



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

Thursday 29 September 2022
Remote Meeting Held Via MS Teams

The meeting started at 2.30 pm

IN ATTENDANCE:

WSF Members

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| Malcolm Richards (Chair) [MR] | - Governor, Bromsgrove |
| Bryn Thomas (Vice Chair) [BT] | - HT Wolverley CE Secondary School |
| Marie Pearse [MP] | - HT Evesham Nursery School |
| Paul Essenhigh [PE] | - Executive HT Catshill Middle, Catshill First and Nursery Schools |
| Jeff Robinson [JR] | - Governor, Malvern Hills |
| Jay Hart [JH] | - HT Kingfisher School |
| Ed Francis [EF] | - HT Fort Royal Primary School |
| David McIntosh [DM] | - Governor, Wyre Forest |
| Lorraine Petersen [LP] | - Governor, Bromsgrove |
| Vivek Shah [VS] | - Nursery Owner |
| Adrian Ward [AW] | - CEO/Exec Head of Bordesley MAT |
| Annette Summers [AS] | - Nursery Owner |
| John Bateman [JB] | - Governor, Aspire Alternative Provision (AP) |

Local Authority (LA)

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| Councillor Tracey Onslow [TO] | - 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 |
| Melanie Barnett [MB] | - Director of All Age Disability Services – Worcestershire Children First |
| Caroline Brand [CB] | - Senior Schools Finance Manager - Worcestershire Children First |
| Rob Phillips [RP] | - Accountancy Officer - School Funding - Worcestershire Children First |
| Ruth Bessant [RB] | - Team Manager - Schools Finance Team - Worcestershire Children First |

WELCOME

The MR welcomed members, and the two new members join WSF taking up positions for the Early Years Sector, AS and VS.

RP confirmed the meeting would be recording to aid note taking purposes only, then it would be deleted.

1. Apologies

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| Phil Hanson [PH] | - HT Pershore High School |
| Lizzie Dixon [LD] | - HT Franche Primary School |
| Chris King [CK] | - CEO Severn Academies Educational Trust |
| Tim Reid | - Church of England Board of Education |
| Lorraine Petersen | - Governor, Bromsgrove |

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

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

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (30 June 2022)

Minutes agreed.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- Item 12 – Discuss disapplication for exceptional premises. This was agreed by school forum members.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a. Do School Forum wish any consultation on School Block Funding) (RP)

WCC asked the school forum for either agreement to or not to go out to consultation, they agreed that this was not necessary for financial year 2023/24.

b. Transfer of DSG blocks to HLN Block (RP)

The school forum discussed if 0.5% of the school block could be transferred to the HLN budget. Mainstream schools felt that it was not the right time to consider this.

The special schools provision felt that it was proper, as this would help support the HLN budget.

The overall decision of the school forum was to not support this transfer at the present time but to further discuss at a later meeting.

7. Cabinet Report Financial Update (PR)

This was for reference and brief discussion on the local authorities position. PR to write a synopsis going forward and include full report for supporting information going forward.

8. High Needs Update – DBV in Send (PR)

PR gave an update on the deficit going forward looking at being in the region of £15.4m by end of 2022/23.

One main concern being the removal of the statutory instrument for the accounting of this deficit which could cause major issue and impact on the local authority.

We are part of the DBV in tranche 2, which was our request, so we could also see the benefits from the first tranche.

The continuing deficit within in local authorities Designated School Grant (DSG) has the potential of causing local authorities into a Section 144 notice, meaning they are unable to balance their budgets.

9. SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) (SW/MB)

MB and SW gave an update on the current position moving forward with the APP.

A Parent Stakeholder Group has been setup and an open invitation to parent this takes place once a month led by MB. MB has also agreed to attend any parent groups if invited.

One of the main tasks going forward will be giving parents appropriate expectation and clarity our reasonable duty.

MB clarified they are auditing Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) to set a high-quality standard and reviewed on time. The plan is to clear the backlog by the end of December 2022. TO thanked MB for her work on this area and that she had received a number of positive feedbacks from parents on MB work.

WCF are waiting for health to supply wording to go to parents and schools about the delays in health's around assessments. MB to feedback to forum on this.

Within mainstream we are still well below the country average of pupils within EHCP in mainstream schools. Still work to do in this area but starting to see slight change.

Special school provision, needing the right schools with the right children attending, we are submitting a bid for a new special school, and looking at what is needs to adapt all schools, not just for physical disabilities.

10. Budget Planning and pressures for 2023/24 impact of cost of living, pay rises and Schools Forum action (BT)

The school forum discussed this in a lot of detail, it was made clear that school needed to be mindful of setting a deficit budget for next year. Especially with the unfunded pay awards.

It was also felt that this, was the most uncertain time in the stability of school's finance's in a generation.

It was felt that the Government was risking the education of pupils due to not being able to purchase resources, and the premises, or schools needing to make significant cuts to staffing to keep within budget. With members stating this could push their schools into deficit.

It was agreed that MR or BT were to draft and send a letter to appropriate bodies, sharing this with the forum.

11. Early Years Surplus distribution (RP)

This was agreed by the school forum to distribute this as an additional supplementary funding to the early years' providers with 3- and 4-Year olds.

WSF also agreed for the local authority to set up a fund to support sufficiency from its early years central pot.

12. Early Years Consultations (RP)

This was agreed that the local authority to send out a consultation to early years providers.

Meeting ended

The meeting closed at 4.25 PM

Date of next meeting

The date of the next WSF meeting: - Wednesday 23 November 2022 at 2.30 PM
(Remote Meeting - MS Teams)