

**Cheshire west and Chester Schools Forum, Queen's Park High School,
Chester 14 January 2019 – approved 11 February 2019**

Present:

Marie Allen
Hilary Berry
David Bradburn
Sarah Curtis
Ian Devereux Roberts
John Freeman
Kate Docherty
Duncan Haworth
Mike Holland
Luci Jones
Kath Lloyd
Jason Lowe
Mike McCann
John Murray (Chair)
David Rowlands
Andy Stewart
Sue Tomlinson
Katie Tyrie
Lyndsay Watterson
Susan Yarnall

Representing:

Academies - Special
CWAPH Chair
Primary governors
Primary headteachers
Primary headteachers
Secondary governors
Primary headteachers
Primary governors
Secondary headteachers
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Primary governors
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Special headteachers
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Secondary governors
PRU
Primary headteachers
Nursery headteacher
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Primary governors

Officers:

Natalie Cole
Charlotte Fenn (Clerk)
Anna Jones
Sue Lawson
Jonathan Lear
Mark Parkinson
Ric Turnock

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were noted from Paula Adolph, Sue Anderson, David Curry, Greg Foster, Carol Gahan, Amanda Harrison, Sarah Worthington, Caroline Vile, and Harry Ziman.

John Murray, welcomed new members to the meeting; Lyndsay Watterson, Head Queens Park High School, taking over from Steve Dool as Academy representative; Mike Holland, Head Hartford High School, taking over from Sue Yates as secondary heads representative; David Bradburn, governor Wincham Community Primary school, taking over from Sue Pearson as primary governor representative; Susan Yarnall governor Lache Primary taking over from Francis Kwateng as primary governor representative; Sue Tomlinson, Vice Chair CWAPH (Cheshire West Association of Primary Heads) who was covering the primary heads vacancy following the retirement of Cheryl Bullen. A permanent representative would be elected at the next CWAPH meeting 23 January.

It was noted that Luci Jones' term of office had come to an end but Luci was covering the vacancy while nominations were being sought and would be standing for re-election.

John also reported that David Curry was the new CWASH (Cheshire West Association of secondary Heads) chair.

Forum members introduced themselves for the benefit of the new members.

2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting

2.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Matters arising

None to report.

3. Dedicated schools grant (DSG) allocations for 2019-2020 and budget setting

Natalie Cole, Finance Manager, introduced the paper which confirmed the indicative DSG allocation for 2019-2020 and draft budget proposals for the next financial year.

Forum members' attention was drawn to paragraphs 4 and 5 which provided a summary of the current and next year allocation and explained the changes resulting in an increase in available funding. Natalie also informed Forum members that the increase included an extra £600k growth funding which had not been included in the paper.

Natalie referred forum members to appendix A which provided the indicative DSG allocation details. It was noted that it was proposed that the additional DSG funding was largely to be allocated as received, to fund increased pupil numbers and growth in high needs. Forum members were also informed that the early years block data had not yet been received and any changes to early years funding as a result of revised pupil numbers would be confirmed in July.

Forum's attention was drawn to paragraph 7 and 8 and the proposal to reverse the previous decision to transfer 0.5% from the schools block to the high needs block. It was noted that this would require Cabinet approval.

David Rowlands questioned now wise this reversal was in light of the increasing pressures on the high needs block.

It was noted that the new injection of funds demonstrated the Government's acknowledgement of the ongoing situation regarding increasing high needs

expenditure, though it was unfortunate this had not been anticipated; it was hoped that this would be taken into account under the next spending review.

Mark Parkinson reported that, although high needs expenditure had been increasing in CW&C, other local authorities were under more pressure, one local authority in the North West had an 11 million overspend.

Resolved that the Schools Forum

- i. approve the draft DSG budget proposals (vote: unanimous); and
- ii. note the next steps for confirming the DSG budget proposals for 2019-2020.

4. Draft of 2019-2020 school funding formula for January submission

Natalie Cole introduced the item and circulated a document entitled 'draft schools block funding allocation 2019-2020 compared to 2018-2019'. The document showed the impact, on individual school funding, between the two proposed options. It was noted these figures were for illustrative purposes only and were not the final figures as some factors were still to be included, in particular, rates.

Forum's attention was drawn to paragraph 8 which outlined the proposal to allocate the additional high needs funding (£703k) out to schools using the prior attainment factor. It was noted that this proposal ensured the additional funding was used in alignment with current priorities.

Resolved that Schools Forum approve allocating the additional high needs funding (£703k) to schools using the prior attainment factor (vote: unanimous maintained, Academy and PVI).

5. Ellesmere Port Private Finance Initiative (PVI) schools contribution

John Murray introduced the paper and provided some background to the item. Officers had explained the complexities of PVI and sought the views of the subgroup at a previous meeting on the proposed arrangement to revise the contribution mechanism. The subgroup had taken the view, at that meeting, that the proposals ensured a 'level playing field' with other schools.

John reported that officers had come back to the subgroup to update them on the responses from the schools concerned, as outlined under paragraph 5. It was noted that one school had contested the principles. Forum members' attention was drawn to the principles in appendix A which provided an extract of the letter sent to the Ellesmere Port PVI schools.

Luci Jones asked what the school's concern was. Ric Turnock, School Organisation Manager, responded that he believed that whilst most of the PFI schools had accrued surpluses as a result of not having to meet the full cost of services such as caretaking etc; the school contesting the arrangement felt they were now being disadvantaged as they had fully committed their available budget into planned expenditure. The authority's proposal was not to disadvantage the PFI schools but to remove the mechanism that had given them a financial advantage.

Resolved that the Schools Forum endorsed the finance subgroups view that the principles outlined in appendix A were fair and confirmed their support for the LA implementing them.

6. Review of Early Years Inclusion and Support fund (EYISF) and support for mainstream pupils with SEND in primary and secondary school

Sue Lawson, Commissioning Officer, introduced the item and took Forum members through the report. It was noted that the resources allocated to early years children with SEND were high compared with other authorities, though there was no evidence of this in the impact on educational progress and outcomes. It was also noted that there had been no increase in funding to support those pupils accessing 30 hours and the lack of monitoring of pupils progress meant the approval process around allocating EYISF was not sufficiently robust.

Jon Lear, SEN Advisory Officer, reported that the current descriptors were out of date and did not link to the new 0-25 age range. It was noted that the new descriptors would show what was expected under the universal offer and would help manage parent's expectations and reduce the number of inappropriate requests to SEN panel. The new document would also be posted on the Local Offer.

Jon Lear drew Forum members' attention to the sample descriptors on pages 29 – 32 and sought their views on the proposal. It was noted that the A-C bands referred to in the sample descriptors reflected the old B-D bands.

The group discussed the proposals and sample descriptors; comments were made that the current band A was not useful and that the new band C was very complex compared to what it had been.

John Murray raised concerns voiced at the last finance sub group meeting as to the impact of removing band A and whether the temptation would be to seek the

new higher level A banding. It was noted that the criteria would be used more rigorously to ensure funding was allocated at the appropriate band.

Sarah Curtis suggested that it would be helpful to see the overlap with Specialist provision. This suggestion would be taken back to the 0-25 working group.

Mark informed Forum that the authority had looked at what other authorities had been doing in this area. It was noted that the introduction of the new banding would be done alongside a programme of workforce development in conjunction with Teaching School Alliances.

Katie Tyrie referred Forum members to Sue Anderson's comments, circulated prior to the meeting. Katie shared many of her concerns in particular regarding the impact and pressure of finding skilled staff especially when working to a short time frame. Katie suggested a rolling programme of staff employed short term would help manage the pressures.

Mark explained that the intention was to ensure funding goes across transition phases and during the transition period conversations between settings were needed. Mark acknowledged that staffing in PVI setting was a challenge. Mark reiterated that the authority was not seeking to reduce the level of funding but to ensure the criteria were clear on how funds were allocated. The authority would support settings to implement the new criteria.

In general the forum felt that the principles made sense, recognised the concerns of the PVI settings and the need to get to the position where parents understood the criteria and what support they would get.

In response to a question regarding when this was to be implemented, Mark responded that it was likely to be from the next academic year as April may be too soon.

Sarah Curtis flagged that using the word specialist in the bandings might be misleading and confused with specialist support. It was suggested that enhanced be used instead of specialist when referring to banding.

It was noted that the proposals would be taken forward through the Schools Forum finance sub group for further consultation with Schools Forum at a future meeting.

7. Combined budgets and miscellaneous expenditure

Natalie Cole introduced the paper which outlined the proposed allocation of the combined budgets element of the DGS and the former miscellaneous budget items.

It was noted that from 2020 to 2021 the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) expected this expenditure to reduce. Other funding would need to be identified to maintain these commitments otherwise they would become chargeable activities or cease.

Natalie drew Forum members' attention to the realignment of funding, shown in table 2, to cover the increase FFT (Fischer Family Trust) licence costs to ensure the costs stay within the permitted total funding envelope.

It was noted that the CWEIB (Cheshire West Education Improvement Board) had additional funds, to those shown in table 2, accrued from unspent funds from previous years. Mark would be speaking to CWEIB regarding how these funds were to be spent.

John Murray informed Forum that he was now a member of CWEIB as part of his role as Schools Forum chair.

Resolved that the Schools Forum agree the allocation and configuration of the combined budgets element of the DSG and the miscellaneous expenditure for the 2019-2020 financial year as outlined in table 1 and 2.

8. De-delegated – proposals for 2019-2020

Natalie Cole introduced the report which outlined the amounts to be de-delegated by maintained primary and secondary schools for 2019-2020. Forum members' attention was drawn to paragraph 8 which explained the increases to the proposed rates.

Resolved that the Schools Forum agree the amounts to be de-delegated to the Local Authority for 2019-2020 as set out in the paper. (Vote: maintained primary unanimous; maintained secondary unanimous)

9. Dedicated schools grant (DSG) 2018-2019 forecast outturn at Third Review

Natalie Cole introduced the report which provided an update on the financial forecast outturn position for 2018-2019 for centrally held DSG as reported at the Third Review.

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

10. Any other business

None to report.

11. Next meeting

Monday 11 February 2019