



# worcestershire county council

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

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021  
Remote Meeting Held Via MS Teams

The meeting started at 2.05 pm

### IN ATTENDANCE:

#### WSF Members

Malcolm Richards (Chair)	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Bryn Thomas (Vice Chair)	-	HT Wolverley CE Secondary School
Marie Pearse	-	HT Evesham Nursery School
Paul Essenhigh	-	Executive HT Catshill Middle, Catshill First and Nursery Schools
Nathan Jones	-	HT Meadow Green Primary School
Lizzie Dixon	-	HT Franche Primary School
Adrian Ward	-	HT Trinity High School
Bec Garratt	-	HT Wyre Forest School
David McIntosh	-	Governor, Wyre Forest
Jeff Robinson	-	Governor, Malvern Hills
Lorraine Petersen	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Stephen Baker	-	Union Representative
John Bateman	-	Governor, Aspire Alternative Provision (AP) Free School
Greg McClarey	-	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Catriona Savage	-	PVI Sector
Tom Jenkins	-	PVI Sector

#### Local Authority (LA)

Phil Rook	-	Director of Resources Worcestershire Children First
Andy McHale	-	Senior Finance Business Partner Worcestershire Children First
Caroline Brand	-	Schools Finance Manager Worcestershire County Council
Chris Bird	-	Senior Finance Business Partner Worcestershire Children First
Rob Phillips	-	Accountancy Officer School Funding Worcestershire County Council
Gabrielle Stacey	-	Assistant Director SEND and Vulnerable Learners Worcestershire Children First

## **1. APOLOGIES**

Emma Pritchard	-	Principal Black Pear Trust
Chris King	-	CEO Severn Academies Educational Trust
Tim Reid	-	Church of England Board of Education
Edward Senior	-	16-19 Providers
Sarah Wilkins	-	Director of Education and Early Help Worcestershire Children First
Councillor Marcus Hart	-	Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education Worcestershire County Council

## **2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

2.1 Chris Bird declared an interest as a foundation trustee of the Lady of Lourdes MAT.

2.2 Lorraine Petersen declared an interest as a Governor of Lokrum Fields independent specialist setting.

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

None.

## **4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (21<sup>st</sup> January 2021)**

Agreed.

## **5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

### **5.1 Place Partnership Limited (PPL)**

Phil confirmed that the transfers advised at the last WSF meeting had taken place. The contact is Andy Moran for the Council and Chris Hall for Acivico and meetings were being held on a regular basis, Phil reminded the forum if any issues arise let him know.

### **5.2 Medical Education Pathway**

Phil advised that the Cabinet report circulated to the WSF had been approved on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Gabrielle advised there had been 11 responses to the soft market testing and confirmed the next steps which involved a formal consultation on proposed funding changes with delivery by an OFSTED registered provider

### **5.3 Retirements**

The Chair confirmed the end of the academic year would see the retirements of two longstanding WSF colleagues, Andy McHale Financial Adviser and Clerk to the WSF and Stephen Baker WSF Union Representative.

## **6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **6.1 Liberata**

(a) Phil advised on the current position in that accounts payable and receivable services would transfer back into WCC from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021. Phil further advised payroll would stay with Liberata, but HR support would transfer back to WCC on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

(b) Phil also confirmed that schools finance support from Liberata would transfer back into WCF from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 as well as the Schools Finance Team currently in WCC transferring into WCF at the same time. This would enable all school funding policy matters and schools finance support to be located within WCF. A member of the WSF commented that this was a positive move and schools would welcome the change.

(c) The TUPE process was currently being started and there would be further communications with schools and SBMs as the transfers progressed.

### **6.2 Proposal for a New Secondary School in Worcester City Council Boundary**

(a) Andy advised that Cabinet had approved in February 2021 for a new secondary school and the WSF would be briefed at a future meeting on the detailed proposals. There is currently a short consultation on principles.

(b) In response to a query from a member of the WSF, Andy confirmed there had been no confirmation yet on the proposed location for the new school.

## **7. WCC ISSUES**

### **7.1 Cabinet Report 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021 Agenda Item 4 – 2021-22 Draft Budget and MTFP Update 2022-24**

Andy confirmed the approval of the WCC budget and Council Tax by WCC Cabinet and Council. The report contained details on the provisional DSG for 2021-22 and the HN deficit.

### **7.2 Local Elections 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 Outcomes**

Phil confirmed the results and that previous ruling administration had increased its majority. Council had met earlier on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to elect a Leader and approve political structures and appointments. Phil advised the Leader had appointed the Cabinet and Councillor Marcus Hart is Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Councillor Andy Roberts is Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families.

## **8. BUDGET ISSUES 2021-22**

### **8.1 Letters to Schools**

The WSF noted the issues in the letter to schools on budget allocations for 2021-22. This confirmed the DfE NFF Year 4 parameters including the NFF funding rates, the mainstreaming of the former grants to support teachers' pay and pensions, the MFG and no capping.

## 8.2 Final Authority Proforma Tool (APT) for Mainstream Schools

(a) The WSF noted the final APT position for 2021-22 and the comparison to 2020-21.

(b) Andy confirmed this reflected the DfE NFF Year 4 parameters and was just affordable in the Schools Block quantum for 2021-22 as reported at the January 2021 WSF meeting.

## 8.3 Early Years Hourly Rate

(a) Andy introduced the item and the WSF noted the discussions on the hourly rates for April 2021 with the WSF early years representatives. The letter confirmed increases of £0.04 for the 2, 3 & 4-year-old rates and that given the impact of COVID on attendance at settings the LA would likely to receive a clawback of DSG later in the year. It was confirmed that LAs would be able to submit termly count data for DSG purposes in 2021-22 instead of relying on the January census data.

(b) In response to a query from a member of the WSF on head count data for the Spring Term 2021, Rob advised this was been assessed but numbers were less than expected. The WSF recognised this was a national issue and LAs would continue to challenge the DfE.

## 8.4 DfE Action Plans – Schools in Financial Difficulty

(a) The WSF noted the requirements for the LA mandated by the DfE.

(b) Members of the WSF commented as follows: -

- The LA needs to consider peer support in this area as some HTs have considerable experience in managing complex deficit situations.
- The impact of COVID on schools that generate significant traded income cannot be underestimated as a major contributor to schools' current financial positions.
- There is a need to support governors in their strategic role for such schools.
- In any reply to the DfE the LA needs to make it very clear of the impact of the low funding position of WCC.

(c) Phil advised the first step is for the LA to attend the DfE workshops indicated in the letter and then the LA would respond accordingly.

## **9. SCHEME FOR FINANCING MAINTAINED SCHOOLS APRIL 2021**

9.1 In response to a query from a member of the WSF, Andy advised that directed changes already approved by the WSF in September 2020 relating to schools in deficit did not represent a conflict of interest.

9.2 Andy further advised of some further minor required changes to the Scheme because of updates to the DfEs statutory guidance.

9.3 The WSF noted the changes and the maintained school members approved the changes from April 2021.

## **RESOLVED –**

**On a show of hands, the 9 WSF maintained school members approved the required changes to the WCC Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools and for its publication on the WSF web site.**

### **10. DfE CONSULTATIONS 2022-23**

#### 10.1 Sparsity Funding

The WSF noted the LA response in supporting the proposed changes with the caveat any change must be supported by a relevant increase in Schools Block DSG estimated to be £0.984m.

#### 10.2 Funding for School Business Rates

(a) The WSF noted the DfE proposal for the ESFA to manage the issue on behalf of all schools.

(b) Andy advised there was no information how the changes would impact on the DSG and APT or the schools in the nursery or specialist sectors. Also, the impact on 2-tier LAs like WCC was unclear as it is the District Council that are the rating authorities.

### **11. HIGH NEEDS ISSUES**

#### 11.1 DfE Consultation 2022-23

(a) Andy advised of a short DfE consultation on the historic factor used with the national HN DSG formula and that the national SEND review had yet to report.

(b) The WSF noted the LA response and expressed its disappointment that it only related to a minor aspect of the HN DSG and not the fundamental funding issues. It was felt the proposal for using historic data up to 6 years out of date was wholly inappropriate.

#### 11.2 F40 Survey and DfE Submission

The WSF noted and concurred with the issues raised by the F40 Group with the DfE in response to the short consultation. It was felt the response was good and contained more detail than the LA response. Phil advised WCC using the national lobbying through the Society of County Treasurer's (SCT) was a useful tactic.

#### 11.3 Schools Week Article 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021

(a) Phil advised that a small number of LAs had brokered some financial support from the DfE to assist in their HN deficit recovery. However, it was noted this has many conditions attached that it would be difficult for those LAs to meet.

(b) A member of the WSF advised of an analysis from the County special schools particularly around top up funding. Other WSF members from other sectors felt this would be useful to share. Phil commented on the complexities of the issue and that the DfE will point to the additional DSG allocated but that has not even kept pace with the increasing demands.

## 11.4 OFSTED SEND Reinspection and WCC Management Plan Updates

(a) Gabrielle advised the reinspection is imminent, the LA is ready and has been strengthening the continuum of provision with some very good support from schools. There are continuing issues on the capacity in special schools and limited accommodation options. The significant impact of post 19 has led to this being a priority for the DfE capital allocation of £1.9m as revenue spend in non-County provision of over £9m is not sustainable.

(b) Gabrielle took the WSF through the latest work stream position and progress to date. The WSF noted the current positions.

(c) The WSF commented as follows: -

- A member of the WSF raised concerns on the projected EHCP table requesting clarity on the projections.
- There are concerns on the numbers of pupils in independent and private providers at significant cost.
- The data is key and WCF are moving in the right direction, but issues remain in inclusivity in some mainstream schools.
- Parents can argue at SEND tribunal for more expensive provision.
- Due to COVID there has been an increase in the numbers requiring support in early years settings.
- There has been an improvement in the last 12 months in the SEND processes, particularly on timescales for EHCPs.

(d) On the projection data, Gabrielle agreed to review and advise the WSF further.

## **12. F40 GROUP UPDATES**

### 12.1 Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) Survey

The WSF noted the outcomes of the survey and the impact on the F40 Group LAs on the move to using the October census data.

### 12.2 Campaign Objectives 2021

The WSF noted the objectives.

### 12.3 Executive Committee 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

The WSF noted the minutes.

### 12.4 Vice Chair Meeting 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021

The WSF noted the minutes.

## **13. ACADEMIES UPDATE**

13.1 The WSF noted the academies position as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

**The meeting closed at 3.40pm**

The date of the next WSF meeting: - Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021 at 2pm via MS Teams