



worcestershire county council

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM (WSF)

Thursday 5th November 2020
Remote Meeting Held Via MS Teams

The meeting started at 2.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE:

WSF Members

Malcolm Richards (Chair)	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Bryn Thomas (Vice Chair)	-	HT Wolverley CE Secondary School
Marie Pearse	-	HT Evesham Nursery School
Paul Essenhigh	-	Executive HT Catshill Middle, Catshill First and Nursery Schools
Nathan Jones	-	HT Meadow Green Primary
Adrian Ward	-	HT Trinity High School
Bec Garratt	-	HT Wyre Forest School
David McIntosh	-	Governor, Wyre Forest
Lorraine Petersen	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Jeff Robinson	-	Governor, Malvern Hills
Stephen Baker	-	Union Representative
Tricia Wellings	-	PVI Sector

Local Authority (LA)

Phil Rook	-	Director of Resources Worcestershire Children First
Andy McHale	-	Service Manager Funding and Policy Worcestershire Children First
Councillor Marcus Hart	-	Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills Worcestershire County Council

1. APOLOGIES

Emma Pritchard	-	Principal The Black Pear Trust
Chris King	-	CEO Severn Academies Educational Trust
John Bateman	-	Governor, Aspire Alternative Provision (AP) Free School
Tim Reid	-	Church of England Board of Education
Greg McClarey	-	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Edward Senior	-	16-19 Providers
Sarah Wilkins	-	Director of Education and Early Help Worcestershire Children First
Caroline Brand	-	Schools Finance Manager Worcestershire County Council

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

3. DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTERESTS WITH ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

The Vice Chair declared he was to present on behalf of the Worcestershire Association of Secondary Headteachers (WASH) under Agenda Item 10 Pupil Growth Fund Considerations 2020-21.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (15th September 2020)

David McIntosh Governor Wyre Forest requested it be recorded his non attendance at the last meeting was due to the IT connectivity issues.

Minutes then agreed.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5.1 Covid 19 Issues

(a) The WSF commented as follows: -

- Given the 2nd lockdown there needs to be further pressure put on the DfE of the escalating costs in schools.
- The scope of qualifying costs needs to be widened particularly around loss of income e.g. from wrap around care, breakfast and after school.
- Many TA staff in school are on multiple contracts so furlough is very complicated.
- The unfairness that the recoupment of exceptional costs not being available to PVI settings.
- The first grant available was very restricted and a lot of costs were not deemed eligible for support, so a lot of schools have had to fund these directly.
- Ministerial comments that funding had been increased to support these issues was not helpful.
- Details on the 2nd claim window are needed urgently.

(c) Phil advised: -

- The LA would feed all this back as part of the regular meetings with the DfE.
- An announcement on furlough had just been made with it being extended to March 2021.
- The LA would press the DfE on the furlough details and any arrangements for the further claims window.

(d) On behalf of the WSF, the Chair thanked the LA for all their work and support in these matters.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

7. DRAFT STATUTORY INSTRUMENT DSG DEFICIT RELATED STATUTORY OVERRIDE

7.1 Phil introduced the report which detailed issues for the accounting treatment of DSG deficits. Given the position in most LAs some external auditors were having issues regarding their opinion on some LAs final accounts, whose deficits are significant.

7.2 Phil clarified the treatment in WCCs accounts for the DSG deficit as at 31st March 2020 of £6.2m as an unusable reserve had been approved with the relevant external audit opinion and that the Statutory Instrument will provide certainty on this issue until the end of 2022-23.

7.3 The WSF noted the provisions.

8. SCHOOL FUNDING 2021-22 LOCAL ISSUES

8.1 Recommended Policy

(a) Andy advised the WSF recommended policy for 2021-22 had been communicated to schools following the WSF meeting on 15th September 2020 and that no contra indications had been received.

(b) In response to a query on the mainstream of the specific pay and pensions grants for specialist providers, Andy confirmed this would be an additionality to the HN DSG and would need to be reflected in the allocations to providers in 2021-22.

(c) The WSF noted the position.

8.2 WSF Required Decisions

(a) The WSF were requested to consider their required decisions for 2021-22. These would then form part of the WCC Cabinet report to inform the decisions required by the Cabinet.

(b) The WSF were reminded that, decisions on the potential to transfer schools block funding, delegation and de-delegation matters and centrally retained items are for designated members of the WSF; whereas the final decision on the LSFF was for the WCC Cabinet. The WSF were requested to consider and either endorse, approve or otherwise the recommended actions.

(c) Andy advised that the voting arrangements were as follows: -

- Schools Members and PVI Members only – LSFF for endorsement or not.
- Maintained Mainstream School Members only – approval or not for the delegation and de-delegation for central services for their phase only.
- All WSF Members – approval or not for schools' block transfer and centrally retained services for all schools.

(d) LSFF for 2021-22

- Although not a WSF decision, the WSF were requested to consider endorsement of the proposal.
- On a show of hands, the **WSF RESOLVED TO ENDORSE** (For 10 votes; Against 0 votes; Abstentions 0 votes) the LSFF in 2021-22 to continue as far is affordable and practicable to be based using the DfE Year 4 NFF parameters using the DfE required data sets and formula factors as in the NFF, with the estimated factors to be detailed in the WCC Cabinet report.

(e) Potential to Transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block DSG in 2021-22 to the High Needs Block

- The WSF considered its statutory responsibility in making a decision on the transfer of Schools Block Funding. In line with the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, the WSF considered the issue.
- On a show of hands, the **WSF RESOLVED NOT TO APPROVE** (For 0 votes; Against 12 votes; Abstentions 0 votes) the transfer in 2021-22 of 0.5% of the Schools Block funding to support High Needs budget pressures.

(f) Delegation and De-delegation of Centrally Retained DSG Services for Maintained Mainstream Schools

- The WSF considered its statutory responsibilities in making decisions on the delegation or de-delegation of services currently centrally retained in the DSG. In line with the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, the WSF maintained school members by phase considered these areas.
- On a show of hands, the **WSF MAINTAINED SCHOOL MEMBERS BY PHASE UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO APPROVE** (Primary: For 3 votes; Against 0 votes; Abstentions 0 votes; and Secondary: For 2 votes; Against 0 votes; Abstentions 0 votes): -
 - The continued initial delegation and transfer of the following centrally retained services for 2021-22 as in 2020-21 as follows: -

FORMULA FACTOR	SERVICE
Basic Per Pupil	School Specific Contingencies (not early years) Support for Schools in Financial Difficulties 14-16 Practical Learning Options Schools Insurance Staff Costs Supply Cover Licences and Subscriptions
Deprivation	FSM Eligibility
EAL	Support for Minority Ethnic Pupils
Low Cost High Incidence SEN Prior Attainment	Support for Underachieving Groups Behaviour Support Services

- The delegation or de-delegation of these areas by reducing the formula amounts for maintained mainstream schools as follows: -

Phase/Service	Primary Delegation	Primary De-delegation	Secondary Delegation	Secondary De-delegation
School Specific Contingency (SSC)	No	Yes	No	Yes
Support for Schools in Financial Difficulty	Yes	No	Yes	No
14-16 Practical Learning Options	N/A	N/A	Yes	No
Behaviour Support Services	N/A	N/A	Yes	No
Schools Insurance	Yes	No	Yes	No
Support for Minority Ethnic Pupils or Underachieving Groups – EAL	No	Yes	No	Yes
Support for Minority Ethnic Pupils or Underachieving Groups – Travellers Children	No	Yes	No	Yes
Free School Meal Eligibility	No	Yes	No	Yes
Staff Costs Supply Cover – Civic Duties	No	Yes	No	Yes
Staff Costs Supply Cover – Trade Union Duties	No	Yes	No	Yes
Staff Costs Supply Cover – HR Related Duties	No	Yes	No	Yes
School Improvement	No	No	No	No
Former General Duties ESG	N/A	No	N/A	No

- For those services subject to de-delegation by the formula factors detailed above by reducing the formula amounts in 2021-22 for maintained mainstream schools only on the basis detailed above.

(g) Centrally Retained DSG Services

- The WSF also considered its statutory responsibilities in making decisions on other centrally retained DSG services. In line with the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, the WSF considered these areas.
- On a show of hands, the **WSF MEMBERS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO APPROVE** (For 12 votes; Against 0 votes; Abstention 0 votes) the continued central retention in 2021-22 of the centrally retained services as detailed, limited to the 2017-18 budget level or as prescribed by the DfE (indicative budgets are shown either limited to previous year levels or **estimated** funding subject to final clarification and change) for: -
 - Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) and Music Publishers Association (MPA) licences (subject to DfE prescription) – £0.41m **estimated**.
 - Contributions to Combined Services – the Early Intervention Family Support (EIFS) service budget – £0.96m **actual** (reflecting the 2020-21 amount being reduced by a further 20% because of the DfE change to the Central Services Schools Block DSG).

- Co-ordinated admissions scheme – £0.60m **estimated**.
- Servicing of the Schools Forum – £0.06m **estimated**.
- Services previously funded by the retained rate of the ESG – £1.26m **estimated**.

(h) The WSF considered the need to exercise its responsibilities to inform the County Council Cabinet of the issues discussed and decisions for the 2021-22 LSFF and its decisions on transfer from the Schools Block, delegation/de-delegation for maintained mainstream schools and other centrally retained services for all schools. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills advised the WSF he would feedback to Cabinet accordingly on the above issues.

RESOLVED –

The WSF unanimously agreed that all these above decisions be communicated to the Worcestershire County Council Cabinet as required.

9. HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

9.1 F40 Survey

(a) Andy advised on the recent response to the F40 group survey relating to HN budget pressures and the future projections. There was a similar survey via the Society of County Treasurer's too.

(b) The WSF noted the position on both surveys.

9.2 DfE HN Planning Template

(a) Phil advised that as part of the planning process for HN issues the DfE had devised a working document template for LAs. It is designed to give visibility to the issues and for it to be updated and shared termly. There is also a need for it to be signed off by WCC, WCF and the WSF.

(b) Gabrielle Stacey the LAs Assistant Director SEND is currently preparing a HN Management Plan that will inform the template and she will be invited to the January 2021 WSF meeting to present to the WSF.

(c) The WSF noted the position.

10. PUPIL GROWTH FUND (PGF) CONSIDERATIONS 2020-21

10.1 The Vice Chair advised the WSF of issues to be raised on behalf of WASH. The PGF provides for in-year revenue funding to support basic need demographic requirements agreed with the LA that are not funded through the DfEs lagged funding system. The concern is that with the advent of the MFLs this is not reflected in the PGF funding rate, which are based on the AWPU. Schools want to continue to work in partnership with the LA and admit these additional pupils but request consideration of using the MFLs as the funding rate.

10.2 Andy advised the arrangements for the PGF were approved by the WSF in January 2013 providing funding for the difference in actual numbers in the admitting group in the new academic year compared to the top leaving group in the previous academic year to

be based on the relevant age group AWPU. Funding is allocated annually to schools until the PAN increase is fully implemented in the school and the scheme has operated successfully on that basis.

10.3 Phil advised the PGF is part of the Schools Block DSG but the DfE policy of the MFLs is only for the LSFF and not for the PGF, so there is potentially a gap in national policy. The LA has raised this with the DfE, but they have passed the issue back to the LA as PGF criteria are set locally. Phil further advised the report requests the WSF to consider options to retain the current funding level of AWPU or change to the MFLs. Andy advised a change to the MFLs would be a further call on the PGF and if the WSF were minded changing then it could only apply from September 2020 for 2020-21 using the October 2020 census.

10.4 Members of the WSF commented as follows: -

- There was general support in the WSF for consideration of using the MFLs as the funding rate and that this would support the increasing costs in schools.
- Could the LA consider using the PGF to support growing schools admitting up to their PAN?
- The MFL rate would support the additional costs for the whole budget e.g. premises, utilities, etc not readily reflected in the AWPU.

10.5 Andy commented that the PGF is restricted to basic need requirements and that schools increasing their NOR to PAN can only be supported through lagged funding. Councillor Hart advised he had a briefing from officers and was supportive of the request to use the MFLs and that this was an equitable solution. Phil requested the WSF consider the options in the paper and the LA and WSF needed to be mindful of the budget pressures on the DSG overall.

RESOLVED - On a show of hands, the WSF MEMBERS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED (For 12 votes; Against 0 votes; Abstention 0 votes) to: -

- **Support Option 2 to change the PGF to use the DfE MFL rates from 2020-21 i.e. from September 2020 to be based upon the October 2020 census; and**
- **Insert a change to the criteria to read '*Funding to be allocated based on the national MFLs, so there is no disparity between the funding of new and existing students*'.**

10.6 In closing the item, the Vice Chair thanked the LA and the WSF for considering the matter and the transparency in the report, debate and decision making.

11. F40 GROUP UPDATE – MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 16th SEPTEMBER 2020

11.1 The WSF noted the issues and Andy agreed to circulate a further letter from F40 to the DfE relating to DSG funding and cost pressures.

12. OTHER MATTER

12.1 This being her last WSF meeting, on behalf of the LA, Andy paid tribute to Tricia Wellings the current PVI representative who was standing down after over 8 years on the WSF. Tricia was thanked for her excellent service and contributions representing the views of all EY providers. The Chair on behalf of the WSF echoed those comments and wished Tricia all the very best for the future.

12.2 Tricia requested an update on the current position of the recruitment of EY representatives. Andy advised for the 2 EY vacancies there had been 3 expressions of interest and all had made excellent submissions resulting in the need for an election. Andy further advised there had been support for all 3 candidates across all the EY sectors and as such the voting was consistent with this. Due to this, Andy had approached the DfE to see what scope there is within the Schools Forum Regulations regarding appointments and would advise the WSF on this later. The new EY reps would be appointed for the January 2021 meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.10pm

The date of the next WSF meeting is: -

Thursday 21st January 2021 at 2pm Via Remote Meeting MS Teams

DRAFT