

## Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Thursday, 25 November 2021 Virtual Teams Meeting at 5.00pm

<p><b>Present:</b>  <b>Maintained Primary Sector:</b>                  Antoinette Fisher (Governor)                  Bernie Farkas (Head teacher)                  Karen Scott (Head teacher)                  Rebecca Lewis (Deputy Head)                  Rob Fletcher (Head teacher)                  Paul Jackson (Governor)  <b>Maintained Special Sector:</b>                  Jane Davenport (Head teacher)  <b>Academy Primary Sector:</b>                  Lynda Mackay (Governor)                  Jenny Godsall (Head teacher)  <b>Academy Secondary Sector:</b>                  Claire Smith (Head teacher)                  Clare Thorpe (Head teacher)                  Charlotte Shadbolt (Governor)  <b>Pupil Referral Unit:</b>                  Eleanor Clarke  <b>AP Academy:</b>                  Stephen Steinhaus  <b>Specialist Academy</b>                  No representative  <b>Post-16 College:</b>                  Lindsey Stewart  <b>TU Representatives:</b>                  David Lewis                  Gillian Clowe                  Gareth Eastham  <b>Early Years PVI Sector:</b>                  Gina Godwin                  Lisa Whitehouse  <b>Elected Members</b>                  Councillor Annette McKenzie  <b>Officers of the Council:</b>                  Councillor Richard Holt                  Tim Browne                  Steve Fenton                  Stuart McHale                  Michele Sadler  <b>Observers:</b>                  Peter Davis                  Mike Walker</p>	<p>Dorridge Primary School                  Blossomfield Infant School                  Greswold Primary                  Oak Cottage                  Fordbridge Primary School                  Castle Bromwich Juniors                    Reynolds Cross Special School                    Knowle CofE Academy                  Knowle CofE Academy                    Tudor Grange Academy                  Langley Academy                  Heart of England Academy                    Triple Crown Centre                    Solihull AP Academy                    Solihull College                    TU Representative                  NEU                  NASUWT                    Whitesmore/Wise Owls Nursery                  Tender Years Nursery                      Cabinet Member for Children, Education &amp; Skills                  Assistant Director, Inclusion &amp; Additional Needs                  Head of Commissioning for Learning                  Children’s Services Finance Manager                  Head of Inclusion Service                    Our Lady and All Saints MAT/RC Diocese                  Triple Crown Management Board</p>
<p><b>Chairperson:</b>  <b>Vice Chairperson:</b>  <b>Minutes:</b></p>	<p>Antoinette Fisher – Dorridge Primary School                  not in attendance                  Alison McWilliam, Senior Forum Administrator</p>

Item		Action																								
1	<p><b>Apologies for Absence and Welcome</b>                      Apologies were received from:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Andrew Wilkins</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Governor</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Hazel Oak</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Louise Minter</td> <td>Head Teacher</td> <td>Streetsbrook I&amp;EY Academy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marie Murphy</td> <td>Head Teacher</td> <td>St Peters RC Academy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Darren Gelder</td> <td>Principal</td> <td>Grace Academy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Andrew Best</td> <td>Governor</td> <td>Smith’s Wood Secondary Academy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sarah Smith</td> <td>Observer</td> <td>Church of England Diocese</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lynn Clark*</td> <td>Head Teacher</td> <td>Marston Green Juniors</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Richard Marshall*</td> <td>Head Teacher</td> <td>Oak Cottage</td> </tr> </table>	Andrew Wilkins	Governor	Hazel Oak	Louise Minter	Head Teacher	Streetsbrook I&EY Academy	Marie Murphy	Head Teacher	St Peters RC Academy	Darren Gelder	Principal	Grace Academy	Andrew Best	Governor	Smith’s Wood Secondary Academy	Sarah Smith	Observer	Church of England Diocese	Lynn Clark*	Head Teacher	Marston Green Juniors	Richard Marshall*	Head Teacher	Oak Cottage	
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	*substitute members in attendance																									

- 2 **Welcome to New Members and Thank You to Out-going Members**  
The Chair welcomed new members Peter Davis (Our Lady and All Saints MAT, Roman Catholic Diocese) and Gareth Eastham (NASUWT) and thanked out-going members, Gillian Clowe (NEU) and Honorary Alderman Norman Davies (Langley Secondary) for their support of Forum over the past years. *Further to the meeting, members were advised that Norman Davies had very sadly passed away after a short illness.*
- 3 **Minutes of Last Meeting (4.10.21)**  
The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
- 4 **Matters' Arising (4.10.21)**  
There were no Matters Arising.
- 5 **Assistant Director's/Acting Director's Items - Tim Browne**  
Children's Social Care  
Nationally, Childrens Services are facing a number of challenges and significant demand for services, particularly in the area of Children's Social Care. Indications show that the number of looked after children could reach 100k by 2025; a 36% increase over the last ten years and there continues to be a huge shortage of placements. Solihull is recruiting additional social workers (to reduce reliance on agency workers) and putting additional AD capacity in place in response to increasing need in this area.  
Education  
Two SEND reports will be presented to Cabinet Member on 9 December – one requesting formal approval for a number of strategies associated with Additional Needs, the second detailing the SEND improvement journey and 3-year High Needs budget projection. Nationally, 89% of local authorities are expecting their DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) to be in deficit by the end of 2021-22; some LA deficits are doubling each year. Solihull is not in as bad a situation as many others, but it is clear that a national solution is required to bring HN budgets back into line. Without additional Government funding, Solihull's 3-year projection is a £22m deficit by 2024-25. However, assuming a conservative annual £2m a year uplift, we should see the HNB achieve an in-year balance by 2024-25, with an accumulated deficit of £15.7m. The SEND Review is expected in Spring 2022. A Government White Paper is also expected in Spring 2022, which is expected to bring a number of changes, including future funding for the LA's role in school improvement. There were no questions.
- 6 **School Funding 2022-23 (Central Services, General & Retained Duties) – Steve Fenton, Stuart McHale**  
*Reference [Report, Appx A and C](#); [Appx Bi and Bii General & Retained Duties](#); [Appx D Central Services](#) and [Appx E General Duties Narrative](#)*  
Both budget elements – Central Services and General Duties – have been combined into a single report for Schools Forum to approve as one of its statutory duties as part of the annual budget cycle for 2022-23.  
The three areas are:  
  - Centrally held funding in Central and Early Years Blocks
  - De-delegations that only apply to maintained schools
  - Top-slice of maintained school budgets to cover General Duties**Centrally Retained Services (Appx D)**  
Growth Fund (2 parts) c.£800k total  
Part 1 – Pupil Number Variation (£500-600k) for schools growing permanently, with pupil numbers based on the October count and funding allocated across all formula factors.  
Part 2 – To respond to the needs of bulge classes where growth is more ad hoc. The LA is currently experiencing significant pressures in secondary school admissions and is exploring with HTs measures to deal with the possibility of having no places in certain year groups. This will be revisited in January when there is a better understanding of whether secondary bulge classes will need to be created and the proposed £350k funding increased to accommodate this. (Secondary bulge classes are expensive, at £135k for a 30 place secondary AWPU). In the meantime, the recommendation is to maintain this element of the

Fwd Plan

Growth Fund at the long-standing level of £350k.

#### Questions and Comments

**PD** – What funding do we receive for the 418 children joining Solihull schools under the Hong Kong resettlement scheme?

**SF** – Solihull receives no additional funding for the Hong Kong children. We will receive grant funding for children arriving under the Afghan resettlement scheme, but this number is expected to be relatively low.

#### Central School Services Block (all schools)

This is a passporting through of the £1.364m grant to the LA for it to undertake its statutory functions in respect of ALL schools regardless of status. This includes Pay and Pension grant for centrally employed teachers (SISS, Music Service, School Advisory Service), Admissions, servicing of Schools Forum, Licence Fees and Retained Duties (Appx Bii).

#### Central Services Block - Historical Commitments

This grant has attracted a further 20% reduction to £892k. The only remaining item is Prudential Borrowing (mortgage payments for the north Solihull schools' regeneration programme) which, at £1.115m, exceeds the grant by £223k. As a long-term commitment, the Government has agreed to cover the shortfall through Grant Protection Funding.

#### Questions and Comments

**PD** – Have we looked at weighting the budget across north/south Solihull?

**SF** – Services are delivered according to need irrespective of location. The LA believes in its community of schools and has enabled a number of services previously provided under Historical Commitments – Health and Safety Training, Records Management, etc. to continue, with the LA taking on the financial burden. Prudential Borrowing is wholly a north Solihull commitment.

#### Early Years Block

The LA receives a single grant which fluctuates between years and is not settled until around six months after the end of the financial year. This makes financial planning difficult and demonstrates the need for a contingency fund. For 2022-23 Forum is asked to approve centrally retained funding at existing levels:

- EY Advisory Team £253k – it is anticipated that funding requirements for the new single EY team (under Reshaping Education) will remain largely the same.
- Other EY Services £289k
- Family Information Service £257k
- EY Inclusion Fund £250k (top-slice of the EY budget to support emerging SEND needs in EY settings, similar to SEND Support in schools) plus £90k from the HN Block for children with higher needs.
- EY Contingency Fund £130k – to smooth grant fluctuations between years and avoid having to make adjustments to the hourly rate.

#### Questions and Comments

**LW** – It would be helpful to understand how much is retained centrally within the context of the whole EY budget, particularly in light of significant rising costs and a wish to pass on to providers as much funding through the hourly rate as possible. SF/LW to follow-up outside the meeting.

**SF** – The LA is allowed to centrally retain no more than 5% of the total budget and the Advisory Team, FIS, Inclusion and Contingency funds are outside that 5%. Today's announcement confirmed a 17p increase in the hourly rate for each of the next three years and it is intended this will be passported through to providers in full, subject to formal local political approval.

#### De-delegation (maintained schools only)

Maintained school approval is sought for two de-delegations:

- Primary Contingency Fund - £70k/£6.40pp. This funds school-focused expenditure, predominantly linked to school re-organisations and staff exit costs for budgetary

LW/SF

reasons and where for a school to fund them would put it further into deficit. This does not apply to special schools.

- TU Facilities Time - £55k/£5pp (reduced to £5pp in line with Forum's long-term goal), this is also the cost for academies who wish to buy into the service.

### **General Duties** (Appx Bi) (maintained schools only)

Forum is asked to approve the allocation of a financial contribution (a top-slice) to cover statutory General Duties, fixed a number of years ago and subsidised by the LA, for maintained mainstream, special schools and PRUs.

When schools academise, their General Duties contribution is redirected from the LA to their MAT in order to fund support services, so contributions to the LA will reduce over time.

However, the LA has no intention of raising the current contributions and for 2022-23 a top-slice of £66pp for mainstream schools and £165pp for special schools and PRUs is sought.

### Questions and Comments

**PD** - How do these rates compare with other Local Authorities?

**SMcH** – All LAs manage services in different ways, some receive contributions from their Schools Forums and some have a hybrid arrangement. These are statutory duties that the LA undertakes for maintained schools, some of which have fixed costs, irrespective of number of schools in the system. Forum agreed the rates some years ago and services are heavily subsidised by the LA.

**RF** – With the number of maintained schools reducing, is there a guarantee that the rates will not be increased to fund the shortfall?

**SMcH** – These are fixed rates and it would be unreasonable to expect a smaller number of schools to pick up the shortfall.

***Forum Members unanimously approved all elements of the report.***

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### **Cabinet Member's Items – Councillor Richard Holt**

- Cllr RH explained his Involvement in the initial 'calling-in' of the decision about proposed provision for excluded C&YP at Castle Bromwich. With no opposition, it was later decided to go ahead with the provision and progress is on-going.
- A key focus, both for economic reasons and in the best interests of C&YP, is to reduce the number of placements in out-of-borough provisions and work to bring C&YP back into appropriate provision in Solihull.
- Our aim is to ensure C&YP are at the centre of all we do, to empower them and to be ambitious for them.
- We need to be able to more quickly identify the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged C&YP and, working with Health, overcome delays in the system, particularly around ASD.
- The range of strategies currently in process - SEND, Inclusion, Accessibility, EY, AP - will underpin service provisions.
- It is clear that there are a number of challenges – impact of Covid, funding, an ever-changing political landscape – that we need to grapple with in the coming months.

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### **Inclusion Service Report – Michele Sadler**

Reference [Inclusion Service Report](#)

The report gives the current status of the new Service, which was one of the key aspects of Reshaping Education implemented from 1 September 2021. It is early days for the Service, good progress has already been made, but there is a way to go. MS reported key areas:

- Eventually the Service will have 22 staff members, around half of whom are now in post. Recruitment to date has been very successful, with a strong cohort of applicants for each post. The three key posts are the Locality Leads; many staff will be in post soon after Christmas and it is hoped the Service will be fully staffed by February half term.
- A key focus of the Service will be monitoring attendance, including for Solihull children educated out of the borough.
- The Service's aim is for all C&YP to access suitable full time education.
- Service objectives and priorities have been clearly identified, with identifying the highest risk children as top priority.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are some challenges with EHE and whether the education C&amp;YP are receiving at home is suitable.</li> <li>• MS agreed to share some examples of the Service’s impact at a later meeting, but asked schools to feed back if they felt there was anything missing from current proposals.</li> <li>• The Alternative Provision review has not moved forward as quickly as planned, however MS is now working with Ann Pearson to put a Consultation together.</li> </ul> <p><u>Questions and Comments</u></p> <p><b>AF</b> – Is delighted the Service has come so far in such a short space of time, but continues to be concerned about EHE where the LA has limited powers to intervene.</p> <p><b>MS</b> – A number of Government White Papers are expected post-Christmas, which may include guidance on EHE, so no significant changes will be made in this area until details are clearer.</p> <p>9 <b>Work Group Reports</b>  <i>Reference</i> <a href="#">Finance Work Group Report</a>  DL highlighted that schools will have to bear the cost of increased NI contributions from April 2022. The Autumn Budget made headline announcements concerning additional funding, full details about which are awaited.</p> <p>10 <b>Date of Next Meeting</b>  Monday, 17 January 2022 at 5.00pm Venue tbc</p>	<p>Fwd Plan Members</p>
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