

- 1 Welcome and Introductions**
- 2 Apologies**  
Apologies were received from Stephen Smith, Ian Moore and Lucia Turner.
- 3 Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**  
There were no declarations of confidentiality.

An Academies Representative declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 12.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 25 February 2021**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 25 February 2021 be approved.

5 **Matters Arising**

In respect of minute 10 it was noted that an update on maintained nurseries had been addressed and it was the rate rather than the formula which was discussed.

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 outlined that a number of terms would be coming to an end after September 2021 and the process of contacting colleagues to establish whether they wished to continue had begun. Any remaining vacancies were also being followed up in the usual manner.

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 2020 – 2021 be noted.

8 **Surplus and Deficit Budget Monitoring**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Surplus and Deficit Budget Monitoring report and highlighted key points. The report provided Members of Schools' Forum with an update on the Local Authority processes of monitoring schools having or forecasting a deficit balance and schools carrying excess surplus balances; and to note the balances held within Wolverhampton maintained schools at 31 March 2021.

It was reported that the Scheme for Financing Schools provided an option for the clawback of excess surplus balances, which would be redistributed to schools through the arbitration panel.

It was acknowledged that all schools had now submitted their budget plans for 2021, 2022-2023 and 2023 – 2024.

It was noted that schools had been expecting balance forms however it had been advised that this was on hold due to the new process and a query was raised on when this process would be known. It was noted that this was being finalised with Phil Leivers, Head of Service – Educational Excellence and would be communicated in due course.

Resolved:

1. That the level of balances in maintained schools at 31 March 2021 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 update on the new balance monitoring forms process would be communicated once finalised.

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

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2020-2021 report and highlighted salient points. The report sought to inform members of the Schools' Forum of the final expenditure against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2020-2021.

It was noted that for financial year 2020 – 2021, the City of Wolverhampton's initial allocation had been £268.39 million across the four DSG funding blocks. In March 2021, that figure was revised to £268.46 million and a final updated figure would be published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in July 2021.

It was reported that the Schools Funding Block carried forward a balance of £1.96 million relating to an underspend on the budget for growth funding. It was planned to use this to support growth needs in future years.

The Central Schools Services Block had a brought forward underspend of £0.04 million in 2021-2022 to support the appointment of the ONE System Manager as outlined in the report. This amount had been carried forward into 2021-2022.

In terms of the High Needs Block Outturn, the budget of £35.90 million was made up of the government's allocation (£36.19 million), and a small brought forward deficit balance from 2019-2020 (£0.29 million).

An overspend of £0.33 million on the High Needs Block in 2020-2021 which will be offset against the 2021-2022 allocation as mandated by ESFA. Additional work was being undertaken in 2021-2022 to improve forecasting particularly in the areas of overspend in 2020-2021.

It was noted that the Early Years Block had a brought forward underspend of £1.63 million, which had increased in 2020-2021 to a carried forward underspend of £2.36 million.

It was reported that additional work was being undertaken here also in 2021-2022 to utilise the amount carried forward to further support the City's Early Years settings.

Resolved:

1. That members of Schools Forum note the most recent DSG allocation for 2020-2021 as published by the Department for Education.
2. That members of Schools Forum receive the report on the final out turn against the DSG in 2020-2021.

10

**Schools Insurance Arrangements 2021 - 2022**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Schools Insurance Arrangements 2021 – 2022 report and highlighted key points.

The report provided a rationale for the decisions made to cover insurable risks for the year 2021 – 2022.

It was noted that the risk protection insurance scheme that was originally just for academies was now being rolled out to all schools.

Assurances were given that the aim was to secure the best deal possible for schools.

Resolved:

That members of Schools' Forum note the decision and rationale for the arrangements to cover insurable risks for the year 2021-2022.

11

**New Specialist Provision Start Up Fund**

Steven Larking, Children's Commissioning Transformation Lead presented the New Specialist Provision Start Up Fund report for approval and highlighted salient points.

It was noted that there had been no meeting of the High Needs Sub-group recently therefore the report was being presented to Schools' Forum for approval. The report outlined that three resources were being established for special provision, one of which was ready to open.

It was proposed that a New Specialist Provision Start Up Fund be established as opening costs were significant and, at present, City of Wolverhampton Council do not provide pre-opening funding and have no process by which to do this other than the original capital grants.

It was proposed to allocate £50,000 each to any new specialist provision through a newly created funding line and that a Guidance document be developed to clearly set out the process for allocation of funding and how it will be monitored. It was proposed therefore that £50,00 each be allocated to the two new resource bases for this financial year, totalling £100,000 from the DSG.

A query was raised around whether there would be budget plans for each allocation, if those plans could be seen by the High Needs Sub-Group and if staff development was to be included in the £50,000. It was also queried whether there may be any impact on the budget line on additionality throughout the year.

It was confirmed there would be provision for staff development within the £50,000 budget to ensure qualification standards were met. It was noted it would depend on the type of provision what standards were required, for example an autism provision would require AOT standards to be met. This would be intended to go into the document.

It was agreed that spending plans would be submitted to the High Needs Sub-group for comment.

It was advised that the funding would give resource bases chance to open as fit for purpose ready for when children started attending. Assurances were offered that

monitoring of the high needs block had been examined extensively and conversations on forecasting for future breakdown on pupil places and costs were ongoing. It was offered to bring the outcomes of these to the High Needs Sub-Group and/or Schools' Forum. The funding was thought to be an opportunity to save by investing as the provision of a resource base meant special school places could be used effectively.

Resolved:

1. That members of Schools' Forum agree to the creation of a New Specialist Provision Start Up Fund budget line within the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), with budget setting in future financial years in line with current processes.
2. That Schools' Forum agree to the allocation from the High Needs DSG of £50,000 to each new specialist provision planned to open in the 2021-2022 financial year, amounting to £100,000 for two new resource bases.
3. That Schools' Forum approve the creation of a New Specialist Provision Start Up Fund Guidance Document and monitoring as set out in 4.3 of the report.
4. That budget plans for the New Specialist Provision Start Up Fund would be submitted to the High Needs Sub-group for comment.

## 12 **St. Michael's (CoE) Primary School Social, Emotional and Mental Health Resource Base Costs**

Steven Larking, Children's Commissioning Transformation Lead presented the St. Michael's (CoE) Primary School Social, Emotional and Mental Health Resource Base Costs report and highlighted salient points. The report outlined that, on 27 February 2020, Cabinet approved the allocation of resources from the approved Special Provision Capital Fund budget to a new capital project at St Michael's CE (A) Primary School for a 16 place SEMH Resource Base.

It was reported that, with strict requirements for the Specialist Provision Capital Fund (SPCF), St. Michael's had made a request to the Council for additional resource to provide for classroom equipment to a total cost of £44,396. The items required to equip the base cannot be purchased from the SPCF.

The report also provided a list of the items required and breakdown of costs

Resolved:

That Schools' Forum approve the allocation of £44,396 to be funded from the High Needs DSG to St. Michael's CE (A) Primary School for resources and equipment for the sole use of the Resource Base.

## 13 **Matrix Funding Update**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services provided a verbal update on matrix funding.

It was recalled that Schools' Forum had been receiving updates from the High Needs Sub-Group over the last few years and, as discussed previously, a piece of forensic work was being undertaken on Special Educational Needs and the High Needs Block.

It had become apparent following this work that it would be necessary to undertake a matrix review and it was formally announced that the review would be carried out in the Autumn term in partnership with Schools' Forum and schools in the City. Regular updates would also be provided at future Forum meetings.

Resolved:

That the Matrix Funding Update be received.

14

**Any Other Business**

Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre wished to express sincere thanks on behalf of the local authority to Schools' Forum members, headteachers and school communities for their hard work during an appalling year. He acknowledged that despite the pressure placed on schools, all had worked hard to place the welfare of the children of Wolverhampton as priority. It was felt that an outstanding effort had been made to provide the best level of education possible under the circumstances. Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services agreed that this message would also be communicated to schools and institutions on behalf of Schools' Forum.

The Chair wished all a good summer and closed the meeting at 17:02.

Resolved:

That Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services communicate Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre's message of thanks to schools and institutions on behalf of Schools' Forum.

15

**Dates for future meetings**

- 30 September 2021
- 2 December 2021
- 20 January 2022
- 17 February 2022