

## Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Tuesday, 10 December 2019 Held in Room 1, Civic Suite

<p><b>Present:</b>  <b>Maintained Primary Sector:</b>          Antoinette Fisher (Governor)          Ben Taylor (Head teacher)          Bernie Farkas (Head teacher)          Jenny Godsall (Head teacher)          Paul Jackson (Governor)          John McDermott (Governor)  <b>Maintained Secondary Sector:</b>          Marie Murphy (Head teacher)  <b>Maintained Special Sector:</b>          Jane Davenport (Head teacher)  <b>Academy Primary Sector:</b>          No representative present  <b>Academy Secondary Sector:</b>          Geoff Harley-Mason (Governor)          Darren Gelder  <b>Pupil Referral Unit:</b>          Eleanor Clarke  <b>AP Academy:</b>          Stephen Steinhaus  <b>Post-16 College:</b>          No representative present  <b>TU Representatives:</b>          David Lewis  <b>Early Years PVI Sector:</b>          Gina Godwin          Lisa Whitehouse  <b>16-19 Sector:</b>          No representative present  <b>Officers of the Council:</b>          Councillor Ken Meeson          Councillor Annette McKenzie          Steve Fenton          Stuart McHale  <b>Observers:</b>          Ann Lowe</p>	<p>Dorridge Primary School          Our Lady of the Wayside School          Blossomfield Infant School          Knowle CofE Academy (proxy arrangement)          Castle Bromwich Juniors          St Alphege Juniors            St Peters RC School            Reynolds Cross Special School              Arden Academy          Grace Academy            Triple Crown Centre            Solihull AP Academy              TU Representative            Whitesmore Neighbourhood Nursery/Wise Owls          Tender Years Nursery              Cabinet Member for Children, Education &amp; Skills          Conservative representative          Head of Business &amp; Performance          Childrens Services Finance Manager            SMBC Head of 0-25 SEND Service</p>
<p><b>Chairperson:</b> Antoinette Fisher – Dorridge Primary School  <b>Vice Chairperson:</b> Darren Gelder – Grace Academy  <b>Minutes:</b> Alison McWilliam, Senior Forum Administrator</p>	

Item		Action																											
1	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b>            Apologies were received from:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Wendy Jarema</td><td>Governor</td><td>Park Hall Academy</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rob Fletcher</td><td>Head Teacher</td><td>Fordbridge Primary School</td></tr> <tr> <td>Andrew Wilkins</td><td>Governor</td><td>Hazel Oak Special School</td></tr> <tr> <td>Lynda Mackay</td><td>Governor</td><td>Knowle Primary Academy</td></tr> <tr> <td>Norman Davies</td><td>Governor</td><td>Langley Secondary Academy</td></tr> <tr> <td>John Callaghan</td><td>Principal</td><td>Solihull College</td></tr> <tr> <td>Charlotte Shadbolt</td><td>Governor</td><td>Heart of England Secondary Academy</td></tr> <tr> <td>Karen Scott</td><td>Head Teacher</td><td>Greswold Primary</td></tr> <tr> <td>Louise Rees</td><td>Director of Children's Services</td><td>SMBC</td></tr> </table>	Wendy Jarema	Governor	Park Hall Academy	Rob Fletcher	Head Teacher	Fordbridge Primary School	Andrew Wilkins	Governor	Hazel Oak Special School	Lynda Mackay	Governor	Knowle Primary Academy	Norman Davies	Governor	Langley Secondary Academy	John Callaghan	Principal	Solihull College	Charlotte Shadbolt	Governor	Heart of England Secondary Academy	Karen Scott	Head Teacher	Greswold Primary	Louise Rees	Director of Children's Services	SMBC	
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2	<p><b>Minutes of Last Meeting (12.11.19)</b>            The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>																												

- 3 **Matters' Arising**  
**Page 1 Non-traded SEMH Support** – The 'threshold' arrangement has been superseded by a requirement for schools to have followed the graduated approach before accessing this support.  
**Page 4 EY Access to EP Service** – Halit Hulusi and Dawn Wayne are currently putting together a business case.
- 4 **Cabinet Member's Items – Councillor Ken Meeson**  
**School Organisation Plan**  
The updated SOP, which includes potential options for creating additional in-borough SEND provision, will be presented at CM's Decision-making session for approval on 18 December. There will be a separate report on SEND School Place Commissioning and an update on the Capital programme.  
**F40 SEND Policy Document**  
In relation to the papers circulated on 9 November, CllrKM agreed with most of the suggestions made by Kent, but had reservations about its proposal for restricting special school provision to pupils with only the most extreme needs. Solihull's policy has always been to have a range of provision to match to individual children. Members were asked to submit any comments they may have to CllrKM via [schoolsforum@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsforum@solihull.gov.uk) for passing back to f40. AL's response is attached to the minutes.
- 5 **Message from Director of Children's Services, Louise Rees**  
In her absence, SF delivered LR's written message:
- *Following the council's confirmation that it would not be seeking to submit a disapplication request to the Secretary of State, the council and schools (Forum SSSAB and Governors' Association) have restated their commitment and determination to work together in an open and transparent way to develop the Borough's approach to SEND provision, funding and the deficit recovery plan. Last week there were meetings between schools representatives and Louise Rees, the Chief Executive and Councillor Meeson which were hard hitting, honest and challenging – and in which we agreed to "draw a line in the sand" under our difficult discussions in recent weeks.*
  - *A letter will be sent jointly from Louise Rees and Louise Minter to set out our plans and principles for working together. There will shortly be a meeting of a group of head teachers supported by David Graham, the council's specialist SEND consultant to begin to feed into the development of the recovery plan.*
  - *Meanwhile the council is making progress with the appointment of the new post of Assistant Director for Inclusion and Additional Needs. The advert went live in the Municipal Journal and WM Jobs last week and will run until the new year. Shortlisting will take place in the week beginning 6 January with assessment panels and final interviews the following week. Applications from any interested Solihull heads would be very welcome and representatives from head teachers, governors and the SEND Parent Carer Forum will be part of the recruitment and interview process. Our recruitment partners are already making contact with potential candidates and compiling a long list.*
  - *In other news, our 3 week Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers finished on 25 November. We await the draft report for a factual accuracy check, and the publication date is 9 January. As part of the inspection, our arrangements for the virtual school, children missing education, exclusions and how vulnerable learners are supported, tracked and safeguarded were examined. Feedback from the HMI during the inspection on these areas was positive.*
- 6 **Scheme for Financing Schools – Steve Fenton**  
***Reference 'Update on the Solihull Scheme for the Financing of Schools' report***  
One of Forum's statutory duties is to approve the Scheme, which relates only to maintained schools. Changes made have been highlighted in the report and reflect statutory guidance (Feb 2019), with no significant local changes proposed. The main change relates to loan schemes applicable to schools converting to academy status. SF invited questions.
- With regard to school reserves, PJ sought clarification of Solihull's stance on applying the 5% (secondary) and 8% (primary) limit on reserves. SF clarified that the application

Attached

	<p>of the balance control mechanism pre-dates major delegation, whereas schools are now carrying greater financial risks and are increasingly making their own provisions for capital. Solihull's approach is to monitor balances and work with schools to ensure they have a clear financial strategy. SF agreed to produce a briefing note as guidance for head teachers and their Governing Bodies. SF would also be happy to discuss this further outside the meeting if required.</p> <p><b>Forum approved the Scheme.</b></p>	SF
7	<p><b>School Funding 2020-21</b>  <u>Central Services, Retained Duties and Historic Commitments – Steve Fenton</u>  <u>Reference 'School Funding 2020-21 – Central Services' report</u>  Forum was asked to approve recommendations in point 2.1 a-h.  <u>Central Services Block - Historic Commitments</u>  For 2020-21, Government has instigated a national 20% reduction in LA's Historic Commitments' grants. For Solihull this equates to a cut of £290k, largely driven by the £1.1mpa Prudential Borrowing (mortgage to fund the rebuild and refurbishment of north Solihull schools). As this is a fixed mortgage, the remaining services must, in effect, carry the whole reduction. In order to maintain the majority of services, at least for the short to medium-term, the LA has agreed to input £150k. However, it is proposed that two services could stand alone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports Management/Sports Federation funding £27,500</li> <li>• Collaborative funding £60k</li> </ul> <p>£22k to compensate the host school of the Chair of SSSAB will continue to be funded – in future from the Schools Forum budget.</p> <p><u>Early Years Centrally Retained Budgets</u>  The EY Contingency Fund helps to smooth things out when there are rising numbers and lagged funding and ensures against fluctuations in the hourly rate. The 8p increase in the hourly rate for 2020-21 will be passported through.</p> <p>SF invited feedback on the potential to use the Inclusion Fund as the source of funding to extend the EP Service to Early Years. This raised some concern and it was agreed to consider this and potential other funding sources through EdSEND Group.</p> <p><u>De-delegations – Maintained Schools Only</u>  TU Facilities Time was funded at £7.50pp last year and is currently £6.50pp. FWG recommended a rate of £6pp for 2020-21, based on continuing the trajectory towards a final outcome of £5pp.</p> <p>SF invited questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schools agree that the Sports Service is outstanding in Solihull and there was reassurance at FWG that the Sports Premium Grant had been increased and schools would therefore be content to fund this. It was noted that Historic Commitments are funded by a specific Government grant, if the service ceases, the funding will be returned to the Government, not to schools.</li> <li>- It was noted that ExComm is a long-standing contractual arrangement (around 15 years still to run), (originally relating to SureStart), which is now run on Solihull's behalf by Unity Collaborative. The cost is associated with the staff who run the scheme and building costs for the schools where the centres are located. It is proposed to continue the former element from the Historic Commitments budget, with the latter funded from the Schools Block.</li> <li>- The LA is concerned that if, as is the long-term aim – the grant to fund Historic Commitments is removed, this will impact on Prudential Borrowing. There is a mechanism for Solihull to challenge the Government's decision on this and the LA will take this up, setting out the implications for Solihull.</li> </ul> <p><b>Forum agreed all recommendations contained in item 2.1.</b>  <u>General Duties – Stuart McHale</u>  <u>Reference 'School Funding 2020-21 – General Duties' report</u>  The LA is required to request Forum's agreement to top-slice maintained schools to fund a range of statutory duties undertaken by the Council. The proposal, in line with the DfE's own recommendations, is to retain the current rate of £66pp for mainstream schools, £165pp for special schools and £165pp for PRUs (the latter rates being locally agreed in 2017). The total funding amounts to £1.182m, against an estimated cost to provide the</p>	EdSEND

	<p>services of £1.914m, with the LA subsidising the difference. The list of duties is contained in Appendix C.</p> <p><b>Forum agreed the top-slice.</b></p>	
8	<p><b>Group Reports</b></p> <p><i>Reference Work Group Reports</i></p> <p><u>SSSAB meeting on 19 November 2019 – Louise Minter</u> The Report was accepted with no questions.</p> <p><u>EdSEND Group meeting on 28 November 2019 – Louise Minter</u> The Report was accepted with no questions.</p> <p><u>Finance WG meeting on 2 December 2019 – David Lewis</u> DL talked through his report and the following questions and comments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Following Forum's vote against top-slicing Schools Block and the LA's decision not to submit a disapplication to the Secretary of State, RF asked 'what next'? In response, SF confirmed that the LA is now obliged to take a Recovery Plan to Full Cabinet on 13 February. This is currently being worked on and will include final DSG data and more robust information around numbers. The SEND team is looking at every independent and out-of-borough placement to work out demand going forward.</li> <li>- DG was concerned that bringing children back in-borough, when there is insufficient suitable provision for them to attend or putting them into mainstream when there will be reasons why they moved out of mainstream, could create a rise in exclusions. Cutting out-of-borough placements is not workable unless there is a solution in-borough. In response, AL said that there is no intention to bring young people back and place them inappropriately in mainstream schools. We must also be clear about which children go into the ASD Free School before it opens, to avoid losing places to other authorities. There are a number of resources being explored which may answer some of the problems, including reviewing the EHCP process and support available in mainstream schools; the fully fledged EP team and a named EP allocated where there are concerns about behaviour and exclusions; the joint SISS and EP High Needs SEMH team has a rapid response arrangement (2 weeks or less) for young people at risk of exclusion. DG and AL and DG agreed to talk about this outside the meeting.</li> <li>- It was felt that the f40 documents made the point very well about parental expectations. There are issues at tribunals where parents push for independent schools and the LA knows it will lose because we have no alternative to offer. However, we are better placed now and are challenging and starting to win some of these cases. Young people who are placed in non-specialist independent schools because of smaller class sizes, should be in mainstream on the basis that there is no reason why a non-specialist independent can meet their needs any better.</li> <li>- With regard to EY children, the Inclusion Fund has helped to identify how many children are being supported in EY settings, which also helps with transition. The LA is aware of the lack of specialist provision at Reception and both special schools are working to increase places.</li> <li>- Some members raised issues with communicating with the SEND team and AL asked that any on-going issues be brought to her attention. An email inbox has now been set up at <a href="mailto:sendenquiries@solihull.gov.uk">sendenquiries@solihull.gov.uk</a> and AL asked members to consult the Local Offer at <a href="https://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/">https://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/</a> which is regularly updated. AL agreed to publicise both of these links via Headlines.</li> </ul>	<p>DG, AL</p> <p>AL</p>
9	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>5.15pm on Wednesday, 15 January 2020 in the Council Chamber</p> <p>This meeting may not go ahead, further information in due course.</p>	