



worcestershire county council

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

Thursday 21st January 2021
Remote Meeting Held Via MS Teams

The meeting started at 2.00 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
Emma Pritchard	-	Principal Black Pear Trust (to 3.00pm)
Adrian Ward	-	HT Trinity High School (from 2.50pm)
Bec Garratt	-	HT Wyre Forest School
David McIntosh	-	Governor, Wyre Forest
Jeff Robinson	-	Governor, Malvern Hills
Stephen Baker	-	Union Representative
John Bateman	-	Governor, Aspire Alternative Provision (AP) Free School (to 2.30pm)
Tim Reid	-	Church of England Board of Education
Catriona Savage	-	PVI Sector
Tom Jenkins	-	PVI Sector

Local Authority (LA)

Phil Rook	-	Director of Resources Worcestershire Children First
Andy McHale	-	Service Manager Funding and Policy Worcestershire Children First
Sarah Wilkins	-	Director of Education and Early Help Worcestershire Children First (from 2.20pm)
Caroline Brand	-	Schools Finance Manager Worcestershire County Council
Rob Phillips	-	Accountancy Officer School Funding Worcestershire County Council
Gabrielle Stacey	-	Assistant Director SEND and Vulnerable Learners Worcestershire Children First

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed new WSF members to their first WSF meeting: -

- Lizzie Dixon – HT Franche Primary School in the primary HT category.
- Catriona Savage – My First Friends and Little Oaks Day Nursery in the PVI category.
- Tom Jenkins – Wishing Wells Nursery Group in the PVI category

1.2 Apologies

Lorraine Petersen	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Chris King	-	CEO Severn Academies Educational Trust
Greg McClarey	-	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Edward Senior	-	16-19 Providers
Councillor Marcus Hart	-	Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills Worcestershire County Council

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

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

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (5th November 2020)

Agreed.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Place Partnership Limited (PPL) Update

(a) Phil introduced the item and advised on PPL ceasing trading on 31st March 2021. Consequently, services provided under the current SLA contract will not be provided by PPL from 1st April 2021. Phil advised building energy management services will revert to WCC, core property maintenance and compliance services will be undertaken by an alternative provider, which is currently subject to due diligence and schools will shortly be written to in order to confirm the proposals.

(b) Phil confirmed the creation of a new post within WCC to oversee the change in arrangements and requested representatives from the WSF to support and advise on the transition. A member of the WSF raised concerns on the late notification of the proposed changes and the service not currently giving value for money. Members of the WSF were

requested to contact Phil if they wished to support the change in arrangements with the council to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

6.2 Early Intervention Family Support Service (EIFS) Update

Phil advised, given the further 20% budget reduction as part of the Central School Services Block DSG and following the transfer to WCF of the Continu Plus contract in October, the service was in the process of being reviewed to ensure a sustainable and consistent Early Help service across Worcestershire is provided. The WSF noted this and that a further report would be brought to the WSF in due course following consultation with staff had been completed.

7. CABINET DECISIONS

7.1 10th December 2020 Agenda Item 4 – Fair Funding for Schools 2021-22 National and Local Funding Arrangements for Schools

(a) Andy reported the outcomes of the local funding proposals for 2021-22, discussed and approved by the WSF in the Autumn Term 2020, were received and considered by Cabinet.

(b) The WSF noted the Cabinet decisions and approvals made: -

- The Local Schools Funding Formula (LSFF) to continue as far as is practicable and affordable on the DfE NFF Year 4 parameters.
- No transfer of funding from the Schools Block to support High Needs.
- De-delegations for maintained schools
- Centrally retained services items for all schools.
- The LSFF submission to be made to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) by 21st January 2021.

7.2 7th January 2021 Agenda Item 4 – Budget and Council Tax 2021-22

Phil reported the draft budget for 2021-22 for WCC had been considered and was now out for formal consultation. It included proposals for growth in both Adult and Children's Services and the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.5% (1.5% general increase and a further 1% for Adult Social Care). It also included references to the School Funding DSG settlement 2021-22 received in December 2020.

8. PROVISIONAL SCHOOL FUNDING SETTLEMENT 2020-21

8.1 Andy advised, on 17th December 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) published details of the provisional School Funding Settlement 2021-22.

8.2 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

(a) Andy confirmed the DSG details as follows: -

- The DSG schools block allocated based on the National Funding Formula (NFF).
- The Central Services Schools (CSS) Block allocated on the DfE NFF.
- The High Needs (HN) Block allocated based on the DfE NFF.
- The Early Years (EY) Block allocated on the DfE NFF arrangements introduced in 2017-18.

(b) The 2021-22 provisional allocation is detailed below under the notional DSG blocks. This is prior to the recoupment deduction for academies and non-LA maintained specialist providers. It also compares the provisional allocations to the 2020-21 DSG latest settlement.

Provisional DSG Gross Settlement 2021-22

DSG Block	2020-21 Latest Nov 2020 £'000	2021-22 Indicative July 2020 £'000	2021-22 Initial December 2020 £'000	Variance 2020-21 to 2021-22 £'000
Schools Pupil Growth Fund	339,667	368,200	369,495	+29,828
S-T Schools	2,319	Not Advised	1,908	-411
Central Services	341,986	368,200	371,403	+29,417
High Needs	3,515	3,343	3,377	-138
Early Years	60,182	67,944	68,401	+8,219
TOTAL	35,963	Not Advised	36,476	+513
	441,646	439,487	479,657	+38,011

(c) For the **Schools Block** this is based upon DfE NFF policy for Year 4 including: -

- The October 2020 pupil census against the Primary and Secondary Units of Funding (PUF) and (SUF) confirmed in July 2020.
- Provides for NFF year 4 parameters including mandatory sector Minimum Funding Levels (MFLs), additional October 2020 pupil numbers and historic premises related factors allocation £7.443m.
- Includes the effect of the mainstreaming of specific grants in 2021-22 of £16.329m for teachers pay and employer pension contributions.
- Reflects the change in pupil numbers October 2019 to October 2020 of +199 (Primary -141.5; Secondary +340.5) as detailed below.

Pupil Number Variation 2020-21 and 2021-22

Phase	2020-21 October 2019 Census	%	2021-22 October 2020 Census	%
Primary	44,250.0	60.1	44,108.5	59.7
Secondary	29,411.5	39.9	29,752.0	40.3
Total	73,661.5	100.0	73,860.5	100.0

- Pupil Growth Fund £1.908m now on DfE formulaic basis in fourth year, reflecting changes in pupil numbers between October 2019 and October 2020.

(d) For the **Central School Services Block (CSSB)** formulaic allocation for centrally retained statutory services £2.417m plus historic commitments £0.960m (**reduced by a further 20% by the DfE from 2020-21 allocation £1.2m as part of their national policy**).

(e) For the **High Needs Block**: -

- The allocation of £68.401m reflects the share of the additional £730m HN DSG allocated in 2021-22 of £8.219m gross.

- Includes the effect of the mainstreaming of specific grants for teachers pay and employer pension contributions in 2021-22 of £2.165m, which will need to be reflected in the allocations to specialist providers.
- The estimated net HN DSG in 2021-22 is £59.819m which is an increase of £7.956m on 2020-21 of £51.863m. This reflects the proposed place deductions from the HN block for SEN units in academies, maintained post 16 and NMSS providers detailed below. These are subject to change during the year.

Estimated HN Place Deductions

DETAIL	2020-21 Latest November 2020 £'m	2021-22 Provisional December 2020 £'m	Variance £'m
HN DSG Gross	60.182	68.401	+8.219
Place Deductions			
SEN Units Academies Pre and Post 16	(0.763)	(0.730)	+0.033
Special Academies Pre and Post 16	(5.208)	(5.400)	(0.192)
Alternative Provision	(0.962)	(1.000)	(0.038)
Academies Post 16	(0.028)	(0.012)	0.016
FE Providers	(1.358)	(1.440)	(0.082)
S-T Deductions	(8.319)	(8.582)	(0.263)
= HN DSG Net	51.863	59.819	+7.956

(f) For the **Early Years Block** provisional based upon Schools, Early Years and Alternative Provision census data for 2, 3 & 4-year olds from January 2020. The final allocations will be updated based on January 2020 and January 2021 census data. The allocations reflect an increase to the allocated hourly rates for 2-year olds +8p and 3&4-year olds +6p.

(g) The WSF noted the details comparing 2020-21 and 2021-22 in **Appendices A and B** to the report. This showed for the Schools Block the effect of the increase in the PUF and SUF for the NFF Year 4 and the increased numbers in the October 2020 pupil census. Andy advised the Schools Block and the CSSB were fixed and the increase in the former was expected due to the NFF Year 4.

(h) For Early Years, Andy advised the indicative DSG requires the January 2021 census data to confirm what the 2021-22 grant position is likely to be. The WSF noted the significant national discussion on impact of Covid on the EY January 2021 census completion. Andy further advised these numbers are likely to be lower than usual, which will impact on the funding available for the hourly rate, particularly if numbers start to increase in the Summer and Autumn 2021. Andy confirmed colleagues in the EY and finance teams will soon start the work to model the January 2021 census effect including any proposed changes to the provider hourly rates from April 2021. The WSF noted there needed to be further discussion with the WSF EY representatives between now and the next scheduled meeting in March 2021.

8.3 Pupil Premium Grant (PPG)

(a) For the **PPG**, the WSF noted the DfE have confirmed the funding rates in the financial year 2021-22 will stay the same as for 2020-21. These are: -

- Primary Pupils £1,345.
- Secondary Pupils £955.
- Looked After Children £2,345.
- Children Ceased to be Looked After £2,345.
- Service Children £310.

(b) Andy advised, although the eligibility criteria for the pupil premium will remain unchanged, from 2021-22 **the DfE will be using October 2020 school census data to calculate pupil premium allocations**. The LA had not known this changed prior to the settlement being announced.

8.4 The WSF noted the former specific grants in 2020-21 to support the costs of teachers pay and pensions have now been mainstreamed into the NFF in 2021-22 – Schools Block DSG (AWPU) and High Needs Block DSG (Basic Entitlement and Supplementary Factors) and other grants were still to be announced.

8.5 The WSF noted the provisional school funding settlement for 2021-22.

9. SCHOOL BLOCK ALLOCATIONS 2021-22 AUTHORITY PROFORMA TOOL (APT)

9.1 APT 2021-22 Quantum

(a) Andy introduced the report which detailed the current position on the APT 2021-22.

(b) An analysis of the Schools Block funding, prior to de-delegation for mainstream schools detailing the estimated amount to be included in the Local Schools Funding Formula (LSFF) and the breakdown of the Central School Service Block detailing the already approved centrally retained services is below.

Analysis of Schools Block 2021-22

DETAIL	£'000	£'000
Schools Block Allocation		
Primary Unit of Resource £4,407.42 x Pupil Numbers 44108.5	194,405	
Secondary Unit of Resource £5,634.82 x Pupil Numbers 29752	167,647	
+ Premises Costs Historic Costs Allocation	7,443	
= Total LSFF Quantum 2021-22		369,495
+ Pupil Growth Fund DfE Formula Allocation		1,908
= Total Schools Block DSG		371,403

Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) Allocation		
<u>Centrally Retained Budgets (Previously Approved by WSF and WCC Cabinet)</u>		
Contributions to Combined Services – Early Intervention Family Support	960	
Co-ordinated School Admissions	582	
Servicing of the Schools Forum	55	
Former ESG Retained Duties for All Schools	1,262	
<u>DfE Designated Centrally Retained Budgets</u>		
Licenses and Subscriptions – DfE Actual	442	
Mainstream Grant for Teachers Pay and Pensions for Centrally Employed Teachers	27	
= Total Centrally Retained		3,328
- Central Services Schools Block (CSSB) Allocated		3,376
= Projected Surplus/(Deficit) on CSSB		48

(c) For the LSFF net amount allocated in 2020-21 was £338.880m. A comparison of the position compared to 2021-22 is detailed below.

Comparison of LSFF Actual 2020-21 and Estimated 2021-22

DETAIL	£'000
LSFF 2020-21	338,880
<u>Adjustments</u>	
Prior Year – pupil growth fund, growing school, rates and premises	787
Additional DSG for NFF Year 4 for Schools Block October 2020 and for Increase in Pupil Numbers October 2020	13,499
Mainstreaming of former specific pay and pension grants	16,329
= Estimated Amount for LSFF 2021-22	369,495

(d) Although this seems a significant increase, the additional NFF DSG allocation notified in July 2020 was expected. Also, the net increase in pupil numbers of +199 (Primary - 141.5; Secondary +340.5) will require funding in the LSFF 2021-22 together with the requirements of LSFF to be based as far as is practicable and affordable upon the National Funding Formula (NFF) data set and unit of resource parameters for Year 4 together with the mandatory DfE sector Minimum Funding Levels (MFLs).

(e) The WSF are reminded that the budgetary impact for each individual school will depend upon: -

- How their individual pupil numbers and all other data varies between October 2019 and October 2020.
- The Schools Block DSG increase between 2020-21 and 2021-22.
- The impact across all schools.

- The impact of the LSFF for the NFF parameters i.e. the MFG requirement and any potential capping level for affordability, together with the mandatory DfE sector Minimum Funding Levels (MFLs).
- The impact and affordability of the Minimum Funding Levels (MFL) per pupil for the total budget: –
 - Primary increasing from £3,750 in 2020-21 to £4,180 in 2021-22.
 - Secondary increasing from £5,000 in 2020-21 to £5,415 in 2021-22.
 - Hybrid MFL rates for schools with 'non-uniform' year groups.
- The MFG of between +0.5% and +2.00% per pupil in 2021-22 and any potential affordability cap.
- Although overall numbers have increased, there are also some significant variations with increases and decreases for individual schools, which will result in budgetary impact for those schools.
- Given the additional resource from the NFF in the Schools Block and the LSFF being based as far as is practicable on the NFF parameters, including the per pupil Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) protection, most schools should see increases in 2021-22.
- However, **the MFG is a per pupil not a cash protection**, so the LSFF even when based on the NFF parameters, cannot protect schools from the effect of data changes between 2019 and 2020.
- Consequently, some schools will see reductions in funding due to these data changes mainly due to significant reductions in pupil numbers. Nevertheless, all schools in the DfE NFF parameters will be subject to at least the 2% MFG per pupil increase on their 2020-21 baseline.

9.2 APT 2021-22 Current Position

(a) Andy advised assessment and the impact on the APT of all the above together with the data changes for 2020 has been made. This has been based upon the units of resource agreed by County Council Cabinet on 10th December 2020, the DfE NFF parameters for 2021-22, the recently provided DfE data sets for 2020 and other required local data sets.

(b) The WSF were provided with further information in **Appendix A** together with **Annexes A and B**, which summarised the current position and a comparison of the APT formula factors between 2020-21 and 2021-22.

(c) Andy confirmed: -

- The estimated quantum for the LSFF in 2021-22 is £369.495m plus a further sum of £1.908m from the national Pupil Growth Fund.
- The current APT position using the approved units of resource, other data and the NFF Year 4 parameters for the MFG, Capping and the sector Minimum Funding Levels is £369.216m – an under **allocation of £0.279m** against the £369.495m excluding the Pupil Growth Fund.
- The analysis is detailed below.

Summary of Final APT 2020-21 Compared to Draft APT 2021-22

<u>FORMULA COMPONENT</u>	<u>2020-21 APT £'m</u>	<u>2021-22 APT £'m</u>	<u>VARIANCE £'m</u>
AWPU	250.8	275.3	+24.5
Deprivation - FSM	14.4	15.8	+1.4
Deprivation - IDACI	8.9	10.2	+1.3
Low Prior Attainment	25.7	25.5	-0.2
EAL	1.5	1.5	+0.0
Lump Sum	26.0	26.7	+0.7
Sparsity	0.2	0.5	+0.3
Split Site	0.6	0.6	0.0
Rates	3.9	4.0	+0.1
PFI	2.5	2.6	+0.1
Exceptional Premises	0.4	0.4	0.0
Minimum Funding Levels (MFLs)	3.4	5.5	+2.1
Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)	0.6	0.6	0.0
LSFF Prior to Capping	338.9	369.2	+30.3
Capping	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	338.9	369.2	+30.3

(d) Andy advised the draft APT: -

- Includes the effect of all the DfE NFF Year 4 units of resource including the MFG and the mandatory MFLs together with the majority of WCC local factors.
- Shows significant increases in some formula areas e.g. AWPU, FSM, IDACI and the mandatory MFLs must be managed within the quantum of funding available
- For deprivation factors, the effect of an additional +£2.7m had not been reflected in the DfE PUF and SUF notified in July 2020.
- Includes the effect of Year 4 for the new North Worcester Primary Free School. This is a call on the DSG and must be funded on estimated numbers not included in the October 2020 census.
- Provides for sparsity factor currently not based on the tapered model as in previous years but on the full DfE NFF model to support the DfE policy for additional funding provided in this area.
- Requires some local data sets to be finalised e.g. rates, which will all be a call on the currently under allocated funding of £0.279m.
- On current estimates, the NFF Year 4 is affordable from the Schools Block quantum for 2021-22.

(e) The WSF were reminded: -

- The new DfE data will have to drive the allocations and so cannot be amended along with the units of resource as approved unless there is a Schools Block DSG quantum issue. Varying from this approach is not appropriate – as in previous years the data and local formula parameters run.
- The APT is draft only and it is not final until the ESFA have approved the APT following their detailed compliance checks – this will take some time following submission.
- School by school data is never shared at this time as is not available until all maintained schools and academies have had their allocations.

(f) In response to questions from a member of the WSF regarding the funding of the new free school and notional SEN, Andy confirmed as the free school is a growing school the Schools Block DSG must provide for the new October 2021 intake numbers in advance of any funding and there has been no local review for notional SEN as this is likely to be part of the DfE policy for a 'hard' NFF.

(g) The WSF agreed for the need to endeavour to replicate the NFF Year 4 parameters in 2021-22 and gave its unanimous support to submitting the APT for 2021-22 using the NFF Year 4 parameters using the Schools Block DSG including the Pupil Growth Fund.

(h) Andy thanked Rob Phillips for all his hard work on the APT submission and the WSF recorded their appreciation.

RESOLVED –

The WSF unanimously endorsed (For 13 votes; Against 0 votes; Abstention 0 votes) the submission of the LSFF APT final Schools Block funding for 2021-22, using the NFF Year 4 parameters as approved by Cabinet in December 2020, taking account of the above issues, to the ESFA by 21st January 2021 as required.

The Chair introduced Gabrielle Stacey to the WSF meeting to lead on the next two agenda items.

10. MEDICAL EDUCATION PATHWAY PROPOSAL

10.1 Gabrielle made a presentation on the current position on the proposals for the Medical Education Pathway. The details covered the current provision, the statutory duty on the LA, the review timeline, stakeholder feedback, the proposed multi agency approach and funding issues.

10.2 The WSF commented as follows: -

- The review is vital given the current issues and their impact on medical and mental health for pupils.
- Given Covid cases will increase these needs, an efficient service to access is vital.
- The pathway looks comprehensive but how deliverable is it and at what extra cost to schools?
- Need to push on health to meet their fair share of the costs.
- Concern if already underfunded schools are requested to contribute to any shortfall – it is not their place to fund it is a statutory function of the LA.
- Schools already do an enormous amount of work on these aspects already and the current service must provide as required and shortfall from High Need budget.
- There is a need for further training for schools – some good training is available, but it needs to be enhanced.
- Value for money aspects are key so how will quality assurance aspects work?

10.3 Sarah thanked WSF members for their comments which will help shape the Cabinet paper and in terms of the potential funding shortfall options are being looked at internally and with the CCG. Gabrielle advised on the need for clearer advice to schools particularly on robust pupil outcomes and future service level agreements. Phil stated that we would share with the forum the Cabinet report and we would need to look at a transparent model for funding the pathway with the principle that the funding follows the child.

10.4 The WSF noted the proposed timescales and next steps.

11. HIGH LEVEL NEEDS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-21

11.1 Phil introduced the item detailing the current and projected budget position, with 2020-21 predicted to be a £10.5m deficit increasing to £15.0m by the end of 2021-22. This is despite the increases in HN DSG received. Phil advised on the position of other County LAs, where a recent Society of County Treasurer's (SCT) survey reporting 13 members with deficits between £0m and £10m, 9 members with deficits between £10m and £20m, 1 with a deficit of over £20m, 1 with a deficit of over £30m, 3 with deficits between £40m to £50m and 2 with deficits even higher. Phil further advised on the need for a national solution but the requirement for a HN recovery plan to be discussed with WCC and the WSF and for the completion of the DfE HN template.

11.2 Gabrielle took the WSF through the presentation detailing the aims of the HN management plan, the governance arrangements including the role of the WSF, the plan workstreams and the challenges to the delivery of the plan.

11.3 The WSF commented as follows: -

- What progress has been made since the presentations from the previous interim SEND Group Manager?
- There appears to be little difference just further cost pressures, so is there any data to support changes?
- How has the additional DfE HN DSG been allocated?
- Has there been any progress on parental experience of complications in the EHCP process and delays in the process for issuing EHCPs?
- Special schools are in constant dialogue with WCC and are endeavouring to keep pupils in County provision.
- The role of the WSF is strategic but its input is important and there is a need for WSF to understand the operational and financial risks with regular briefings on progress.

11.4 Gabrielle advised that significant progress had been made on first time EHCPs with more pupils now being admitted to mainstream schools. Gabrielle further advised that this plan goes much wider than the previous discussions and there is a need to understand the gaps in SEND provision e.g. post 16/19, SEMH, population pressures in special schools, etc, which is a major piece of work.

11.5 On the timescales for issuing EHCPs, Gabrielle confirmed performance had improved significantly and former delays had been addressed through the graduated response process. Sarah confirmed data on key aspects of the plan seen by the SEND Improvement Board in WCC would be useful for the WSF.

11.6 In terms of the additional HN DSG, Phil advised this was only keeping pace with some of the current demand but it will not address the historic deficit, although some resource has been directed to special schools to allow the top up funding cap to be lifted from April 2020.

11.7 The WSF requested regular updates on a termly basis as the plan progresses.

The meeting closed at 3.55pm

The date of the next WSF meeting: - Thursday 25th March 2021 at 2pm
Via Remote Meeting MS Teams