

# **Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Monday, 9 July 2018** **Held in Room 1, Civic Suite**

<b>Present:</b> Antoinette Fisher (Chair) Andrew Wilkins Louise Minter Lynda Mackay Des Foxon Eva Evans Andy Simms Derek Sheldon Darren Gelder Geoff Harley-Mason Marie Murphy Eleanor Clarke Claire Smith Wendy Jarema Rob Fletcher John McDermott Mark Wilson David Lewis Hon. Alderman Norman Davies Gina Godwin Sheila Thompson Councillor Annette McKenzie Councillor Julie Hlland Sally Hodges Phil Leivers Steve Fenton Stuart McHale <b>Observers:</b> Peter French Lisa Whitehouse Bernie Farkas Karen Scott	Dorridge Primary Hazel Oak Streetsbrook I & EY Academy Knowle CofE Primary St George & Teresa Bentley Heath CofE Primary Hazel Oak St Margarets Grace Academy Arden St Peters RC School Triple Crown Centre Tudor Grange Academy Park Hall Academy Fordbridge St Alphege Lode Heath Academy TU Representative Langley Academy Wise Owls Kingsley Childcare  Director of Children's Services & Skills Assistant Director, Learning & Achievement Head of Business & Performance Childrens Services Finance Manager  Church of England, Birmingham Tender Years Nursery Blossomfield Infants Greswold Primary
Minutes taken by Alison McWilliam, Senior Forum Administrator	

Item		Action
1	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies were received from Ben Taylor, Trevor Scott, Gillian Clowe and Charlotte Shadbolt.	
2	<b>Welcome and Thank You</b> AF welcomed Bernie Farkas and Karen Scott representing maintained primary head teachers, Lisa Whitehouse for PVI Early Years, Eleanor Clarke for Alternative Provision and Councillors Julie Hlland and Annette Mackenzie as new members of Forum. A number of members will be standing down at the end of this academic year and AF thanked Roberta Narroway, Sheila Thompson, Des Foxon, Russell Bryant, Ian Backhouse and Mark Wilson for their support of Forum over a number of years. PL expressed particular thanks to Derek Sheldon, who will be stepping down after nine years as a Forum member, four of which were as Forum Chairman.	
3	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting (14.5.18)</b> The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
4	<b>Matters' Arising</b> There were no matters' arising.	
5	<b>Nominations for Forum Chair and Vice Chair 2018-19</b> Nominations were taken and Antoinette Fisher and Darren Gelder were duly elected as	

Chair and Vice Chair for 2018-19.

## 6 **Director of Children's Services & Skills – Sally Hodges**

SH talked through the key area in focus in the 'children's world', locally, regionally and nationally:

**Regionally** key issues include:

- A significant rise in looked after children (LAC) and the complexity of needs that individual children have
- A very tricky SEND agenda
- Staff retention and growth and development of future leadership.

There are significant challenges around dealing with **County Lines** and SH urged schools to take up any offers to have someone speak to their staff about County Lines - what it looks like and how it works. This is not the usual form of exploitation of vulnerable children and some very intelligent, highly skilled youngsters are being enticed to lead an alternative lifestyle that they cannot escape and dealing with it and identifying those children who could be targeted requires a different approach.

Solihull is generally doing very well with **Inspections** and SH thanked those who had been involved recently. Ofsted has been targeting schools with long-standing Good or Outstanding judgements and the SEIS team is identifying and working with schools that may need support. The target for all schools to be Good or Outstanding by 2018 is not quite there yet, but there has been a significant improvement in the last few years.

An emerging national and regional issue is the concept of **off-rolling**, where children are not on a school roll, or anywhere else for a number of reasons (permanent exclusion, elective home education (EHE), alternative curriculum, etc.) The DfE will be expecting the LA to identify these young people, understand their level of need and do something about them, with data to be included in future Ofsted inspections.

The Local Authority inspection regime - **Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services** (ILACS) has changed and now includes:

1. Focused Inspections of a few days plus a week of preparation beforehand, targeted at a particular theme, service or cohort of children (CSE, domestic abuse, care leavers etc.)
2. Standard Inspections, a no-notice intensive two weeks, which are very child-focused and rigorous.

SH encouraged members to read the report from Solihull's last Focused Inspection on Care Leavers from February 2018 LINK: [Ofsted Feb-18](#).

With SH leaving in March 2019, it is possible that Ofsted will instigate a Standard Inspection just before she leaves or soon after the new Director is in-post.

There have been an increasing number of **Care Orders** issued by the Courts placing children at home, where their protection could be compromised. Their looked after status means the LA is spending a lot of resources to ensure they are safe, to later find that the Care Order is not required. This is putting additional burden on the system and is not improving children's lives.

**SEND** is a massive issue nationally and is a particular issue for Solihull due to the disproportionate number of young people with ASD, either with a diagnosis or where professionals and family believe there should be an ASD diagnosis. Solihull is placing high numbers of children in out-of-borough provision and the cost of this, together with the cost of transporting them there, is way beyond the budget and this is not sustainable. We need to find different ways of managing the money to support more children in our own schools. Some schools are very open at supporting children with an EHCP, but quite a few say they cannot meet their needs; we need to review the profile of these schools to understand why and what can be done to help. There may be a more imaginative approach and the LA will be looking for volunteers to take these conversations forward. (The South London SEN Commissioning Group LINK: [SL SEN](#) is already looking at things in a different way).

Discussions are already taking place around a **Centre of Excellence for Autism**, with sites identified and the LA will be applying to the DfE in July when a bidding window opens up. Solihull's vision is for the Centre to include a 80-100 place specialist ASD school, together with opportunities for training-teaching, medical research and family support. However, the DfE is unlikely to announce the successful bids until July 2019, which would delay opening until 2021/22 at the earliest, so the team is considering alternative options using an existing,

	<p>refurbished building rather than a new-build.</p> <p>Darren Gelder, Bev Petch, Natalie Jones and John Callaghan (Solihull College) are considering what an <b>Alternative Curriculum</b> could look like for secondary school pupils who are disengaged from education, looking at something innovative and different to capture their enthusiasm.</p> <p>Despite the distraction of Brexit, the Government's focus in terms of funding is on adults and health. However, at every opportunity the Local Government Association and Association of Children's Services Directors are promoting the <b>children's agenda</b> on the basis that investment in this area would result in big savings for the criminal justice system, health, mental health and employment.</p> <p>SH agreed to return to Forum in the Autumn to provide an update.</p>	
7	<p><b>Assistant Director's Items – Phil Leivers</b></p> <p>An announcement is imminent on whether Solihull, led by Hazel Oak Teaching School, has been successful in its latest bid for £500k of School Improvement funding.</p> <p>PL thanked those who attended last week's Heads' Partnership meeting for their input to various aspects of the SEND agenda. The EdSEND Group will be pivotal in moving this agenda forward.</p>	
8	<p><b>National Funding Formula 2019-20 DfE Update – Steve Fenton</b></p> <p><i>Reference 'NFF 2019-20 DfE Update'</i></p> <p>At an 18 June Conference, the DfE announced the main changes to funding for 2019-20; the APT tool to calculate school budgets will be published later in July and SF will run draft budgets based on current data, taking into account the new minimum funding levels, gains, caps etc. The main news includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There will not be any information beyond 2019-20 due to the timing of the next Comprehensive Spending Review. It remains the Government's intention to move towards a hard formula from April 2020.</li> <li>➤ For 2019-20, as previously published last year, the funding floor will increase to 1% from 0.5% and the Government cap will increase to just over 6%. Minimum per pupil funding will rise to £3,500 for primary and £4,800 for secondary. At local level, we will continue the approach we have had for 2018-19 and seek to replicate the NFF in full, using adjustments to the gains cap to balance to the funding received from the DfE.</li> <li>➤ There are some minor changes to the NFF; they will move towards a standard formula calculation based on pupil numbers (between October 2017 and October 2018) to fund pupil growth (rather than basing it on actual spend from the previous year). Funding will continue to be lagged.</li> <li>➤ They are aware of pressures on the HNB, but no additional funding is planned for 2019-20. So Solihull needs to accelerate its work to reduce funding pressures in this area.</li> <li>➤ The Blocks will continue to be ringfenced, but there is still the option to transfer 0.5% from Schools Block to the HNB, with the agreement of Schools Forum. There are no plans to do this in Solihull for next year.</li> <li>➤ For the Central Services Block, from 2020-21 the DfE is minded to bring in percentage reductions to historic commitments, i.e. Combined Services. This also includes Solihull's £1m prudential borrowing scheme which is a 20 year commitment.</li> </ul> <p>In response to a question from DG, SF confirmed that a media report relating to a recent Council Meeting, where SF had talked about funding difficulties for 1FE schools and schools in deprived areas, referred to the impact of the NFF in general and not to the DfE's specific announcements regarding funding for 2019-20 because of the further 0.5% minimum per pupil increase. However it was the case that a significant number of primary schools were losers under the NFF.</p>	
9	<p><b>High Needs Block Budget Position – Steve Fenton</b></p> <p><i>Reference 'High Needs Block Funding Pressures'</i></p> <p>The out-turn report delivered to the May Forum reported a 2017-18 HN overspend of £248k, with a prediction that this is likely to rise to around £1.5m overspend by the end of 2018-19. SF's paper draws together a number of strands that the LA will be discussing with schools in the new academic year (section 4.1) including funding to incentivise inclusion, cost</p>	

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10	<p>effectiveness of existing provisions, monitoring the application of the Banding system and smarter commissioning of places – in line with the upcoming SEND Commissioning Strategy which will come through EdSEND, FWG, Forum and Cabinet Member in Autumn 2018. These areas, together with a continuing commitment to 'spend to save' investments (further ARPs and enhanced mainstream provision) are aimed at reducing reliance on expensive out-of-borough placements, bringing pupils back in-borough and offering value for money. SF highlighted the proposal (mentioned earlier by SH) for a specialist Autism Free School, which would be particularly welcomed by Forum members.</p> <p>Members raised the following questions and comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is behind the significant increase in Band 2c pupils at primary? There could be a number of reasons, including the possibility of inconsistency in the application of banding criteria and analysis is already taking place to assess this or there could be more pupils with greater needs.</li> <li>• EHCPs are not evenly spread across the Borough, is this because some schools are better than others at supporting these children?</li> <li>• Have other LAs gone through the process of reviewing the funding the schools for places? Yes some have and some are consulting on making radical changes; every LA is having this conversation with its schools.</li> <li>• The EdSEND Group (reporting to SSSAB and Forum) is aware of all these issues and is gradually working through them.</li> <li>• The new Education Psychologist and Head of SSS are drawing up an Inclusion Policy. A number of investments have already been made – the Solihull AP Academy, 18 additional special school places, primary and secondary ARPs, but additional provision is only part of the solution.</li> <li>• How does the LA measure value for money on out-of-borough placements in terms of progress, attendance etc.? Generally we rely on ex-borough provision because we cannot identify a suitable place in-borough. There are Safeguarding and Annual Reviews linked to the EHCP and if an in-borough place becomes available we should be looking to bring the child back. Pupils in ex-borough provision do not do as well as those in-borough, so there are reasons other than financial for keeping them in Solihull and there is a drive to monitor progress, provision and safeguarding.</li> <li>• What degree of parental pressure enters into this? Nationally, this is an influencing factor, but the key factor is about having an appropriate place available in Solihull.</li> <li>• Some of the places are £50k+ a year. There will always be some children for whom Solihull cannot meet need.</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Factor for Schools with Exceptionally High Levels of EHCPs – Steve Fenton</b>  <i>Reference 'Funding for Schools with Exceptionally High Levels of EHCPs'</i>  SF explained the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The proposal provides a financial solution for the relatively small number of schools that have very high levels of children with EHCPs, where their notional SEN budget is exhausted by the high number of Plans, leaving no funding for 'k' (school support) pupils.</li> <li>- The proposal does not respond to concerns around high numbers of 'k' pupils.</li> <li>- The solution is intended to further incentivise inclusion.</li> <li>- The proposed solution would extend the current arrangement (where the notional SEN budget is topped up to ensure it is never in deficit) so that the top-up amount ensures there is no less than 40% of notional budget left when all the £6ks are taken out for EHCP pupils. Schools will find that they fall in or out of scope of this arrangement as their number of EHCP pupils change.</li> <li>- The criteria will be any school with more than 1.5 times the sector average.</li> <li>- The cost based on current schools in this category is £102k which will be found from within the existing SEN budget.</li> <li>- Schools with very high levels of Plans and an ARP, where there are additional pressures on the SENCo, will receive an additional financial enhancement.</li> <li>- The funding solution is formula driven and will apply to any schools that meet the qualifying criteria.</li> </ul> <p>There were no questions and members accepted the proposal.</p>	Fwd Plan
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<p>11</p>	<p><b>Individual Group Reports</b>  <i>To be read in conjunction with individual reports. Of particular note:</i>  <u>Finance Work Group</u> – David Lewis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TU Facilities Time – This is funding that supports local TU reps in the schools’ sector and buys in time for them to work with the LA to develop key Policies and to support their members to resolve issues. In Solihull the current cost is £7.50pp for maintained schools and academies who buy the service; this is very high nationally and there are proposals to try to reduce this to around £5pp. The proposals are 1) to encourage more academies to buy the service (consideration is being given to offering a one-year deal to academies of £3.50pp to entice new business) 2) reimburse local TU reps at the supply rate of £200 a day (rather than full cost) 3) reduce the number of support days (aided by the fact that two unions are merging). The LA runs the scheme and more negotiation with schools/academies may be required, but on balance FWG supported the measures to reduce the cost.</li> <li>- Academies that do not buy into the scheme may have their own in-house arrangement or their members may have to rely on support from regional TU reps, where there are more likely to be delays which can lead to escalation of issues.</li> <li>- Part of the scheme is to work with the LA to produce and consult on model policies. These are available to academies that are outside the scheme as many are available on-line and it is in the LA’s interests to have all settings working to the same policies.</li> <li>- The TUFT report is attached to the minutes.</li> </ul> <p><u>Capital Work Group</u> – Andrew Wilkins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tudor Grange has already added 1FE and Alderbrook and St Peters are looking at adding additional places. Until the new housing developments start to come on-line, Solihull can deal with the requirement for additional secondary places by ‘pushing back’ children from neighbouring authorities.</li> </ul> <p><u>Solihull Schools Strategic Accountability Board (SSSAB)</u> – Louise Minter  There were no questions.</p> <p><u>Education SEND Group</u> – Louise Minter  There were no questions.</p>	<p>Att.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b>  Thursday, 27 September, 2018 at 5.00pm in Room 1, Civic Suite</p>	