

Minutes of the Meeting of the Schools Forum

**Thursday 21st September 2017 at 1.30 p.m.
at Hawkley Hall High School**

Present:

Members: A.P. Hardy (Chair) E. Loftus, E. Ellis, D. Winstanley, V. Birchall, H. Phillips, A. Birchall, A. McGlown, R. Halford, A. Isherwood, R. Lewis and , J. Holland, P. McGhee, T. Warren and A. Wells.

Observers: M. Atkins and J. Hanley.

LA Officers: A. Lindsay (Assistant Director) C. Pealing (Service Manager) J. McDonald (Strategic Finance Manager) C. Myers (Finance Group Manager) and F. Gore (Clerk)

1. Appointment of Chair for 2017-18

It was agreed: That Mr A. Hardy be appointed Chair of the Forum for 2017-18.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair for 2017-18

It was agreed: That Mr P. McGhee be appointed Vice-Chair of the Forum for 2017-18.

3. Membership 2017-18

It was noted that there had been no reported changes in school membership since the last meeting; however the PVI Sector had appointed Ms Nicola Amber as the new representative.

4. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from F. Quinlivan and G. Hayes; and from Cllr J. Bullen, M. Wilkinson and K. Winnard.

5. Items for inclusion under AOB

- **National Funding Formula**

6. Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 27 June 2017

It was agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2017 be approved as a true and correct record.

Matters Arising

None.

7 High Needs

A. Budget 2017-18 - Update:

In accordance with Minute 6 of the last meeting, Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on the budget position of the High Needs Block as at the end of August 2017. The report showed a projected overspend of £744,546, although it was anticipated this would rise and could be as high as £1M by the end of the financial year.

The report identified the reasons for the increased demands on the High Needs budget due to demand within maintained special schools; Post 16 Institutions; Independent Schools; and the increased demand for Education and Health Care Plans.

The Schools Block and High Needs reserves had been fully utilized in 2016-17 and the Forum was asked to identify how the projected overspend would be funded.

The academy school representative reported that academies within the Borough had met to discuss this and had decided not to agree to any proposal to top-slice school budgets to meet the projected deficit. They had done so on the basis of the considerable pressures on school budgets already; the projected increased staffing costs as a consequence of the teacher's pay award 2017-18; and a lack of clarity about the reasons for the projected overspend.

Ms Pealing referred to the explanations given in the report submitted and that like many Local Authorities, Wigan was facing a significant increase in demand on High Needs funding. Wigan had taken action in 2017-18 to minimize costs through increased use of in-Borough placements wherever possible. The LA was also conducting a strategic review of SEND provision and support services in order to address this issue in the longer-term.

Mr Lindsay confirmed that the LA recognized the importance of explaining to schools the reasons for the overspend and placing this into a national context in that many LAs were facing an even more acute deficit in their High Needs funding.

Representatives asked that if the proposed solution was to top-slice individual school budgets could the LA make clear the level of contribution required by the primary and secondary sectors?; and in light of planned increased national funding from 2018-19 could that contribution be made in 2018-19 rather than this financial year?

Reference was made to balances held by the LA and by schools and that it was suggested it would be possible for the LA to meet the shortfall until such time as the detailed financial implications were clear for schools and the level of funding available in 2018-19 was known; at which time the Forum could make a more informed decision..

It was agreed: (1) That the Cabinet be asked to adopt the approach referred to above.

(2) That the likely financial implications for the primary and secondary sectors of top-slicing school budgets to meet the actual shortfall in the High Needs Budget 2017-18 be reported to the next meeting of the Forum.

B. Inclusion – Future Proposals:

Further to the information given at 7a above Ms C. Peeling reported that the strategic review of SEND provision was underway and discussions were being held on models for alternative provision. Further updates would be given at future meetings.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted.

8. Apprenticeship Levy.

Mr Lindsay reported on progress made thus far in agreeing the process for maintained schools to access the apprenticeship funding available through contributions to the apprenticeship levy. The planned arrangements would give a high degree of flexibility to schools and the LA in seeking apprenticeships at all levels, subject to there being appropriate providers.

It was agreed: That in view of the time limited nature of this initiative, the detailed guidance be prepared as soon as possible and circulated to schools

9. AOB

9.1 National Funding Formula (NFF)

Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) giving an update on the recently announced National Funding Formula. Key features of the announcement included:

- the schools block would be ring-fenced. With the agreement of their Schools Forum, LA's could move 0.5% into the other 3 blocks – Early Years, High Needs and Central Services. This would be subject to an annual review by the Schools Forum.
- there would be additional funds available from the DfE to allow a cash increase in per pupil funding of 0.5% in each of the 2 financial years, giving a 1% increase in 2019/20.
- a proposal to reduce the Lump Sum per school from the national average of approx. £128,000 to £110,000 for each type of school or academy.
- the AWPU or basic per-pupil amount would be:
Primary schools - £2,747 per pupil (£35 increase)
Key Stage 3 - £3,863 per pupil (£66 increase)
Key Stage 4 - £4,386 per pupil (£74 increase)
- an additional factor would be introduced into the schools' national funding formula – "Minimum per-pupil funding"

	• 2018/19	• 2019/20
• Primary	• £3,300	• £3,500
• Secondary	• £4,600	• £4,800

(Note - these amounts included funding factors for AWPU and additional needs such as Deprivation, Low Prior Attainment, English as

an Additional Language and Mobility. In addition, the DfE would include the Lump Sum in the determination of these amounts)

- the proposed NFF for 2018/19 had a minimum increase of 0.5% and a maximum increase of 3% per pupil.
- most of the national formula's factors would be maintained at the same level, apart from the increases in the AWPU.
- Pupil Premium – the LAC factor in the formula has been transferred to the pupil premium plus budget. The 2018/19 PPP rate would be £2,300

A spreadsheet had also been circulated showing the projected impact on individual school budgets in 2018-19 and 2019-20 if their pupil numbers remained the same.

A representative asked why the projected allocations did not fully reflect the proposed increase in the AWPU? Mr McDonald reported that the explanation for that could only be determined when the technical guidance had been issued by the DfE.

It was agreed: (1) That a Working Group comprising Mr A. Hardy (Chair); Ms E. Ellis (primary sector); Mr A. McGlown (secondary sector); Ms E. Loftus (special schools sector) and Mr R. Halford (academy schools representative) - or their representatives - be convened at 12 noon on Wednesday 18 October at Wigan Town Hall.

(2) That the Working Group be asked to consider the potential impact of the technical guidance to be issued on the NFF and make recommendations to the Forum.

10. Future Meetings: (all meetings to commence at 1.30 p.m.)

2nd November 2017 – at Hawkley Hall High School

11th January 2018 - at Bedford High School

22 March 2018 - at Bedford High School

10th May 2018 – at Hawkley Hall High School

21st June 2018 - at Bedford High School

Meeting closed at 2.20 p.m.