



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

Thursday 20th January 2022
Remote Meeting Held Via MS Teams

The meeting started at 10.00 am

IN ATTENDANCE:

WSF Members

Malcolm Richards (Chair) [MR]	- Governor, Bromsgrove
Bryn Thomas (Vice Chair) [BT]	- HT Wolverley CE Secondary School
Marie Pearse [MP]	- HT Evesham Nursery School
Phil Hanson [PH]	- HT Pershore High School
Paul Essenhigh [PE]	- Executive HT Catshill Middle, Catshill First and Nursery Schools
Lizzie Dixon [LD]	- HT Franche Primary School
Emma Pritchard [EP]	- Principal Black Pear Trust
Adrian Ward [AW]	- HT Trinity High School
Jeff Robinson [JR]	- Governor, Malvern Hills
John Bateman [JB]	- Governor, Aspire Alternative Provision (AP)
Chris King [CK]	- CEO Severn Academies Educational Trust
Jay Hart [JH]	- HT Kingfisher School
Ed Francis [EF]	- HT Fort Royal Primary School

Local Authority (LA)

Councillor Marcus Hart [MH]	- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills Worcestershire County Council
Phil Rook [PR]	- Director of Resources - Worcestershire Children First
Sarah Wilkins [SW]	- Director of Education and Early Help Worcestershire Children First
Caroline Brand [CBr]	- Senior Schools Finance Manager - Worcestershire Children First
Chris Bird [CBi]	- Senior Finance Business Partner - Worcestershire Children First
Rob Phillips [RP]	- Accountancy Officer School Funding - Worcestershire Children First

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members and let members know that we would be recording the meeting for a test and note taking purposes only, then it would be deleted. That after a few trials we may start publishing the recording as part of our WSF transparency protocol.

The Chair informed WSF that Rob Phillips was taking over the clerking role for the forum.

Apologies

David McIntosh	-	Governor, Wyre Forest
Lorraine Petersen	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Tim Reid	-	Church of England Board of Education

1. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

CBI declared an interest as a foundation trustee of the Our Lady of the Magnificat MAT

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

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (18th November 2021)

Agreed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

EY Members update

RP Confirmed that we have had two Early Years (EY) resignations from WSF (Tom Jenkins and Catrina Savage). He is working with the sector to replace these EY representatives.

Liberata Payroll update PR

This is being monitored and asking for clarity from members on the position.

Positive feedback from members received, with PE and BT schools are trialling enter information on the front end to assist. WCF are having fortnightly meeting with Liberata. Would like any issues notified so that these can be raised.

6. CABINET DECISIONS

7.1 9th December 2021 – Fair Funding for Schools 2022-23 National and Local Funding Arrangements for Schools

PR reported the outcome of the local funding proposals for 2022-23, discussed and approved by the WSF in the Autumn Term 2021, were received and considered by Cabinet.

The WSF were notified that the Cabinet decisions and approvals of made: -

- The Local Schools Funding Formula (LSFF) to continue as far as is practicable and affordable on the DfE NFF Year 4 parameters.
- No transfer of funding from the Schools Block to support High Needs.
- De-delegations for maintained schools
- Centrally retained services items for all schools.
- The LSFF submission to be made to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) by 21st January 2022.

7.2 6th January 2022 – Budget and Council Tax 2022-23

PR reported the main details from the draft budget for 2022-23 for WCC. This is now out for formal consultation. It included proposals for growth to deal with significant pressures in both Adult and Children's Services and the proposed Council Tax increase of 3.94% (0.94% general increase and a further 1% for Adult Social Care plus 2% carried forward from 2021/22). The Local Government Settlement announced on 16 December was slightly better than anticipated, a one-year settlement, however funding contains several of one-off grants in 2022/23. The budget includes an update on School Funding DSG settlement 2022-23 received in December 2021. The draft budget also includes additional capital funding for building works at schools and a new Worcester High School.

7. PROVISIONAL SCHOOL FUNDING SETTLEMENT 2022-23

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

PR advised, on 16th December 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) published details of the provisional School Funding Settlement 2022-23 updated the WSF on the latest position with DSG funding for next year. Worcestershire has received additional HLN block funding in January of £2.777m, which was not included in the original DSG settlement. This is partly to cover the additional cost due to the increase in National Insurance Contributions (1.25% increase).

Pupil Premium Grant (PPG)

PR confirmed that the PPG funding rates were increasing next year as advised by the Department for Education (DfE)

8. SCHOOL BLOCK ALLOCATIONS 2022-23 AUTHORITY PROFORMA TOOL (APT)

RP presented the reports to WSF. He confirmed that school funding was affordable within the school block and advised that the main change in the formula apart from the funding rates is the Sparsity factor. Sparsity now takes into consideration the distance by road rather than as the 'crow flies' as previously. This has increased the funding in this area by £1.1m for Worcestershire schools.

School business rates

Another change for school from April 2022 is that the school will not need to budget for rates income or expenditure as school will not receive the funding to pay the rates but will receive any adjustments relating to 2021-22 as part of normal funding allocation. The payment of rates will be taken over the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for all schools. Allocation will include a rates figure which should not be included, this will be clarified to maintained school as part of our budget setting. The authority is waiting for clarification on how these figures will be shown within their accounts for end of year and Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) returns.

Allocations to Schools

CBr confirmed that school allocation will go out, in the normal timescale of end of February 2022, which will be included her normal information alongside this.

Pupil numbers

Pupil number in high schools are increasing where in primary sector they are reducing and that this could cause issues for school budgets as most factors within funding are based on pupil led factors.

SW highlighted that it is a very mixed picture within Worcestershire with some areas of high demand and other with spare capacity.

Special school funding

JH brought up the funding of special school and the increase in pupil within the sector and that the additional funding is needed to support this increase. SH thanked the special school sector for working with the authority to manage these pressures.

SW stated as part of the SEND improvement plan this is part of the work, trying to make sure that the provision is right for the children in the right place.

Growth funding was discussed for special schools, it was confirmed that this is a school block funding item so for it to be used for special schools would need WSF agreement to move money from school block to High Level Needs (HLN) block.

RP confirmed that the funding for special school is different in that it used several different counts in the year to pick-up the change in pupil numbers.

9. Joint area SEND revisit in Worcestershire

SW presented this item; this covered the SEND revisit between 1 – 3 November 2021. She went through the 12 areas of the review with the 8 areas of improvement and 4 area requiring further improvement. Worcestershire are working on an action plan to improve these areas, which must be submitted to the DfE within 5 weeks of the published report.

SW thanked members within schools that are already working with them on this.

It was agreed that a draft version of the SEND improvement plan will be sent to all members with a deadline for feedback. This will allow feedback to be considered/included in the final version of the plan.

10. All Age Disability Service

PR presented to WSF the proposal paper to the Scrutiny Panel within the Council for the transformation and restructure to create an All Age Disability Service 0-25 (AAD 0-25), for information. This will also dovetail into the SEND improvement plan.

SW gave further details on this and how it will assist the child's journey into adulthood and is linked to SEND improvement and a more joined up service and approach.

SW confirmed that two-senior officers within SEND management have or are leaving and that the Virtual School and Vulnerable Children areas will move under Nicola Jones.

11. Government response to - Reforming how local authorities' school improvement function are funded

PR updated WSF on the outcome of the consultation. With a reduction of 50% in funding in 2022-23 and it is ending in 2023-24. He also confirmed that this will not affect school improvement staff as they are not funded by this grant like some authorities.

SW explained the use of the money within Worcestershire and would like feedback on how we can use this whilst still available to support system led improvement.

BT stated that it was disappointing, but if this helped us towards more system led and collaborative approach, with more local solutions it should be welcomed. Schools need to remember that this is also their problem as well and help find the solutions. He stated we need to remain positive and move forward.

Future meetings

MR raised about the continuation of meeting online with one face to face meeting a year to be discussed further at the next meeting. This is to give members a chance to consider this before the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am

The date of the next WSF meeting: - Thursday 31st March 2022 at 2pm
Via Remote Meeting MS Teams