

**Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum, Queen's Park High School,  
Chester, 16 January 2017 approved at the 13 March 2017 meeting.**

**Present:**

Paula Adolph  
  
Sarah Curtis  
Cheryl Bullen  
David Charlton (Chair)  
David Curry  
Kate Docherty  
Kerry Forrester (sub for Chris Priddey)  
Greg Foster  
John Freeman  
Carol Gahan  
Duncan Haworth  
Luci Jones  
Sarah Lee  
Kath Lloyd  
Samantha Myers-Whittaker  
John Murray  
Sue Pearson  
David Rowlands  
Katie Tyrie  
Caroline Vile  
Sarah Worthington  
Sue Yates  
Harry Ziman

**Representing:**

PVI (Private, voluntary and independent) early years' providers  
Primary headteachers  
Primary headteachers  
Secondary headteachers  
Secondary headteachers  
Primary headteachers  
Primary headteachers  
  
Unions  
Secondary governors  
Primary governors  
Primary governors  
Academies  
Academies  
Primary governors  
Special headteachers  
Academies  
Primary governors  
Secondary Governor  
Nursery headteachers  
Diocese  
Primary headteachers  
Secondary headteachers  
Academies

**Officers:**

Natalie Cole  
Charlotte Fenn (Clerk)  
Mark Parkinson  
Paul Plested

**Official observers:**

Councillor Meardon

**Observers/  
public:**

Two attended

**1. Introductions and apologies**

Apologies were received from Sue Anderson, Hilary Berry, Steve Dool, Francis Kwateng, Kathryn Magiera and Chris Priddey.

David Charlton reported that Sue Anderson, The Beeches Pre-school, previously the nominated PVI substitute, had been elected to fill the PVI vacancy and David Rowlands, Upton High School Governor, previously the nominated Primary governor substitute, had been elected to fill the Secondary governor vacancy.

David Charlton welcomed Alison Menkin and Callum Bratley, CWAC Finance Officers, to the meeting as observers and introduced them to the Forum to as they were part of the LA schools finance team.

David Charlton put forward a resolution that the Schools Forum agree that item 3, Falling Rolls Fund, be moved to part two of the meeting and the press and public be excluded as the item may involve the likely disclosure of exempt financial and business affairs of a third party.

**Resolved that the Schools Forum agreed resolution unanimously.**

## **2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting**

### **2.1 Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

## **3. Combined Budgets and Miscellaneous Expenditure (item 4 on agenda)**

Mark Parkinson, Director of Education, introduced the item and drew Forum members' attention to paragraph 5 which outlined the key reasons for the removal of the School Intervention Fund (SIF) for 2017-2018. It was noted that the types of interventions funded had moved away from the more costly staff requests to more 'soft interventions' leading the LA to question whether it should support such initiatives and was it legitimate to continue to hold back funding centrally.

Natalie Cole, Finance Manager, informed Schools Forum that, subject to the outcomes of the schools national funding formula consultation and new regulations, centrally held funds would be under more scrutiny; holding of school intervention funds would not be permitted as there was a requirement to demonstrate on-going commitment going forward.

Mark Parkinson referred Forum members to paragraph 6 and the announcement of a fund for LAs to continue to monitor and commission school improvement for low-performing maintained schools. It was noted that the LA had, since the publication of the Forum papers, been notified of its allocation which was approximately half of the amount the LA had allocated for the School Improvement and Intervention Team as seen in table 1.

Schools Forum members acknowledged the importance of the work and support provided through the SIF. Harry Ziman questioned whether the LA was being too 'hawkish' in cutting this fund and were they confident that there would be enough resource to support schools in the future. Mark Parkinson responded that he wasn't confident and they would need to review what support could be provided. There was an assumption that the £140 million 'Strategic School Improvement Fund' would come with strings attached and be less flexible, however there would be some savings in the School Improvement and Intervention team budget which could be used to support schools. It was noted that in withdrawing the SIF the LA was affectively bringing forward a year early a decision they would have to make for 2018-2019.

Harry Ziman asked if systematic challenges for schools, such as narrowing the gap, would still be supported. Mark Parkinson responded that, other than the pupil premium funding that went into schools to address this type of challenge; there were not really any other additional resources available. However this was an area that the CWEIB (Cheshire West Education Improvement Board) might wish to consider using their funds for e.g. action research.

**Resolved that the Schools Forum** agree the allocation and configuration of the combined budgets element of the DSG and the miscellaneous expenditure for the 2017-2018 financial year.

#### **4. Dedicated Schools Grant Allocations for 2017-2018 and Budget Setting** (item 5 on agenda)

Natalie Cole introduced the report which confirmed the indicative DSG allocation for 2017-2018 and the draft budget proposals for the next financial year.

Forum's attention was drawn to paragraphs 4-5 which outlined the allocation changes resulting in an increase in available funds of £6.027m. Natalie Cole took Forum members through the policy options and technical adjustments reported in appendix B.

#### **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 2017-2018.

#### **5. Draft of 2017-2018 School Funding Formula for January Submission** (item 6 on agenda)

Natalie Cole introduced the report which detailed the draft School Funding Formula for 2017-2018.

It was noted that although deprivation had gone up on the census data, the FSM Ever 6 data was lower as it was based on January data; schools receiving Pupil Premium funds needed to bear this in mind as Pupil Premium was based on the same measure.

In response to a question regarding what happens to the funding should the growth in free school pupil numbers not materialise, Natalie Cole reported that the funds would remain as they would not be recouped by the EFA and would be available to use next year.

David Charlton queried whether the school budget figures in appendix B were likely to change or could they be used by schools for budget planning. Natalie Cole responded that it was unlikely that the figures would change however the funding formula was still subject to EFA and Members approval; draft budgets would be sent to schools with that caveat.

**Resolved that the Schools Forum** approve the principles on which the funding formula was based for final submission to the EFA (vote: unanimous).

#### **6. De-delegation – Proposals for 2017-2018** (item 7 on agenda)

Natalie Cole introduced the report which outlined the proposed amounts to be de-delegated by primary and secondary schools for 2017-2018. It was noted that this item did not apply to academies.

Forum members' attention was drawn to the proposal in paragraph 7 not to carry forward the prior year's rates underspend which was a change from previous years.

Natalie Cole drew Forum members' attention to paragraph's 9-11 and the de-delegation of Education Services Grant (ESG) general duties. It was noted that the Schools Forum Finance sub group had reviewed the guidance provided by the EFA in relation to specific statutory duties that the ESG general duties funding was associated with. A specific piece of work was needed to review the services offered and provided to maintained schools by the LA and what would continue as a result of the loss of this funding. A further report would be brought back to Schools Forum later in the year.

**Resolved that** the Schools Forum agree the amounts to be de-delegated to the Local Authority for 2017-2018 as stated in the report.

## **7. Education Funding: Stage 2 Consultations** (item 8 on agenda)

Paul Plested, Senior Finance Manager, introduced the report which provided a summary of the key aspects emerging from the second stage of two consultations on a proposed move to national formulae for schools and for support for children with Special Educational Needs.

Paul Plested took Forum members through the key points in the report. It was noted that the funding allocation figures in the appendix were based on 2016-2017 pupil numbers and that the majority of primary and all secondary schools would see a reduction in overall funding once the transitional arrangements ceased.

Forum members noted a correction to the table under paragraph 12 the; KS3 Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) existing rate should read 3,938 not 3,398.

Paul Plested reported that a bulletin on the impact of the proposed funding changes would be circulated to schools that week.

It was proposed that the Finance sub group draft a response to the consultation at their February meeting. David Charlton sought Forum members' comments/views on the proposals outlined in the paper to assist the sub group in drafting a response to the consultation.

The following comments were noted:

- unfair to CWAC, in top 20 of losers, already amongst lowest funded LAs;
- were promised fair funding by the Government, the proposals make CWAC worse off;
- gap not moved between lowest and highest AWPU;
- focus on the exceptions and demonstrate where prejudice against CWAC (i.e. weightings);
- inequity due to:

- increase in amount of funding going to schools through deprivation – CWAC score low on deprivation;
- reduction in basic entitlement lump sum;
- unclear as to how the lump sum figures arrived at, would appear DfE not looked at what is needed to run a school;
- not looked at impact of unintended consequences;
- the National Audit Office report on school financial stability sited as a good source to draw upon when considering a response to the consultation;
- engage support from local MPs;
- encourage parents and Associations to lobby local MPs.

Councillor Meardon informed Forum members that Councillors had been applying political pressure and raising concerns with the Secretary of State for Education and DfE on behalf of CWAC.

Forum members discussed Associations drafting a response for parents to use when making representation to MPs. It was noted that Officers could provide the factual information but it would be for schools to formulate their own views. Councillor Meardon agreed that a response to parents could go under her name.

Paul Plested agreed to discuss the consultation at the CWAPH Executive meeting that week as he would be in attendance.

**Resolved that the Schools Forum** task the Finance sub group to draft a response to the stage two consultation to be brought back to the March Schools Forum meeting for approval prior to submission by the deadline of 22 March 2017.

**Part two** - observers left prior to part two of the meeting.

#### **8. Falling Rolls Fund (item 3 on agenda)**

**Resolved that the Schools Forum** approve creation of a falling rolls fund for 2017-2018 financial year based on the criteria set out in the paper presented at the 12 December 2016 Schools Forum meeting.(vote: 20 for, 1 against)

#### **9. Any Other Business**

None to report.

#### **10. Next meeting**

Monday 13 March 2017 Queen's Park High School 4.30 - 6.30.