



Minutes of the Meeting of the Worcestershire Schools Forum (WSF)

Thursday 20 June 2024
Remote Meeting Held Via MS Teams

The meeting started at 2.30 PM.

In Attendance:

a. WSF Members

Malcolm Richards (Chair) [MR]	- Governor, Bromsgrove
Phil Hanson (PH)	- Headteacher Pershore High School
Jo Kelleher [JK]	- Governor, Bredon Hill Academy
David Butler	- Principle Tudor Grange (Worcester)
Marie Pearse [MP]	- Headteacher Evesham Nursery School
Annette Summers [AS]	- Nursery Owner
Edward Francis	- Headteacher Fort Royal Special School
Elizabeth Dixon	- Headteacher Franche Primary School

b. Local Authority (LA)

Councillor David Chambers (DC)	- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills, Worcestershire County Council
Sarah Wilkins [SW]	- Director of Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Pupil Place Planning Worcestershire Children First
Chris Bird [CB]	- Acting Director of Resources Worcestershire Children First
Rob Phillips [RP]	- Finance Business Partner - Schools - Worcestershire Children First

1. Welcome Councillor Chambers

SW confirmed to the forum that DC has replaced Cllr T Onslow with responsibility as Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills.

DC gave a short update on previous history and involvement within the education sector.

2. Apologies

Jay Hart [JH]	- HT Kingfisher School
Mel Barnet [MB]	- Director of All Age Disability Services – Worcestershire Children First

Bryn Thomas (Vice Chair) [BT]	- HT Wolverley CE Secondary School
Ruth Bessant [RB]	- Finance Business Partner - Schools - Worcestershire Children First
Chris King	-
Tim Reid	Director of Education – Diocese
Ruth Bessant	Finance Business Partner - Schools - Worcestershire Children First

SW gave apologies she would not be attending the whole meeting due to a headteacher meeting.

3. Declaration of Interests

CB as a Volunteer Foundation Director of Our Lady of Magnificat Multi-Academy Trust and has a family member who runs / owns a nursery provision.

4. Declaration of Potential Conflict of Interests with Items on the Agenda

MR confirmed a conflict of interest with Item 13, as the school that have raised this item.

PH confirmed a conflict on agenda item 6.a as a school that is within the Pershore Education Area Review

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting (11 January 2024)

Minutes agreed.

6. Matters Arising From The Minutes

None

7. Any Other Business

a. Pershore Area Review Update

CB confirmed to WSF that the briefing paper for the Pershore Education Planning Area, is currently live on the council website for the meeting on 27 June 2024, this was supported in October 2022.

The reason for this as the local authority were asked to coordinate the selective age ranges for the schools in the area, so that they will go to a two-tier system for education.

It was confirmed that an additional paper will be brought to the WSF in September. The timeline for the proposed changes in paragraph 52 of this document ([5 Pershore Cabinet Report June 2024 draft v3.0 final.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#))

b. Worcestershire Association of Governors (WAG) and Conference

MR confirmed that the WAG will be closing later this year. With the amount in the bank remaining, being used to be arranging an event in partnership with Worcestershire Children First (WCF) and Worcestershire County Council (WCC).

The aim being to improve the understanding of governance within Worcestershire schools and promote the WSF, and other strategic agenda for education.

With the ending of WAG the constitution of the WSF may need to be changed to make sure that it will fit with this body not being present. This is to be investigated and brought back to WSF. Information to come out at the beginning of the academic year 2024/25.

8. Maintained Schools Balances

RP went through the paper for those present and confirmed the balances, the budget position of schools for the end of financial year 2023/24, and financial year 2024/25. With financial year 2023/24 the balances increasing to over £9.3 million, and the budget position is showing an overall deficit, for the end of financial year 2024/25, of approximately £2.1 million.

No questions were raised on this topic.

9. Schools Attendance

CB gave a briefing on the paper, a discussion was raised and some concerns on if Headteacher would still be able to make decision, it was felt by members that it would still allow for that flexibility but would allow schools to have a standard approach.

It was discussed that this update could create additional workload and need for additional resources within WCC, with the increases in penalty notices and that the information supported that this is a service that is cost neutral for WCC it does not bring in more income than it costs, and in most cases is costing a small amount.

From research at the time of the pre-election release of this policy it was supported by other parties so not expecting this to be changed due to the general election, later this year.

It was also felt that the WSF would be the best place for the consultation to take place rather than needing to go out to a full consultation with all schools. The reason for this is that WSF felt they have a wide range of experience and knowledge and varying views to discuss and agree any consultation.

10. Scheme for Financing Schools

RP presented this item for the agreement of WSF to adopt the updated scheme. The reason for the changes is that the accounting standards for local authority are changing and the need to for the recording of "Finance Leases" within the local authority account under IFRS16.

Finances Lease have previously been counted as a loan, which schools are not able to take out without the Secretary of State approval. These changes allow for certain finance leases to be taken on without this approval, but schools would need to check the list of approved assets, and if it falls outside then they would still need to seek this approval. The other requirement is that schools also notify the local authority of any leases they take out.

WSF voted on this with a unanimous agreement to accept the updated scheme.

11. Wraparound Programme Verbal (Verbal Update)

SW gave WSF a verbal updated of the latest position. With the Wraparound Expansion Programme moving at pace with regular returns to the DfE evidencing progress. Worcestershire has 217 schools with primary aged children:

- 50% of schools have a full wraparound offer (8am-6pm) already in place
- 40% of schools have a partial wraparound offer already in place

Following submission of a Delivery Plan to the DfE, we are now focusing on expanding the hours offered by those schools with a partial offer in place, as well as increasing the number of places available across the County. Support is available via the Early Years Team.

Sustainability of provision is a key challenge across the Childcare Expansion. Whilst funding is available to support wraparound provision during the next 1-2 years, it is important to ensure long-term viability. For the Early Entitlements Expansion, with the sector receiving the majority of their income from funded places, it is imperative that the funding rates are maximised, and the sector are supported to implement their offer in a way that maintains viability. We are developing our expertise as well as working in partnership with the School Finance Team and the Economy and Infrastructure Team of WCC to develop business support tools and resources.

Recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified and experienced staff is a significant challenge across the Childcare Expansion projects. Working with the Skills Team, we are looking for creative solutions to support the sector, including Bootcamps for Playworker qualifications.

Meeting the childcare needs of children and families with SEND is a challenge for schools but presents particular challenges for the early years and childcare sector. A focus group with special schools and alternative providers has been created to look for ways to support the expansion of wraparound provision; there are specific concerns around creating sustainable but affordable provision, as well ensuring that the needs of the children can be met.

It was also confirmed that this did not mean free wraparound but that this provision should be self-funding from parents paying for this provision, and this could be schools signposting to private provision that drop off/collected pupils from the school.

It was confirmed that schools, and providers would be able to apply for the Capital or Revenue funding that the Council has obtained from the Department for Education (DfE). The funding application forms will come out shortly.

If members would like to contact Sharon Jones (Wraparound@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk) for any further information.

12. Early Years Expansion (Verbal Update)

RP updated WSF verbally of the changes for working families with early years children. He explained that like the Wraparound programme that there was some

funding for this project from the DfE. With the funding being used to increase sufficiency with areas of insufficiency or areas taking up this insufficiency.

He also confirmed that the sector was being communicated with and that WCF was running two briefings with the sector on Thursday 20 June evening and the morning of the 21 June. This briefing to the provider would also share areas of insufficient provision.

For September 2024, the local authority within the county and district level have sufficient provision, the insufficiency is more at ward level, and building in additional capacity for future years.

It was confirmed that unlike the Wraparound programme this is for the funded children by the local authority, rather than parents funding this additional need.

13. De-delegated Services

MR explained the reason that this item was being raised, as some schools had felt if they did not use the service, they should not pay for it or be able to claim a refund.

RP went through the paper and the reason for the funding and who could benefit from this and if it was open to other bodies, like academies to buy into this service.

A question was raised about the use of the supply cover, and it was explained that this support schools with any action that would need a union representative to attend meetings at the school, such as consultation, or discipline processes, to save the individual school having to pay the full amount.

The decision was agreed that it should go out as a consultation in the Autumn term to all maintained mainstream schools for their thoughts. The final decision on this still will sit with WSF members.

It was also felt that more information of the services being provided should be sent out to schools and what they will receive from some of the services.

Meeting ended.

The meeting closed at 3.44 PM.

Date of next meeting

The date of the next WSF meeting: - Thursday 12 September 2024 at 2.30 PM
(Remote Meeting - /MS Teams)