

**Meeting of the Schools Forum
Held on Thursday 24th November 2022 at 1.30pm
via MS Teams Digital Platform**

MINUTES

Quorum: 40% (7) of the 18 current School/Non-School Members.

NAME	Organisation - School Members	Attended
Rachel Lewis	Hindley Sure Start Nursery	NO
Louise Curran	Rowan Tree Primary	Apologies
Anne Isherwood	Three Towers Alternative Provision Academy	YES
Tracy Mingaud-Cunningham	Primary Governor	YES
Adrian Hardy	Secondary Governor	YES
Gary Hayes	Orrell St James Primary	YES
Fiona Quinlivan	Howe Bridge St Michael's Primary	NO
Julie Hassan	St Oswald's Catholic Primary	YES
Wendy Hughes	Golborne All Saints Catholic Primary	YES
Lisa Hobden	St Patrick's Catholic Primary	YES
Alan Birchall	Byrchall High	YES
Sue Morris	Care Love Learn Childcare Ltd	NO
Peter McGhee	St John Rigby College	YES
Sam Webster	Dean Trust Academy – representing Mr A McGlown (Apologies)	YES
Chris Williams	Liverpool Archdiocese	NO
	Organisation - Non School Members	
Max Atkins	Wigan NEU	Apologies
	Organisation- Nominated observers	
Cllr Jenny Bullen	Cabinet Member	YES
Karen Parkin	NEU	YES
Mike Wilkinson	Wigan NASUWT	NO
	Organisation - In Attendance	
Mark Rotheram	LA Finance – Strategic Finance Manager	YES
Anthony Meehan	LA Finance – Group Finance Manager (Schools)	YES
Cath Pealing	Assistant Service Director, Education	YES
Sue Brogan	Clerk, Wigan Council Governor Services	YES
Emlyn Wright	LA Education – Service Lead	YES

Meeting started at 13.35pm and was quorate from the start.

Members were advised that the meeting was being recorded.

ITEM & INTENDED OUTCOME

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were **received** and **accepted** for the following Members/Observers:

- Mrs Curran, Rowan Tree Primary
- Mr McGlown, St Peter's Catholic High – representative sent, Mrs Webster
- Mr Atkins, Wigan NEU

The following members were not in attendance:

- Mrs Lewis, Hindley Sure Start Nursery
- Mrs Morris, Care Love Learn Childcare Ltd
- Mr Williams, Liverpool Archdiocese
- Mrs Quinlivan, Howe Bridge St Michael's Primary

2 Agreement of Any Other Urgent Business to Be Added to the Agenda

There were no items of AOB requested for consideration.

3 Previous Minutes

The minutes from the Forum meeting held on 20th October 2022 were **accepted** as a true and accurate record and were **approved** for publication.

There were no matters arising.

4 School Improvement De-delegation 2023/24

Mr Wright reminded members that the item on the agenda was a follow-up to the previous meeting and was looking for feedback and a decision from members after representative taking away and speaking to their stakeholders.

He summarised the options available and shared them on the screen.

- Option A was a reduced funding option with just the core functions.
- Option B described the current arrangements.
- Option C included funding for an option to pay for school improvements for schools that did not have the ability to pay for themselves. Funding principles would be linked to this and not an automatic right.

Mr Hayes reported that he had only had one reply and this feedback suggested that B was the preferred option.

Mr Birchall fed back that B was the preferred option.

Mrs Hughes shared with her consortia and 15 schools had B as the preferred option.

Mrs Hobden had discussed with her consortia and option B was the preferred.

Mrs Hassan had 8 responses and all were for option B.

From these responses Mr Wright concluded that option B was the preferred option and that allowed the LA to maintain a system-led approach but would not allow them to fund urgent help for schools in deficit. In these instances, it may be necessary for a case-by-case approach. He felt that the option was a reasonable outcome for the future and thanked those who had feedback.

The Chair reminded all members that it was their responsibility to obtain feedback from their stakeholders following meetings.

Mr Wright left the meeting at 13:41pm

5 DSG Underspend 2021/22

Mrs Pealing had prepared a paper on the WLZ programme which had been shared with members prior to the meeting. She was looking to seek Forum agreement in principle to use a proportion of the DSG underspend to fund the WLZ programme in 2024.

The details had not yet been finalised, or a place on the programme guaranteed; agreement in principle would allow further discussions to take place that could help secure the programme for Wigan Schools. The money used from the underspend would be matched alongside the 70% philanthropic funding brought in by the programme to support the child beneficiaries of the programme.

Mrs Pealing felt that the programme would be a positive investment and there would be additional contributions from the LA and Health.

Comments and questions were requested from members.

Q. Is it for children of all age groups?

A. Yes

Q. The programme looks great but it appears to have an emphasis on primary aged children, could secondary children be included with the same issues?

A. Yes and we want to have conversations around the finer detail. We are unsure about the numbers, 200 is just the starting point.

Members agreed in principle to the £120,000 funding, there were no objections. They were just disappointed that the target start date was only in 2024.

6 De-delegation 2023/24

Mr Meehan shared the Maintained School De-delegation 2023/24 report on the screen which provided information on proposals for de-delegation values for the financial year 2023/24.

This item was a follow-up to an agenda item on the last meeting where Forum members asked that the proposal was re-considered, and any increases aligned to funding increases. Schools' Forum wanted any increase to be in line with the increase in the schools' block of 2.04% in 2023/24 for maintained schools.

Mr Meehan explained from the report how he hoped to achieve this by reducing the contingency budget and applying between 2% and 4% increases on other budget lines.

Members felt that the proposal seemed equitable. They had only one query regarding the addition of the 'soon to close' Abram Bryn Gates School in the figures and Mr Meehan explained that this was due to October 2021 school census figures being used; the school was closing in December 2022.

Members **approved** a 2.04% increase in de-delegation.

7 High Needs Sub-Group Update

The High Needs Sub-Group had hoped to meet prior to this meeting but had not managed to set a date. This item was deferred to the next meeting in January. The following date had been set for the sub-group to meet: -

- Friday 9th December 3.30pm – virtual

8 Schools Forum Constitution

Members were asked to consider earlier implementation of the revised constitution document.

The Chair explained that whilst he thought that the implementation for the secondary schools was relatively straightforward, that of the two current secondary vacancies one nomination should be from an academy school and one from a maintained school.

Mr Birchall was asked for feedback on this proposal from WASCL. He had no further feedback as prior to the previous meeting the proposal had been discussed and no issues were raised as their constitution was broadly aligned with the revised constitution. No further representatives had been suggested as he was of the understanding that the new constitution would be in effect from September 2023. The Chair indicated that two more secondary representatives were needed and Mr Birchall would take this back to WASCL and check previous minutes from the group to confirm attendance for the next meeting.

ACTION: Two new secondary members to be confirmed for the Schools Forum by Mr Alan Birchall.

Primary membership needed further consideration as all representatives currently were from the voluntary aided maintained school sector and representation from community schools and academies was needed to provide a good cross-section of Forum members.

The Chair requested any comments from the members on this issue.

Mr Hayes indicated that at the last meeting it was agreed that the constitution would be implemented from September 2023 which would have given time to work out how the changes could be effected. He felt it wasn't feasible to implement mid-year.

Mrs Pealing was concerned that all sectors should be represented but appreciated the comments from the member. It was agreed that the issue would be resolved at the summer term Forum.

Mr Hayes made the point that as members they were consulting but people are apathetic in responding to opportunities to have their say.

The Chair commented that we wouldn't want to send away Headteachers who are willing to serve if there is no appetite from members in other sectors. He appreciated that with five consortia it made the choice of members more difficult to achieve appropriate representation. He advised that it would be ideal to set out the details of how the consortia had tried to recruit more widely.

ACTION Membership of Schools' Forum to be resolved by summer term meeting.

9 School Funding Formula 2023/24

Mr Meehan shared the report, School Funding Formula 2023/24– Schools Block, on the screen. The purpose of the report was to provide details of the indicative DSG allocations for 2023/24 and proposed formula for allocation.

He shared the highlights of the report: -

- There is a push towards all schools complying with National Funding Formula withing the next five years.
- Wigan made the move several years ago.
- The indicative allocation for Schools Block is almost £246,000,000 which equated a 2.04% increase per pupil.
- The report was produced prior to the changes announced by the Government this week in the autumn statement.
- The effect of the changes will be clearer by the January meeting.
- There is still some local decision making around the minimum funding guarantee.
- Local authorities can move up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to other blocks.
- Decision was made not to make any contribution to the High Needs block this year as additional funding was already earmarked from the DSG underspend.
- There had been a 2.4% increase in the basic pupil entitlement proposed.
- Minimum funding increase level had been retained at 0.5%
- The lump sum received by all schools had increased by 2.4%
- Changes to business rates funding process would not affect schools. Schools would receive no funding for this but would not be billed for it either.
- Growth fund detail will only be available in December with final DSG allocation. Details of this will be available in January.

Notional SEND budget was discussed as this had not changed in a long time. A recent DFE report had highlighted Wigan's funding to be low in this area compared to the national median. Mr Meehan was hoping that some changes could be made and proposed 3 options for Members to consider: -

- 1) Increase Basic Entitlement to 4.5% = 10.62%
- 2) Basic Entitlement remains at 3%, increase Deprivation factors to 20% = 10.86%
- 3) Increase Basic Entitlement to 4%, increase deprivation to 12% = 10.77%

Proposals were suggested at the previous meeting, it was thought that the sub-group to review the proposals in detail was no longer required. By using NFF there were few changes that could be considered.

The proposals recommended the following: -

- Continued use of the NFF (facts and values in appendix 1)
- continue to apply the maximum of the minimum funding guarantee of 0.5% per pupil.

Mr Meehan explained how he had modelled the proposals and Appendix 2 contained the breakdown of this per school. Business rates had been removed from the proposals and the additional supplementary grant had also been added. to provide a fair comparison.

He reminded members that these were indicative figures only based on October 2021 census data. Final allocations will be available in January 2023.

This modelling exercise had shown that there was a small amount of surplus budget of £143,000 but this normally disappeared when the final allocation was received. The proposal was to add any surplus funding to the basic entitlement factor, which members thought was the fairest way to do this.

If there was to be a gap in funding then the proposal would be to use the Growth Factor as in the previous year and this would be by School Forum agreement in January.

Mr Meehan summarised the recommendations requiring approval from Forum members: -

- To consider the information regarding Notional SEN budgets and to agree one of the three options presented.
- Seeking approval of the proposed formula factors, rates and principles as set out in section 4 to allow final budgets to be prepared.

Comments and questions were invited from Forum members.

Mrs Isherwood commented that it was stated in the report that Wigan had no split site school, when in reality that just pertained to maintained schools as Three Towers was a split site academy school.

- Q.** What percentage of the national education budget is the proposed £2 billion additional budget?
- A.** £1 billion would equate to 2%, so approximately 4%.
- Q.** Will Notional SEND increasing make a difference to schools?
- A.** No, there is no difference to the actual funding as it isn't a separate budget. It will just bring us closer to the national median. In Wigan there is a different process for disproportionate SEND.
- Q.** On page 3, under deprivation in the second paragraph you mention that the FSM factor value has increased by 2.4% and the EVER6 and IDACI factor values have increased by an average percentage of 4.3% which is a higher increase than the rest of the factors. Is that national increase or something you have agreed locally?
- A.** A National increase.
- Q.** As deprivation can be factored many times - Would increasing the basic entitlement to all schools be a fairer system for the benefit of more schools?
- A.** It doesn't offer schools any more funding, by working on the basic entitlement it would increase more schools' Notional SEND rather than targeting against deprivation.
- Q.** Is the Notional SEND the £6000 per pupil that schools need to use before applying for any further funding?
- A.** It essentially is a pot of money to fund all SEND prior to any top up funding, it's not a pot of money but an amount earmarked in budget.

- Q.** Under current funding is there no direct link between Notional SEND budget and the number of SEND in the school?
- A.** No, it is essentially linked to pupil characteristics of deprivation and low prior attainment.

The Chair requested the views from Forum members on the proposals in the report.

Mr Meehan thought that using option 1 and increasing basic entitlement was perhaps fairer for all schools on reflection and from the discussions held. No members appeared to have any objections to this.

In terms of the formula factors, Mr Meehan was looking for ratification from the Members so that he could start the final modelling for schools. There was no proposal this year to use capping and scaling. But he may need to look at in December if there were issues with the budget.

Members **agreed** option one, increase the basic allowance to 4.5%, regarding the Notional SEND budget

Members **agreed** to the formula factors, rates and principles as set out in section 4 to be used for Schools Block Allocations 2023/24.

10 Any Other Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business to discuss.

11 Future Meeting Dates

Members **noted** the agreed meeting dates (all via MS Teams):

- High Needs Sub-Group – Friday 9th December 2022 at 3.30pm
- Spring 1 – Thursday 19th January 2023 at 1.30pm
- Spring 2 – Thursday 16th March 2023 at 1.30pm
- Summer 1 – Thursday 18th May 2023 at 1.30pm
- Summer 2 – Thursday 29th June 2023 at 1.30pm

Meeting ended at 14:16pm

Background documents (available for public inspection):

Appendices to the circulated briefing reports disclose important facts on which the reports are based and were relied upon in preparing the reports. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact the Forum Clerk m.collier@wigan.gov.uk.