

**South Gloucestershire Schools Forum**  
**Minutes of Meeting held on**  
**Thursday 13 May 2021**  
**Microsoft Teams**

**PRESENT:**

Sarah Lovell (Chair)	Finance Director, Cabot Learning Federation
Dave Baker (Vice Chair)	CEO, Olympus Academy Trust
Richard Aquilina	Governor, Bailey's Court Primary School
Nicky Edwards	Natural Choice Nurseries
Stuart Evans	South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
Mark Freeman	Headteacher, St Michael's Primary School
Kim Garland	Headteacher, Brimsham Green School
Clare Haughton	Page Park Pre-School
David Jenkins	Governor, Crossways Schools
Nicola Jones	Representative Special Academies
Carl Lander	Hanham Primary Federation (HPF)
Louise Leader	Headteacher, Patchways Learning Centre
Kirby Littlewood	Headteacher, Stanbridge Primary School
Steve Moir	Headteacher, Bradley Stoke School
Pippa Osborne	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Diane Owen	Chair, King's Oak Academy
Linda Porter	Governor, Watermore School
Fr. Malcolm Strange	Diocese of Bristol Representative
Bernice Webber	Headteacher, Old Sodbury CE Primary
David Williams	Diocese of Gloucester
Louisa Wilson	Headteacher, St. Stephens C of E Junior School

**Officers:**

Mustafa Salih, Head of Financial Management and Business Support  
Hilary Smith, Head of Education, Learning and Skills  
Caroline Warren, Finance Business Partner  
Alison Davies, Business Support Manager  
Alison Ford, Planning & Participation Officer (For Item 7)  
Michelle Palmer, Senior Finance Officer (Observer)  
Maxine Winter, Governor Development Consultant (Observer)

**Others:**

Tamsin Moreton, Enable Trust Representative

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Trevor Jones, Chris Sivers, Lisa Parker, Susie Weaver

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - None**

### **3. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT**

None.

### **4. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP (Ali Davies)**

Noted that this is the last meeting as representative of EY Sector for Nicky Edwards.

Review of Constitution for new academic year to ensure representation accurately reflects local schools system is due which may prompt changes in representation. To be considered for next meeting.

### **5. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT (Sarah Lovell)**

None.

### **6. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING – 25 MARCH 2021**

**Update on agreed actions as follows:**

#### **(i) Schools Budget Consultation – Options**

MS has drafted a joint letter from Council Officers and Schools Forum with intention to issue before half-term. There will be another consultation in the autumn including details of current position on high Needs/SEND. Draft letter produced and shared with the Chair of Forum. Feedback provided and now with MS for comment.

#### **(ii) High Needs Working Group (HNWG) Update**

Arrangements for governance and system-wide communication established. Governor now part of the group. - Closed

#### **(iii) Schools Budget and Early Years Funding Formula (EYSFF)**

Confirmed that a letter had been sent to all Early Years Settings notifying them of the new rates and that the sector had also confirmed receipt of information. - Closed

#### **(iv) Deficit Recovery Plan – High Needs Working Group (HNWG)**

SL/MS/HS updated on the informal meeting with DfE officials who gave some useful steer on expectations of Recovery Plan and suggested areas for focus to support strong submission. This then to be submitted to the DfE for formal discussion – update to be provided as part of the HNWG reporting to Schools Forum at the next meeting.

SL sought confirmation that minutes represented an accurate record and this was agreed.

## 7. UPDATE ON SEND CLUSTERS

Alison Ford (AF) attended to present an update report on the SEND Support Cluster Initiative. The report set out the current position on progress including the agreed priority areas of focus for the current financial year.

AF:

- Explained the work that was taking place now that Claire Heron, Strategic Evaluation Officer was in post, in supporting the clusters to accurately determine need and impact of work completed so far. To support this CH/AF/Cluster Leads are creating a new SEND Data Dashboard to aid performance monitoring.

**Action - AF will include outcome of findings in report to Forum in July.**

- Set out the intention to provide further clarification to the role of the lead Educational Psychologist and lead Senior EHC Coordinator on the Cluster Board.
- Advised on the agreed focus on improving access to Speech and Language to support earliest identification and intervention.
- Confirmed that a further review of processes and decision making for children at high risk of exclusion was required to ensure that High Risk Group (HRG) and Cluster Boards (CBs) were working coherently.

DO – Questioned the percentage of admin for clusters 4 and 5.

**Action:**

**AF agreed to undertake comparisons across clusters to ensure all focussed on value for money.**

MS – Commented that the data is not showing any reduction yet in the number of Education and Healthcare Plans (EHCPs), which is a key objective, therefore is there anything more we can do to accelerate this, for example focus on additional support.

AF – Indicated that some increased demand linked to various factors (population growth, current Covid-19 situation) and therefore important to understand what reduction should be expected. This analysis will be included in the work of AF/CH and will be presented in the paper coming to the next meeting. AF also highlighted the focus on early identification and support in early years settings/reception classes with improved access to language support/development which will also have a positive impact. AF also advised on the work undertaken by Jackie Muggleton, Integra, in producing the new EHC guidance document which has now been available to all schools.

HS – Commented that when sensible the activity undertaken via the school-led cluster approach will be mirrored in early years and this a priority theme within the Deficit Recovery Plan.

**The Forum Agreed:**

- i. To note the underspend to carry forward into 2021/2022 budgets
- ii. Agree and welcome the Evaluation report for this year in terms of spend and impact
- iii. Full participation of the cluster programme with paper going out to Headteachers promoting the work of the clusters and members of the Forum to promote the work of the clusters.

**Action** – update to go to Headteachers informing them of the work of clusters.

**8. High Needs Working Group**

As Susie Weaver had given her apologies, Pippa Osborne agreed to provide a summary of the most recent developments of the HNWG as follows:

- In support of improved governance, the Group had agreed to identify a special schools governor to join HNWG.
- Kate East and Karina Kulawik are leading the review of Top Up arrangements with significant input from sector representatives across the system and will be attending key sector meetings to ensure effective communication and awareness.
- All theme leads will be required to produce a Project Initiation Document (PID) in order to maintain focus, build momentum and achieve agreed milestones.
- The Group are seeking advice/guidance of SGC legal team on requirements of consultation – specifically identification of all stakeholder groups and timescales.
- Next steps of HNWG include: review of draft PIDs to ensure meet expectations, especially in relation to objective of contributing to High Needs Deficit reduction.

Forum thanked PO for the update and had no further questions.

**9. Dedicated Schools Grant 2020/21 Quarter 3**

MS introduced this item as a report showing the Quarter 3 position and therefore not the final position for 2021, which is being determined currently. The outturn position will be reported to Cabinet in June and then to Schools Forum.

CW summarised the key points as follows:

- Q3 position is an overspend of £8,322k in year and therefore overall deficit of £24,669k. As at November, the net current DSG budget is £139,669k excluding academy funding.
- The majority of the overspend in the High Needs Block is linked to post-16 placements and confirmation of changes in September. South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGSC) exceeded their planned places and we have to support those extra places.
- The Early Years Block is forecasting an overspend by £60k due to variance between actual numbers in Autumn compared to predicted forecast in the spring.

SL – Asked if the outturn position is likely to be better or worse than Q3?  
 CW – Indicated that it likely to show an improved position.

SL – sought clarification on accuracy of growth funding and suggested that the Forum would like a better understanding of this and relationship with over/under spends.

CW – Action: Agreed to review the way this is presented in the chart in the report.

#### 10. Forward Plan – agreed as below:

July	8th				
			Update on SEND clusters	Alison Ford (Hilary Smith)	
			Update on Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund ( <i>to include schools balance and information on the submission of budget plans for maintained schools and will feature in the next report</i> ).	Mustafa Salih	
			HNWG Update & Financial Implications	Susie Weaver	Will cover Deficit Recovery Plan
			Q4 Update	Mustafa Salih	
			Schools Forum Constitution/composition	Ali Davies	July/Sept (tbc)

#### 11. Any Other Business

##### Deficit Recovery Plan

MS – Provided further mention of Deficit Recovery Plan discussions with DfE and that it was difficult to give a clear picture of the process being followed by the DfE. It is indicated that there will be another round of financial support. Therefore we will continue to lobby.

HS – The DfE did not provide clarification on how they chose the 5 LAs. They indicated that it was linked to maturity of approach and that they could evidence that system changes were embedded and having positive impact on expenditure.

SL – The DfE indicated that the in-year position needed to stabilise before any consideration was given to historic debt.

#### 2021/22 Meetings

SL – Next road map for easing lockdown due on Monday. This means we can start to plan to hold next year's meetings either virtually or in person, whichever works best for the Forum. Consideration to be given to key meetings such as that in the Autumn, which might benefit from discussion in person.

#### Leavers

SL – Thanked Nicky on behalf of the Forum for her contribution as the representative for the Early Years Sector. All members involved in round of applause to show appreciation.

NE – Stated that it had been an honour and pleasure to be a member of the Schools Forum and liked to think that she had made a positive difference.

Meeting closed.