

Minutes of Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum, virtual meeting, on 12 January 2021 subject to approved 8 February 2021

Members	Representing	Attendance
Schools and Academies		
Alan Brown	Primary headteachers	Attended
Julie Chambers	Primary headteachers	Attended
Sarah Curtis	Primary headteachers	Attended
Ian Devereux Roberts	Primary headteachers	Attended
Kate Docherty	Primary headteachers	Attended
Sharon Broughton	Primary governors	Attended
Duncan Haworth (Chair)	Primary governors	Attended
Helen Hill	Primary governors	Apologies
David Nield	Primary governors	Apologies
Nick Lacey	Primary governors	Attended
Lisa Rigby	Primary governors	Substitute
David Curry	Secondary headteachers	Attended
Mike Holland	Secondary headteachers	Apologies
John Freeman	Secondary governors	Attended
Rob Williams	Secondary governors	Attended
Mike McCann	Special headteachers	Attended
Phil Hopwood	Special governors	Attended
Katie Tyrie	Nursery headteachers	Attended
Andy Stewart	PRU	Attended
Sarah Connolly	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Darran Jones	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Luci Jones	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Jason Lowe	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Helen Studley	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Lyndsay Watterson	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Marie Allen	Academies - special	Attended
Non Schools		
Sue Anderson	PVI early years providers	Attended
Kathryn Magiera	Diocese	Absent
Caroline Vile	Diocese	Apologies
Greg Foster	Unions	Attended
Geoff Wright	Unions	Absent
Rob Pullen	CWAPH	Attended
Cat Hirst	PVI early years providers	Attended
Vacancy	16-19 providers	Vacancy
Official Observers		
Councillor Robert Cernik	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Attended
Officers in attendance		
David McNaught	Director of Education and Inclusion	
Natalie Cole	Finance Manager	
Charlotte Fenn	Clerk	
Laura Sutton	Children's Services Liaison Manager	
Observer		

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were noted.

Duncan Haworth reported the following update to Schools Forum membership and welcomed the new members to the meeting.

New reps

Nick Lacey	Whitby Heath Primary	Primary Governor
Rob Williams	Blacon High	Secondary Governor

New subs

Lisa Rigby	Great Budworth & Antrobus	St Marks CE Federation	Primary Governor
David Rowlands	Upton High		Secondary Governor

2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting

2.1 To agree the minutes from the meeting held 20 October 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 2.2.1 2.2.3 Item 5 Special Educational Needs (SEN) funding for mainstream and special schools - funding from the High Needs block 2020-2021

Duncan Haworth reported that a joint meeting of the High Needs and Finance subgroups had been arranged for 19 January 2021.

2.2.2 2.2.2 Item 5 Maintained School Balances Financial Year 2019-2020 and Academy Balances 2018-2019

Mike McCann referred to the 'CWASSH schools balance summary' report, circulated separately to the main papers which reported that budgets were being effectively managed and for those which historically exceeded 8% there was clear evidence that balances were falling and would continue to fall below 8%. Mike also reported that due to COVID there was extra expenditure such as cleaning and some capital projects had not gone ahead.

Rob Pullen commented that balances varied across primary schools and some contingencies were being whittled away due to COVID related costs.

Duncan asked that all schools continue to look at their balances.

2.2.3 Item 3 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2020-2021 Forecast Outturn at First Review

Natalie Cole reported that the DSG overspend recovery plan item had been deferred to the next meeting in February.

3. Education – Basic Need Capital Programme 2021-2025

Laura Sutton introduced the report which provided Schools Forum with an update on the Education Basic Need Capital Programme.

Laura provided a presentation which explained the background to forecasting pupil numbers to ensure enough school places in the local area which formed the basis for basic needs funding. It was noted that forecasts were reviewed year on year as new housing developments would impact on pupil forecasts. Laura also provided some clarification on interpreting the scorecard data document.

Laura referred Forum to appendix 1 and the basic needs programme for 2021-2025; it was noted that where the estimated places stated n/a, this was because no data was currently available. In relation to Chester South they were looking at what impact the Wrexham Road new build might have on pupil numbers.

In response to a question regarding funding for buildings in a poor condition, Laura reported that there was separate funding for this managed by QWEST, and where appropriate Education would liaise with QWEST to collaborate on join projects.

Resolved that Schools Forum note the paper.

4. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2020-2021 Forecast Outturn at Third Review

Natalie Cole introduced the item providing an update on the financial forecast outturn position for 2020-2021 for centrally held DSG as reported at the Third Review of Financial Performance.

Natalie took Forum members through the key variances contributing to the forecast overspend, as outlined under paragraph 4. Natalie referred Forum to paragraph 6 and the distribution of remaining balances. It was noted that, due to the current national lockdown and funding cap at 85% of January 2020 take-up, the position on early years funding and cost was not clear, further clarification was needed before a decision could be made regarding further temporary distribution of funds.

Sue Anderson sought clarification regarding a recent communication from Daniel Spry, Early Years Consultant, implying that early years funding levels would remain the same for this term. Natalie responded that it was unclear at the moment if this would be the case as further guidance was needed regarding recouping funds for pupils that had not attended due to COVID or had chosen not to attend. Natalie was due to meet with Daniel on 13 January.

Sue reported that many settings were running on 50% capacity and asked if authorities were lobbying on this issue. Natalie responded that she was aware that other authorities had flagged this issue and David McNaught reported that the authority was in regular contact with the DfE and had flagged concerns regarding early years funding.

It was also noted that this was the first time the DSG had been in deficit and further consideration as to how to comply to the DfE deficit recovery plan meant that the budget setting item had been deferred to February Schools Forum.

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

5. Indicative Dedicated Schools Grant Allocations for 2021-2022

Natalie Cole took Forum members through the report which detailed the provisional allocation figures for the DSG for 2021-2022.

Forum members attention was drawn to paragraph 7 and the Early Years Block. Forum was reminded that the two-year-old funding rate was the rate to the local authority not early years settings and CW&C remained at the minimum level of funding for three- and four-year olds.

It was also noted that this was the last year for the free school meals supplementary grant.

Resolved that Schools Forum note the indicative allocations and the next steps for confirming the DSG budget proposals for 2021-2022.

6. Draft of 2021-2022 School Funding Formula for January Submission

Natalie Cole introduced the report which detailed the draft School Funding Formula for 2021-2022.

It was noted that the rates charges were not available at this time, as outlined in paragraph 11, and the school funding formula would not be final until confirmed compliant by the ESFA in February.

Natalie drew Forum members attention to the changes to the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) factor as outlined in paragraph 9. It was noted that schools were protected against adverse changes in data with the positive Minimum Funding Guarantee.

Resolved that Schools Forum (School, Academy and PVI representatives) endorse the draft funding formula submission to the ESFA, pending the update to rates charges.

7. De-delegation – Proposals for 2021-2022

Natalie Cole introduced the report which outlined the services for consideration for de-delegated by maintained primary and secondary schools for 2021-2022. It was noted

that there were no real changes from previous years and the same principles for managing de-delegated funds applied, as outlined in paragraph 8.

Forums attention was drawn to paragraph 9 and the proposed amounts for de-delegation. It was noted that the de-delegation unit value for free school meal eligibility had been amended from FSM 6 (free school meal ever 6) to FSM numbers addressing a previous distortion by the differing proportions on FSM 6. Primary per pupil rate had decreased to reflect the underspend on maternity.

Sarah Curtis sought an update on the proposal suggested at the last Forum to use the primary maternity de-delegated fund underspend to support additional maternity costs resulting from staff member coming out of class early due to COVID. Natalie reported that this had provided difficult as the relevant data was not recorded so funds could not be targeted appropriately, and insurance policies were already providing for cover; the decision had been made to allocate the underspend to all primary schools by reducing the de-delegation rate.

Greg Foster thanked colleagues for continuing to support de-delegated funds for trade union facilities and acknowledged the impressive way union reps had continued to work in schools and what they had achieved during this crisis.

Resolved that the Schools Forum agree the services to be de-delegated to the Local Authority for 2021-2022 as set out in the paper under paragraph three (Vote: Primary unanimous; Secondary unanimous).

8. Financial Transparency of Local Authority Maintained Schools Consultation Outcome

Natalie Cole took Forum members through the report to update Schools Forum with the outcome of the DfE consultation and the actions arising for local authorities and schools.

Forums attention was drawn to paragraph 5 and the proposals taken forward by the DfE with particular reference to proposal 7 and 8 and the requirement for maintained schools to comply from 1 Jan 2021.

Resolved that Schools Forum note the outcome of the government consultation and new measures to be communicated to maintained schools.

9. Any Other Business

None to report.

10. Next meeting

Monday 8 February 2021 4.30 - 6.30 virtual.