



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

Thursday 28th November 2019
Worcester Room, County Hall, Worcester

The meeting started at 2.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE:

WSF Members

Bryn Thomas (Vice Chair)	-	HT Wolverley CE Secondary School
Marie Pearce	-	HT Evesham Nursery School
Nathan Jones	-	HT Meadow Green Primary
Vivienne Cranton	-	Principal The Black Pear Trust
Adrian Ward	-	HT Trinity High School
Chris King	-	CEO Severn Academies Educational Trust
Deb Rattley	-	HT Chadsgrove Special School
David McIntosh	-	Governor, Wyre Forest
Jeff Robinson	-	Governor, Malvern Hills
Stephen Baker	-	Union Representative
Tim Reid	-	Church of England Board of Education
Tricia Wellings	-	PVI Sector

Local Authority (LA)

Sarah Wilkins	-	Director of Education and Early Help Worcestershire Children First
Phil Rook	-	Director of Resources Worcestershire Children First
Andy McHale	-	Service Manager Funding and Policy Worcestershire Children First
Caroline Brand	-	Schools Finance Manager Worcestershire County Council
Rob Phillips	-	Schools Finance Team Worcestershire County Council
Councillor Marcus Hart	-	Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills Worcestershire County Council

Observer

Catriona Savage	-	PVI Sector
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**1. CHAIR, APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST**

1.1 Chair

In the absence of Malcolm Richards WSF Chair, Bryn Thomas WSF Vice Chair took the

Chair for the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

Malcolm Richards (Chair)	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Paul Essenhigh	-	Executive HT Catshill Middle, Catshill First and Nursery Schools
Lorraine Petersen	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Greg McClarey	-	Archdiocese of Birmingham
John Bateman	-	Governor, Aspire Alternative Provision (AP) Free School
Edward Senior	-	16-19 Providers

1.3 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Catriona Savage, potential new PVI representative to the WSF Meeting.

1.4 Introduction to Worcestershire Children First (WCF)

(a) Phil Rook confirmed that the transfer to the new wholly owned Council company WCF had taken place on 1st October 2019. Phil further confirmed that the support for the WSF in terms of clerking and financial policy advice was part of WCF and as such provided independence from WCC. The WSF were advised that the School Finance function had remained as part of WCC.

(b) Sarah Wilkins confirmed the areas within the Education and Early Help part of WCF and that services currently being provided through the contract with Babcock International after contract completion would be part of that service in WCF.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

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

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (26th September 2019)

Agreed.

5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1 Under 6.3 it was noted the briefing note on the Local Government Pension Scheme was still to be circulated. Andy agreed to follow up.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Apprenticeship Levy Update

(a) Andy provided an update on behalf of Judy Chadwick, which confirmed following comments from the last WSF, the LA is putting together an apprentice offer specifically for schools that includes working with the University of Worcester on Headship and Deputy headship qualifications as well as the entry level Teaching Assistant and Business Administration. This is planned to be launched in National Apprenticeship Week in the week commencing 3rd February 2020 together with an event for both maintained schools and academies with courses planned from July 2020.

(b) The WSF very much welcomed the development.

6.2 Liberata Schools HR

(a) A member of the WSF raised issues on the current HR service being provided through Liberata, which in the main related to the capacity of the service. WSF members were requested to channel issues through the member. The WSF commented that quality is generally good but there were concerns on the length of time taken in accessing some services and getting HR advice.

(b) Phil confirmed that a meeting was in the process in being arranged with the WCCs Head of HR to discuss the issues.

6.3 Nursery School Funding

(a) A member of the WSF requested some discussion on a funding matter for the school.

(b) The issues were noted, and Caroline agreed to discuss outside of the WSF meeting.

7. DfE CONSULTATION ON DSG GRANT CONDITIONS

7.1 Andy introduced the report which detailed a response to a DfE consultation on the treatment in LAs accounts of DSG deficits.

7.2 The WSF noted the response and the comments of the Society of County Treasurer's.

8. SCHOOL 2020-21 LOCAL ISSUES OUTCOMES OF THE SCHOOLS CONSULTATION OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2019

8.1 Overall Issues

(a) Andy introduced the item and confirmed the consultation had concluded at 2pm on 18th November 2019.

(b) To support the WSF the following information had been provided prior to the WSF meeting: -

- Summaries of the main issues received for the Local Schools Funding Formula (LSFF) 2020-21, the 4 consultation questions relating to the potential to transfer Schools Block funding to support High Needs, de-delegated and centrally

retained services, other issues raised and an analysis of the number of responses – **Agenda Item 8 and Appendices A to C.**

- Consideration of recommended actions – **Appendix D.**

(c) Andy advised that this feedback would form part of the Cabinet paper for their meeting now programmed for 20th December 2019.

8.2 Overall Responses to Consultation Issues

(a) The WSF noted the level of responses.

(b) Overall, the WSF were disappointed by the lower response rate of 19% against the 42% in the November 2017 local consultation. The WSF noted how this varied by sector, it was highest in the secondary sector and lowest in the primary sector and the WSF commented there would be need for further engagement in that sector. They further noted the reduced level was a consequence of stability proposed for the LSFF and no significant changes to the other statutory matters.

8.3 Local Schools Funding Formula (LSFF)

(a) The WSF commented as follows: -

- The proposal by the DfE for mandatory Minimum Funding Levels (MFLS) in LAs LSFF.
- Despite the LSFF being based upon the DfE NFF there is still not enough resource in the school funding system to support significant current and ongoing demands and cost pressures.

(b) The WSF noted the requirements of the NFF as the LSFF in 2020-21 as far as affordable and practicable including the effect of: -

- The actual schools block DSG allocated.
- The mandatory sector Minimum Funding Levels (MFLs) per pupil.
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of between +0.5% and +1.84% per pupil in each year.
- The potential need for a relevant cap per pupil yet to be determined for affordability purposes.

(c) The WSF further noted the estimated LSFF NFF units of resource and there may be a need for a capping % yet to be determined in January 2020, as required, to take account of: -

- October 2019 census data impact and requirements including use of estimated data for changes in school age ranges if required.
- Other DfE prescribed 2019 data changes including those from prior years.
- The final Schools Block Dedicated Schools Grant for 2020-21.
- Statutory requirements relating to the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)/Capping and the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations.

(d) A member of the WSF raised the issue on affordability of the NFF as the LSFF and the next stages in terms of sharing information. Andy advised this will be determined on receipt of the school funding settlement for 2020-21 to include the impact of the 2019 data sets. The WSF were advised that affordability will be assessed as part that and it will be brought to the WSF at its January 2020 meeting, together with any implications for capping. The WSF noted the settlement could be delayed due to the General Election, so this could impact on timing, but currently ESFA deadlines for LSFF

submission and the current statutory deadlines for LAs of 28th February 2020 remain for notifying maintained schools of budget allocations for 2020-21.

(e) Overall, the WSF respected the consultation outcomes from schools across all phases and concluded that this gave credence to continuing with the DfEs NFF based model in 2020-21, and for it to continue as far as is affordable and practicable to using the DfE Year 3 NFF parameters using the DfE required data sets and formula factors.

(f) The WSF noted that the final LSFF units of resource and MFG and cap for 2020-21 are subject to final confirmation with the ESFA and may change when the impact of the October 2019 census, other 2019 and prior year data changes and the final Schools Block DSG for 2020-21 are confirmed.

(g) Andy advised as in previous years the LSFF model for 2020-21 will **not** include factors for Pupil Mobility, Looked After Children (LAC), Post-16 Top Up and Higher Teacher Costs.

8.4 Potential to Transfer Schools Block Funding to Support High Needs

(a) The WSF noted the consultation outcomes

(b) The WSF further noted the significant detailed responses made by a number of schools regarding the potential to transfer funding, and that such a policy was not supported.

8.5 De-delegated and Centrally Retained Services

(a) The WSF noted the analysis provided and the consultation outcomes supported continuing with the existing arrangements in 2019-20 into 2020-21 as permitted by the DfE to: -

- Support delegation and de-delegation of centrally retained DSG services for mainstream maintained schools.
- Support central retention of designated DSG services for all LA maintained schools and ESFA academies.

(b) Some members of the WSF noted the consultation had raised issues on transparency and service provision. It was felt there needed to be ongoing dialogue and debate with WCC on the issues raised. The WSF requested further information on centrally retained budget for Servicing the Schools Forum, Services previously funded by the retained rate of the ESG and the impact of the budget reduction on the Early Intervention Family Support Service (EIFS). Phil and Sarah agreed to advise further at the next WSF meeting.

8.6 WSF Required Decisions and Consideration of Recommended Actions

(a) Andy requested the WSF to consider **Agenda Item 8 Appendix D** which provided a summary of the consultation outcomes and recommended actions. 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 only.
- 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) Andy further advised 2 members of the WSF not attending had indicated their voting intentions by proxy.

(e) Consultation Question 1 – LSFF for 2020-21

- Although not a WSF decision the WSF were requested to consider endorsement of the consultation outcomes.
- On a show of hands and 2 by proxy, the **WSF RESOLVED TO ENDORSE** (For 12 votes; Against 0 votes; Abstentions 0 votes) the LSFF in 2020-21 to continue as far is affordable and practicable to be based using the DfE Year 3 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.

(f) Consultation Question 2 – Potential to Transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block DSG in 2020-21 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 and 1 by proxy, the WSF **RESOLVED NOT TO APPROVE** (For 0 votes; Against 11 votes; Abstentions 2 votes) the transfer in 2020-21 of 0.5% of the Schools Block funding to support High Needs budget pressures.

(g) Consultation Question 3 – 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 and 2 by proxy 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 2020-21 as in 2019-20 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 2020-21 for maintained mainstream schools only on the basis detailed above.

(h) Consultation Question 4 – 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 and 2 by proxy the WSF members unanimously **RESOLVED TO APPROVE** (For 14 votes; Against 0 votes; Abstention 0 votes) the continued central retention in 2020-21 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 – £1.20m **actual** (reflecting the 2019-20 amount being reduced by 20% because of the DfE change to the Central Services Schools Block DSG).
 - Co-ordinated admissions scheme – £0.60m **actual**.
 - Servicing of the Schools Forum – £0.06m **actual**.
 - Services previously funded by the retained rate of the ESG – £1.26m **estimated**.

(i) The WSF considered the need to exercise its responsibilities to inform the County Council Cabinet of the issues discussed and decisions for the 2020-21 LSFF, the consultation questions and WSF decisions on transfer from the Schools Block, delegation/de-delegation for maintained 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. EARLY YEARS DSG 2020-21

9.1 Andy advised on the recent DfE notification for the EY DSG 2020-21. This confirmed an increase of £0.08 to the hourly rates for 2, 3 and 4-year olds as well as the continuation of the Nursery School supplementary grant for another year. WCC remains on the funding floor and rates for some neighbouring LAs were noted.

9.2 It was suggested a separate consultation with EY providers in January 2020 would be useful to discuss this and any other local issues for consideration for April 2020. The PVI representative requested consideration of a EY working group to discuss.

The meeting closed at 3.00pm

The date of the next scheduled WSF meeting is: -

Tuesday 14th January 2020 at 2pm
 Worcester Room
 County Hall
 Worcester

The WSF were advised this meeting may need to be changed at short notice if the School Funding Settlement for 2020-21 is delayed.