

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 23rd January 2020 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
Pippa Osborne	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Diane Owen	Chair, King's Oak Academy
Stuart Evans	South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
Richard Aquilina	Governor - Bailey's Court
Macolm Strange	Diocese Rep
Will Roberts	CEO – Castle School Education Trust (CSET)
Susan Brobyn	Director of Finance and Operations, CSET
Karl Hemmings	Headteacher – Emersons Green Primary
Julia Anwar (sub)	Finance Director, Olympus Academy Trust

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
Hilary Smith, Head of Education, Learning and Skills
Tanya Smith, Strategic Lead, Place Planning & Commissioning
Dave Perry – Chief Executive, South Glos Council
Erica Williams – Lead Member for Education, Skills & Employment

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Susie Weaver, David Jenkins, Steve Moir, Keith Lawrence, Bernice Webber, Linda Porter, Lisa Parker, Carl Lander

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.

Completed Actions:

Confirmed that letters regarding schools budget were sent out to schools and Governors.

Action Carried Forward:

Funding challenges in Early Years (EY) to be discussed at the EY working group with support from Hilary Smith (HS) and/or Mustafa Salih (MS)/finance.

6. HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP – HNWG (Dave Baker-DB)

Noted that the group has been in operation for 12 months – reflected on progress and forward planning from the council.

Felt it was appropriate to update the terms of reference of the group up to the end of this academic year. People will be invited to present to the group on progress of various projects/initiatives.

Stuart Thomas (ST) will work with **HS** in outlining a template for reporting progress to the Schools Forum. Kim and Pippa will be looking at the terms of reference with Susie Weaver who is HNWG chair.

Action – Revised terms of reference to be provided at the next schools forum

7. EARLY YEARS CONSULTATION (Rachel Webb - RW)

MS presented this in the absence of RW.

This is part of the annual budget-setting process which will be passed onto Cabinet in February. Forum were asked to note the outcome of the consultation and make a recommendation on options.

Nicky Edwards (NE) – Early years working group would like to make it noted that:

- The 8p was insufficient to support the sector but recognised that South Glos proposed to pass all 8p across to provider which has not been the case for all local authorities .
- Cutting back on deprivation to pay more money for childminders was agreed by the early years working group.
- Nothing was changed from the consultation by it coming to the working group.
- 30% responses for this consultation was low.
- Outcome favoured supporting the child minders.

- It is a National problem – 2% is not sufficient to support the sector.

The forum expresses its concern over the insufficient financing of the early years sector but agreed the recommendation in option 2 outlined in page 13 of the forum report. One member abstained from voting.

2year old rate	NEG Rate	Base	Inclusion Fund	Deprivation Supplement	Flexibility Supplement for childminders
£5.23	£4.07		2 % £386,600	0.9% £128,970	£0.14 <i>Base Rate £4.07 + supplement £0.14 = Hourly Rate £4.21. (£0.08 increase)</i>

CW – pointed out that there is an error on page 11. The Deprivation supplement should be £140,710 not £133,627 as reported. It was also pointed out that the Inclusion Fund figure in the table above should read £286,600.

Action: MS will contact F40 group to see if there is appetite to campaign for more funding in the early years sector.

8. PLACE PLANNING COP STRATEGY 2019 (Tanya Smith - TS)

This is a draft report. The document can be used to pick up trends in the area of any school/setting.

Key messages:

- There has been growth across the primary sector.
- There has been rapid growth in certain areas e.g. Patchway, Bradley Stoke, Frenchay.
- There was a downturn 2018/19 but this will recover from 2020 onwards
- For secondary school planning, the focus should be on the year 6 cohort coming through. Demand has exceeded capacity. However, we have a number of children who go out of county.
- New houses will only be taken into account when they are occupied. They are treated separately but not ignored.
- Half-way along the process of developing new schools there is the opportunity for trusts to come forward and develop new school provision.
- Projecting special school places will never be perfect and is very difficult to do.
- For primary schools the focus should be on the reception cohort coming through.

Pippa Osbourne (PO) - Charlton Hayes area has many empty spaces and is currently under capacity. This will be the case over the next few years.

TS - This will pick up over the coming years.

HS -There is a significant growth within South Glos. but this is in pockets of areas. There has been discussion about this in the council's small school strategy group.

NE - Questioned how section 106 opportunities for new early years settings are marketed? Is this a fair market and is it known amongst providers? Is the early years sector likely to be dominated by the big early providers rather than the smaller locally run ones?

TS – Agreed the S106 process was fairly rigid and perhaps didn't support a variety of providers

Action – EY Working Group to discuss new provision process

Dave Baker thanked Tanya Smith for her service to the Schools Forum as this was probably her last meeting before leaving her post.

9. GROWTH FUNDING 2020-21 (Caroline Warren-CW)

CW asked the Schools forum to note the report and agree the criteria.

Growth funding formula section – No comments or questions from forum members were made around this section.

Clarification – Basic Entitlement rate what is it made up of? It is part of the schools formula funding rates, this does not include any of the additional factors and is just the basic Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU).

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2 adjustments have been made in the report since:

Frenchay should be 10 places and John Cabot 15 places rather than the 30 places indicated in the report.

The schools forum approved the growth criteria

Schools Specific contingent fund:

£300k is set aside annually for schools that are in financial difficulty which require more help than through the normal standard recovery plan.

Diane Owen (DO) – Indicated her concern over how schools can access the money and how schools can apply for it.

MS - Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) group for maintained schools, identify schools and work with them on a one to one basis, if there are schools that meet the criteria then it is recommended that they apply for the contingency fund. This is the process for maintained schools. To date there are a handful of schools that fall under this criteria. Academies are able to access the fund providing they meet the criteria in the report.

PO - It would be good to know about the schools that have been turned down from the contingency fund, how are they now?

Finance conference in June 2020 – opened to all Heads and business managers – key messages need to be shared. All Academies are welcomed and it will be kept as broad as possible.

WR - Is there a deadline for SIFD applications? A shorter window for applications would provide better decision-making.

MS – There needs to be a gateway from the academies as part of the process before it comes to the council/forum for consideration. Academy representatives agreed to oversee this.

Forum Approved that the £300k to be used for the following year. One member abstained.

Action: 2019/20 YTD spend report to be provided at the next forum meeting including the impact on students

Action: Chair and Vice Chair to consider timeline and reporting conditions of the SIFD fund and will bring a proposal to the next forum.

10. FUNDING SETTLEMENT 2020-21 (Caroline Warren - CW)

Still waiting for decision from the Secretary of State on the transfer of money between blocks. Overall allocation is £219m
Schools Central Services Block has been reduced – this is being challenged.
The impact of this will not affect schools directly

MS – Is networking with other LA's to hear from them on the outcomes of their transfer requests.

Letter has been sent to the Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding our transfer and the reduction to the Central Services budget. Leader of the council is engaging with our Local MP's.

DfE meeting scheduled on 11th Feb to look at our sustainability plan, the transfer requested is a key part of the plan.

DB – Government is clear that there is an expectation that £3,750 and £5k minimum per pupil funding is delivered, so we need to be looking at a plan B. What will the council do if the transfer is refused?

MS - The council will make a decision at the start of Feb (cabinet), as officers we are positive about the recovery plan, we are seeing some green shoots of recovery.

PO – Asked Dave Perry (DP) On the council's perspective regarding carrying a deficit DSG and would an increase be considered to continue the high needs working group strategies?

DP is working with other LA's and chief execs in lobbying the government to recognise the issue of the continued deficit.

There are some missed communication opportunities in sending joint messages.

How will the decision from the Secretary of State be communicated?

Schools Forum will be informed immediately.

RA – What was the response from schools following the letter sent in December regarding the DSG consultation?

MS – Only 2 responses received objecting to the recommendation made by forum

It is not achievable for us to meet before the next forum if the Secretary of State makes a decision.

11. UPDATE ON THE READY RECKONER (Duane Chappell/Hilary Smith)

HS – The application of the Ready Reckoner (RR) is having a positive difference but has some capacity challenges:

- Time consuming for Educational Psychologists (EPs) to deliver specific reports.
- There has been EP recruitment challenges within the council.
- The drive needs to be accelerated, it is making a difference, and there is a capacity issue.

PO – The RR is fair but when learning support assistants are being split amongst a group of students this does make it problematic, synchronising where children are placed makes it easier, when pupils are split across the school it becomes difficult to share an LSA.

HS – The RR has made it clearer and more transparent, we are not receiving any complaints.

Karl Hemming (KH) – As the number of LSAs has been reduced this has made it difficult managing the RR. Be aware negative feedback may be coming.

Page 86 – Recommendations were approved by the Forum.

DB – Duane Chappell was recognised for the work she has done for the forum and it was confirmed that she has left South Glos Council.

12. INDEPENDENT SECTOR (Duane Chappell/Hilary Smith)

- We are seeing an increasing number of pupils entering the independent sector.
- There is an impact from our social care colleagues on the high needs block.
- There are big financial implications on the high needs block, a process is being developed to look at this. This is not going to be a quick win, negotiations are needed

with the independent sector in negotiating prices and child places within the sector. We are trying to develop our workforce and we need to get capacity right.

- We need to promote our local special schools, they are 100% good (Ofsted). We need to influence parents' choices.

DO – How do we measure the impact?

DB – This has been looked at as part of the work of the HNWG and some of the outcomes were concerning.

The forum approved the recommendations in the report.

13. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

<p align="center">26th March 2020 @ 4.30 Winterbourne Academy</p>	<p align="center">14th May 2020 @ 4.30 Room 0012, Badminton Road Offices</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Schools Budget Update (Mustafa Salih) • Integra Update – SIFD (Sue Morgan) <i>including impact from previous schools that have had SIFD funding and timeframe for contingency funding.</i> • Update on Cluster Fund (Kate East) • Key Findings from Internal Audit on school visits (Justine Poulton) • New staffing structure (Hilary Smith) • DSG Quarter 3 Update (Caroline Warren) • HNWG Update on progress – verbal (Susie Weaver) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Base/Access Centre consultation update (possible) (Hilary Smith) • Decision on extending the use of the Ready Reckoner for Resource Bases/Access Centre - School Forum Approval pending pilot (Kate East) • Forum training for new members 2nd hour (Sarah Lovell/Mustafa Salih)

<p align="center">9th July 2020 @ 4.30 Room 0012, Badminton Road Offices</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Winterbourne Academy will be available for the next schools Forum meeting

Date of Next Meeting: 26th March 2020 at 4.30pm at Winterbourne Academy