

## SCHOOLS FORUM

### Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November Council Offices – Badminton Road

#### PRESENT:

Sarah Lovell	Chair-Finance Director, Cabot Learning Federation
Dave Baker (Vice Chair)	CEO, Olympus Academy Trust
Nicky Edwards	Natural Choice Nurseries
Kim Garland	Headteacher, Brimsham Green
Clare Haughton	Paige Park Pre-School
David Jenkins	Governor – Crossways Schools
Carl Lander	Governor - Hanham Primary Federation (HPF)
Louise Leader	Headteacher, Pathways Learning Centre
Pippa Osborne	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Susie Weaver	Executive Principal, Cabot Learning Federation
Bernice Webber	Headteacher, Old Sodbury Primary School
Richard Aquilina	Governor - Bailey's Court
Linda Porter	Governor - Watermore
Lisa Parker	Headteacher Warmley Park
Macolm Strange	Diocese Rep
Mark Fremman	Headteacher – St Michael's CE Primary
Will Roberts	CEO - CSET

#### Officers:

Mustafa Salih, Head of Financial Management and Business Support  
Caroline Warren, Finance Business Partner – CAH Children  
Management Accounts  
Stuart Thomas, SEND Financial Planning Lead

#### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair.

#### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Steve Moir, Hilary Smith, Keith Lawrence, Erica Williams, Diane Owen

#### 3. EVACUATION PROCESS

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure

#### 4. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

## 5. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING.

Minutes agreed as a true record.

Actions looked at from previous meeting:

Pupil Projections – carried forward – Will present later in the year.  
Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) – Will be discussed in tomorrow's SIFD meeting.

## 6. SCHOOLS BUDGET CONSULTATION OPTIONS – Mustafa Salih

Main purpose of the report is to give an overview on the schools settlement for next year. The final decision is a cabinet decision in February 2020. The schools forum view is important

- We can expect an extra £8m for the Schools Block.
- The High needs block will receive an extra £2.8m.
- Early years block nationally £66m giving an 8p increase in the hourly rate for South Glos. settings.
- Early years national average increase 5% but ours is 1.8%.
- Central Services Block funding is reducing by £0.5million. The council will look at how it will bridge that gap.

The shift into block allocations is new and does restrict things.

**Send Pressures** – The pressures we are experiencing are common amongst other Local Authorities (LA's). There are similar national pressures.

Paragraph-18 between 2017/18 – 2018/19 the deficit did drop off. Then the surge in demand increased again the following year. The extra £2.8m would only pay for half of this increase in overspend. We have tried to shift the local system to try and be more sustainable through the High Needs Working Group (HNWG). Other LA's are carrying out similar initiatives.

Feedback from the Government is that they will not put any substantial extra funding into the High Needs Block until system improves at LA level.

Referring to paragraph 33 – How could the £8m increase in school funding be used? Proposed that £2m be used to fund SEN initiatives – Cluster fund £1m, High Risk Group £0.3m, Early Years £0.3m, Uplift to Special Schools and Resource Base rates £0.2m, HNWG system wide changes £0.2m.

Mark Freeman (MF) – Why has there been a rapid increase in spending? Independent School spend and out of authority placements has risen sharply.

Mustafa Salih (MS) We are getting challenge back from schools saying they can't meet the need of pupils who are finding it really hard for schools to accommodate pupils.

Susie Weaver (SW) – Needs are accelerating. The figure is not representative of the year before.

Louise Leader (LL) – Parental expectation and preference is playing a large part of this increase.

Pippa Osborne (PO) – There has been a sharp increase in the number of tribunal's cases which has impacted on costs for the LA.

### **Ready Reckoner**

MF - Have we seen any savings? Schools are putting in more needs than necessary to be allocated to gain extra funding.

MS – There are positive signs of success. The funding is being aligned to need, it will take 3 years to see the full impact. We are on track. Top-up rates have gone to the right level through the Ready Reckoner but the demand has continued to rise, hence rise in spend

### **Action:**

**Ready Reckoner update to a future Schools Forum**

**Independent places update to a future Schools Forum**

Kim Garland (KG) - Will there be a long-term need for a £1m transfer every year to fund the Cluster Fund?

MS – Yes, every year any transfer will be brought back to the Forum to fund this project.

MF – Spends 25% of the Cluster Fund allocation on AP. We struggle to spend all the money allocated, it is very hard to appoint people on a permanent basis from year to year. We would like to employ people locally on a longer-term basis, this can't be done if the funding could change on a yearly basis. It still relies on schools buying in and the goodwill of certain people. Schools need to change, this is very difficult to do. Early Years does need more support which would helpfully support some of the long term issues.

None of this is sustainable if this is going to be reviewed every year.

Dave Baker (DB) - Will the decision-making process change during the current election period?

MS – We will be able to consult with the schools during this period. The DfE will not make a decision until the end of December regarding any transfers which should fit in after the election period.

**Options** – Reference is made to the options on the attached spreadsheet and paragraph 35.

1FSS- This will protect small schools, this could be attached to any of the options.

Option 1F/1U – Maximum transfer from the schools block to High Needs block totalling £4.9m.

Option 1F - £6M gets distributed through the formula.

The Uplift targets schools below the minimum amount government has introduced (£3,750 per primary pupil and £5,000 per secondary pupil). This targets fewer schools and gives them a bigger increase.

Option 1F allocates funding under the national funding formula,.

Examples of both approaches were looked at with some case studies

Option1F gives more money to schools with a higher percentage of Free School Meals (FSM).

Option 2 is a middle ground £2.9m and £0.8m transfer is made between blocks.

Option 3 has the lowest transfer - a continued transfer of £2.9m between the blocks.

Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0.5% which will ensure every schools gets at least 0.5% increase per pupil was included in all options

Will Roberts (WR) -The continued £2.9m transfer is this discussed or addressed every year? There is no option for not continuing with the £2.9m transfer. Option 3U meets all the minimum pupil amounts but does involve the £2.9m transfer.

The Forum discussed the need to include an option without the previous £2.9m transfer.

MS – Has some positive responses from DfE regarding any transfer.

PO – Are figures summarised at the bottom of the spreadsheet likely to be indicative of what schools will vote for.

MS – The council does **not** want to use the money to pay off the deficit; it's looking to use the money to put back into schools.

Options need to be presented as clearly as possible.

### **Recommendations to consult on:**

Eliminate options 2F/2U.

Governors on the Forum expressed their concern over the timeline. It is very difficult to engage governing bodies in schools with the 2-week timeline. Furthermore there needs to be governor training or drop-in sessions from the LA to help with them with the decision-making.

MF – Option 1FSS (Small schools).. This should be removed as an option. This decision was backed by the rest of the Forum as Hilary Smith due to present a small schools strategy to forum in the coming weeks.

6 options were approved for consultation by Forum members:

1. a zero transfer from the Schools Block (i.e. ceasing the existing £2.9m transfer)
2. a continuation of the existing £2.9m transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block
3. A £4.9m transfer consisting of the continuation of the £2.9m transfer plus a new £2m transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block

Each of the above options would then be split into allocating funding towards the national funding formula or towards the uplift – totalling 6 options.

MS – Asked forum members for their recommendation/steer on which option schools should approve.

The forum could not fully support any of the 6 options but agreed a transfer from schools block to high needs was required in order to progress the new initiatives being developed in paragraph 33. Forum agreed to include their perspective in the consultation document.

## **7. HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP UPDATE – STRATEGIC PLAN – Susie Weaver**

- The Strategic Plan is linked with the South Glos. Way (SGW) which has been launched. A follow-up meeting has been agreed to work on a zero exclusion policy.
- There was a lot of challenge from governors although after the meeting it was agreed that it was the way forward.
- Ongoing work with Parent and Carers.
- Are producing the graduated response and the first draft of a SGW handbook for release as a consultation draft this month to be in place at the start of the year.
- The SEN cluster leads are all now identified and Kate East is working across the 5 to get the boards in place for the New Year so that we have a vehicle which is county-wide to deliver the changes to SEN support and reduce EHCPs.

- Health are looking at their services and how these will wrap around schools to support more integrated delivery – which may have a positive impact on cost too longer-term.
- Early years work is underway
- Resource Base Review is still going ahead but with a different timescale.

Forum approved the high needs working group plan.

**Action – To bring an updated Strategic Plan to a future Forum meeting**

## 8. DSG QUARTER 1 UPDATE – Caroline Warren

Revised recovery Plan will be worked on and a report will go to Cabinet in February.

Caroline Warren briefly took Forum members through the Q1 report.

## 9. RESOURCE BASE/ACCESS CENTRE ENGAGEMENT UPDATE – Hilary Smith

This item is moved forward to the next Forum meeting.

## 10. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

<b>21<sup>st</sup> November 2019 @ 4.30</b>
<b>Room 0012, Badminton Road Offices</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Schools Budget Consultation - MS</b></li> <li>• <b>RB/AC review - HS</b></li> <li>• <b>Place Planning - TS</b></li> <li>• <b>Growth Percentages - CW</b></li> </ul>

<b>23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 @ 4.30</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> March 2010 @ 4.30</b>
<b>Room 0012, Badminton Road Offices</b>	<b>Venue to be confirmed</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Request from Schools Contingency Fund</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Request from Schools Contingency Fund</b></li> <li>• <b>Final Schools Budget Update</b></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Decision on extending the use of the Ready Reckoner for Resource Bases/Access Centre - School Forum Approval</b></li> <li>• <b>HNWG Update</b></li> <li>• <b>Update on DSG Funding Settlement</b></li> <li>• <b>Consultation Budget update</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HNWG update</b></li> <li>• <b>Integra Update -SIFD</b></li> </ul>
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**11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Davina Gibbon has retired. The Forum would like to thank her for the work she has done in supporting the Schools Forum and schools with their finances.**

Nicky Edwards commented that early years funding was not sufficient to meet need and requested consideration be given to providing additional financial support for the early year’s sector; 15%/20% worse off.

**Action – Details around Early Years Funding figures to be brought to next Forum meeting.**

**Date of Next Meeting: 21<sup>st</sup> November**