

Minutes of Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum, virtual meeting, on 18 January 2022 subject to approval at 8 February

Members	Representing	Attendance
Schools and Academies		
Alan Brown	Primary headteachers	Apologies
Julie Chambers	Primary headteachers	Apologies
Sarah Curtis	Primary headteachers	Attended
Ian Devereux Roberts	Primary headteachers	Attended
Kate Docherty	Primary headteachers	Attended
Sharon Broughton	Primary governors	Attended
Duncan Haworth (Chair)	Primary governors	Attended
Lisa Rigby	Primary governors	Apologies
David Nield	Primary governors	Attended
Nick Lacey	Primary governors	Attended
David Curry	Secondary headteachers	Attended
Mike Holland	Secondary headteachers	Attended
David Rowlands	Secondary governors	Attended
Rob Williams	Secondary governors	Attended
Mike McCann	Special headteachers	Apologies
Philip Hopwood	Special governors	Absent
Andy Stewart	PRU	Attended
Deborah Beaumont	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Sarah Connolly	Academies - mainstream	Apologies
Darran Jones	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Luci Jones	Academies - mainstream	Apologies
Jason Lowe	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Helen Studley	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Marie Allen	Academies - special	Attended
Non Schools		
Sue Anderson	PVI early years providers	Attended
Kathryn Magiera	Diocese	Absent
Caroline Vile	Diocese	Attended
Greg Foster	Unions	Absent
Geoff Wright	Unions	Absent
Rob Pullen	CWAPH	Attended
Angela Thornton	PVI early years providers	Apologies
Vacancy	16-19 providers	Vacancy
Official Observers		
Councillor Robert Cernik	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Attended
Officers in attendance		
Natalie Cole	Finance Manager	
Carolyn Davis	Senior Manager Education and Inclusion	
Charlotte Fenn	Clerk	
Debbie Murphy	Acting Head of Education and Inclusion	
Christine Ridley Thomas	Senior Manager School Intervention Co-ordination & Schools Causing Concern	
Observer		
Councillor Razia Daniels	Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Families	

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were noted.

Duncan reported the following updates to Schools Forum membership:

New secondary governor representative - David Rowlands, Upton-by-Chester High School – previously been in attendance as a substitute.

Sue Anderson, PVI representative was retiring 31 March 2022.

2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting

2.1 To agree the minutes from the meeting held 7 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 Item 3 School Information Management System (SIMS) Update and Options

Carolyn Davis provided an update in response to questions asked at the last Forum. There was no further update from ESS regarding the rate per pupil other than what had already been shared with schools, that the current LA contract prices would rise by 3.5% for 2022-2023.

ESS was writing to schools with their individual contract and quote giving them a six-month break clause option should they sign up by 20 February 2022.

Ian Devereux Roberts reported that he had received an email from ESS today with the said contract & break clause.

2.2.2 Item 4 Government consultation - Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded

Duncan Haworth reported that the outcome of the consultation had been published and the proposals were being implemented, further details were available under agenda item 6.

2.2.3 Item 7 Any Other Business - Vice-Chair and Finance and High Needs subgroup vacancies

Duncan Haworth reminded Forum that they were still looking for a Vice-chair and Finance and High Needs subgroup members. David Rowlands put his name forward for Vice-Chair and subgroup member.

Resolved that Schools Forum agree to appoint David Rowlands as Vice-Chair and subgroup member.

3. Indicative Dedicated Schools Grant Allocations for 2022-2023

Natalie Cole went through the report which detailed the provisional allocation figures for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2022-2023 as published in December 2021.

Forum members attention was drawn to the table in paragraph 4 which summarised the current and indicative next year allocation. It was noted that the table heading should read as 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 and not 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 and this correction would be made before the papers were published.

It was noted that new funding for primary and secondary schools to provide support for the costs of the Health and Social Care Levy and wider costs was being allocated as a supplementary grant.

Sarah Curtis asked if the supplementary allocation was ring fenced as to how schools spend it or was it part of the budget. Natalie confirmed the funding was part of the budget.

Resolved that the Schools Forum note the indicative allocations which would inform the schools block funding formula and DSG budget proposals for 2022-2023 in further agenda items.

4. Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Setting Proposals 2022-2023

Natalie Cole introduced the report which detailed the broad principles for the budget proposals for the next financial year based on the allocations in item 3.

Natalie took Forum through the budget setting proposals outlined in Appendix A. It was noted that further detail regarding 'Growth in high needs - further investment' (ref 4) would be brought to the February Forum under the High Needs agenda item.

Natalie drew Forums' attention to the consultation outcomes, in paragraph 5, which were largely in support of maintaining the 0.5% transfer from schools block to high needs block.

Natalie referred Forum members to Appendix B which outlined the changes to the Central Spend Budgets for 2022-2023.

Resolved that the Schools Forum

- i. approve the continuation of the existing 0.5% transfer from schools block to high needs block for 2022-2023 (vote: unanimous);
- ii. endorse the draft DSG budget proposals in Appendix A for approval by Council (vote: unanimous); and
- iii. approve the central spend budgets in Appendix B (vote: unanimous)

5. Draft of 2022-2023 School Funding Formula for January Submission

Natalie Cole went through the report which detailed the draft School Funding Formula for 2022-2023.

It was noted that the report took into account the decisions taken previously on the principles of the local funding formula, already approved by Cabinet and Forum, and the impact of October 2021 census data provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Forum members were reminded that the draft 2022-2023 funding for each school in Appendix D was for reference only; the final funding statements would be issued to individual maintained schools in February 2022 following final approval by Council and the ESFA.

A discussion followed regarding managed moves, exclusions and Fair Access Protocol following a question from David Rowlands as to whether there was any scope to ensure that funds followed pupils moving schools, as currently this was not done straight way. Mike Holland commented that his school had been involved in a managed move last week and funds have been transferred from the day of the move with no delays.

Rob Pullen commented that this issue had been picked up with Michaela Bridge, Education Access Team & Alternative Provision Manager, who planned to review the policy, but the review was not yet complete. Debbie Murphy agreed to liaise with Officers and request Michaela get in touch with Rob.

Natalie Cole confirmed that under the managed move protocol there was a process to transfer funds when exclusions took place. It was noted that these transfers should be facilitated through Natalie's finance team as they would largely be internal transfers between LA schools.

Resolved that the Schools Forum (School, Academy and PVI representatives) endorse the draft funding formula submission to the ESFA (vote: unanimous)

6. De-delegation proposals for 2022-2023

Natalie Cole took Forum through the report highlighting the responses to the consultation. It was noted that the de-delegation option for licences would cease for 2022-2023 due to the SIMS provider moving to direct charging to individual schools. Schools would receive a direct charge for SIMS and CLEAPPS licences.

Resolved that the Schools Forum (maintained school representatives) agree the services to be de-delegated to the Local Authority for 2022-2023 as detailed for:

- a) Contingencies to cover the cost of staff on suspension (primary and secondary representatives separately);
- b) Free school meals eligibility assessments (primary and secondary representatives separately);
- c) Covering the cost of staff on for maternity/paternity/adoption leave (primary representatives only);
- d) Pooling of funding to cover the costs of trade union facilities time (primary and secondary representatives separately);

a-d Primary Vote : Yes 6, No 0, Abstention 0

a,b,d Secondary Vote: Yes 2, No 0, Abstention 0

- e) School improvement time (primary, secondary and special/alternative provision representatives separately)

Primary Vote: Yes 5, No 0, Abstention 0

Secondary Vote: Yes 2, No 0, Abstention 0

Special/alternative provision Vote: Yes 1, No 0, Abstention 0

7. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2021-2022 Forecast Outturn at Third Review

Natalie Cole introduced the report which provided an update on the financial forecast outturn position for 2021-2022 for centrally held DSG.

It was noted that the overspend and change in position largely related to the increase demand for special places inside and outside the borough. It was also noted that the forecast assumed a balanced position for early years budgets, however the forecast might change once the revised funding allocation have been received in January 2022.

Forums' attention was drawn to the key variances and changes summarised in the table under paragraph 8.

A Director-led priority working group had been established to progress the recommendations from the High Needs Strategic Review. It was noted that the Review had taken place before a deficit position was realised and the recommendations would need to be re-framed for the current financial context.

Resolved that the Schools Forum note the Third Review position on the DSG and next steps.

8. Any Other Business

None to report.

9. Next meeting

Next Schools Forum meeting Tuesday 8 February 2022.

Sarah Curtis asked if the High Needs sub-group would be meeting. Duncan Haworth responded that no date had yet been set but a meeting would be arranged in due course.