

Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Monday, 4 December 2017
Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Suite

Present: Antoinette Fisher (Chair) Andrew Wilkins Louise Minter Lynda Mackay Ben Taylor Rob Fletcher Des Foxon Russell Bryant Derek Sheldon John McDermott Geoff Harley-Mason Marie Murphy Louise Minter David Butler Wendy Jarema Mark Wilson Ian Backhouse David Lewis Hon. Alderman Norman Davies Gina Godwin Sheila Thompson John Callaghan Councillor Ken Hawkins Steve Fenton Stuart McHale Phil Leivers	Dorridge Primary Hazel Oak Streetsbrook I & EY Academy Knowle CofE Primary Our Lady of the Wayside Fordbridge Primary St George & Teresa Coppice Juniors St Margarets St Alphege Arden St Peters RC School Streetsbrook Infant & EY Academy Tudor Grange Academy Park Hall Acdaemy Lode Heath Academy NAHT TU Representative Langley Academy Wise Owls Kingsley Childcare Solihull College Head of Business & Performance Childrens Services Finance Manager Assistant Director, Learning & Achievement
Minutes taken by Alison McWilliam, Senior Forum Administrator	

Item		Action
1	Apologies for Absence and Welcome to New Members Apologies were received from Jane Davenport, Darren Gelder, Trevor Scott, Councillor Alison Rolf, Peter French, Councillor Ken Meeson, Vicki Spall and Gillian Clowe. AF welcomed David Butler (Associate Principal at Tudor Grange) and Councillor Hawkins as new Forum members.	
2	Minutes of Last Meeting (9.10.17) The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
3	Matters' Arising Page 3 Benchmarking Information – The Benchmarking information available does not cover General Duties items. Page 4 Ministerial Visit – Following the July meeting at the DfE when a number of school representatives met with Schools' Minister Nick Gibb and colleagues at the invitation of Dame Caroline Spelman MP, St George & Teresa school recently received a ministerial visit. DF explained the focus of the visit and presented to Forum an overview of the difficulties his school is currently facing (see document attached to the minutes).	Att.
4	Ratification of Capital WG Terms of Reference Minor amendments have been made to job titles and the addition of the School Organisation Plan under task 2.3. Forum ratified the document.	AMc
5	Cabinet Member's Items In Councillor Meeson's absence, there were no CM items.	
6	Meeting with Julian Knight MP – David Lewis, Antoinette Fisher In response to Julian Knight's request to be kept abreast of developments with Forum, DL and AF met with him on 24 November. The meeting focused on the content of DL's script	

	<p>(circulated with the agenda) covering current key items for both Forum and SSSAB. JK was particularly interested in understanding how SSSAB works and in viewing the School Organisation Plan and asked how he could be more involved. Executive will follow this up.</p>	Exec
7	<p>Assistant Director's Items – Phil Leivers</p> <p><u>SEND Ofsted Inspection</u> The SEND Local Area Inspection Report from Ofsted was received last week, click to view Ofsted. A number of schools were involved in the joint LA and CCG (health service) inspection around meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. The team is confident that it knows its strengths and weaknesses and plans are in place to address them. Areas picked up include: improvements with senior appointments in the 0-25 team and the co-location of services; we are slow in taking on-board referrals but are now on track for meeting the EHCP conversion process deadline of 31 March 2018; we need to be more robust on quality assurance of ECHPs which are very education driven, with a need to ensure greater prominence of health and social care; we were challenged on attendance and inclusion rates for SEND children, particularly those on part-time timetables and around the SEND profile of young people on fixed-term and permanent exclusions; they agreed that our local ASD provision is limited and understood our wish to expand provision to better meet need in-borough. The Government has put in £29m nationally for investment in SEND and we await more details and there will be some additional money for working with Parent and Carer groups.</p> <p><u>Strategic School Improvement Fund</u> Round 1 resulted in funding of £508k for Solihull – aimed at improving attainment in maths for disadvantaged pupils in the Borough. The funding sits with Tudor Grange Teaching School with strict criteria on how this can be spent. A total of around 70 primary and secondary schools will receive some coaching over 36 months and the LA will ensure activities are effective. The Round 3 bid submission date is January 2018, prioritising Inclusion and Achievement of youngsters with SEND and Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull are looking to put in a joint bid orchestrated through Hazel Oak Teaching School.</p> <p><u>School Improvement Service</u> The Management of Change consultation has ended and 5 voluntary redundancies have been accepted (1 EY and 4 Advisers) cutting the SEIS team by 50% by January 2018. This will significantly affect the work that remaining advisers will be able to undertake, which will focus more on signposting and quality assurance. There continues to be a statutory monitoring, challenge and support role for the LA to undertake and a School Improvement Strategy is being drawn up with SSSAB to ensure shared ownership of the function. PL agreed to keep Forum abreast of developments.</p>	
8	<p>School Funding 2018-19 – Central Services, Retained Duties – Steve Fenton <i>Reference 'School Funding 2018-19 – Central Services' report and appendices.</i> Forum has a statutory responsibility to agree a number of areas that were discussed in detail at Finance WG on 8 November. SF explained the items contained in Appendix E. <u>1)Growth Fund (£350k)</u> – This is now a separate component of the Schools Block, with funding based on actual spend and paid with a one year time lag. A £100k increase is suggested for 2018-19 to respond to current costs. Money will fund set-up costs to equip a classroom for a bulge class for a single year. The majority of growth is funded through Pupil Number Variation. The increase is not expected to impact schools budgets.</p> <p><u>2a)Central Services Block (£1.054,926)</u> – Finance WG received a detailed report on Admissions; Servicing of Schools Forum funds the administration of Forum and SSSAB, plus member expenses and Licencing Fees is an annual charge by the EFA. Retained Duties are the statutory functions that the LA undertakes on behalf of ALL schools and academies (Appx D). The LA receives a grant of around £600k and supplements this with around £1m from its own resources to fund a total service cost of £1.6m. Costs shown are pre-Management of Change for the SEIS service. Any service and associated cost</p>	Fwd Plan

removed from the programme would go towards reducing the LA subsidy, the money would not go back to schools. There is no cost to schools for these services, Forum is asked to agree to the DSG grant being passported through to the LA.

2b) Historic Commitments (£1.446,750) - These services and costs are capped at the 2013-14 level; if the service stops, its funding will cease. Previously schools' budgets have been top-sliced to fund these services. However from 1 April 2018 they will be contained within the Central Services Block and funded from a separate DSG allocation (not a top-slice). If schools wished to remove or reduce the cost of any of these items, the funding would revert to the Government, not to schools. Forum's remit now is to ensure the services deliver quality and value for money and this will continue to be done through annual reports to Finance WG.

3) Early Years Block (£1.126,570) – The EY Advisory team and Family Information Service are funded through a top-slice, with each £100 equating to about 5p in the EY hourly rate. The spend on these two EY teams must be capped at 5% of the overall budget; Solihull is currently about 4.75%. As the Advisory team is undergoing a Management of Change, the figures are based on last year's funding. In November FWG received a synopsis of each service and this can be made available to all EY providers, if required.

It is early days for the EY Inclusion Fund, which has only been in place since September 2017.

The EY Contingency Fund was set to ensure any volatility in the hourly rate could be avoided once the Blocks are ringfenced. Following last week's Government announcement, the hourly rate will be increased by 10p for schools, bringing them in line with PVI settings at £3.90ph; funding looks to remain stable.

6) De-delegation – Maintained Schools

Primary Contingency £100,000 – was reduced to £100k last year and pays for ad hoc items such as retrospective applications to join the teachers' pension fund and staff exit costs. TU Facilities Time £123,550 – the proposal is to maintain the current level of £7.50pp whilst the LA undertakes a review as Solihull's rate is much higher than other authorities. Any changes to the current rate and service would most likely be made from 1 April 2019.

In response to the content of agenda item 8:

SSSAB representatives were pleased that the cost of TU Facilities Time would be reviewed and there were no further comments or questions.

The mood of the meeting was full approval to the centrally held services, de-delegations to maintained schools and the level of growth and contingency funds.

9 **School Funding 2018-19 – General Duties – Stuart McHale**

Reference 'School Funding 2018-19 – General Duties' report and appendices.

Under the new NFF arrangements, the LA still has a range of statutory functions and duties to undertake (Appx C) for maintained schools which were previously funded through the Education Services Grant. The expectation now is that maintained schools will fund these through a top-slice, to be approved by Forum and as allowed for in the new regulations.

Last year Forum agreed that maintained schools would be top-sliced by £60pp mainstream and £150pp PRUs and special schools (£1.1m total) for two terms of costs. The LA does not feel it appropriate in the current financial climate to seek the full-year equivalent cost for 2018-19 and is asking instead for the rates set by the DfE - £66pp mainstream, £280.50pp special schools and £247.50pp PRUs (£1.361m total). This will leave a shortfall of £408k which the LA will subsidise from its own resources. Clearly as schools continue to academise, income to the LA for General Duties will reduce as the funding transfers back through the academy route, which the LA will have to manage.

The LA sought approval from maintained Forum members to the three levels of top-slice.

In response:

- There was general acceptance of the £66pp top-slice for mainstream schools. However special schools were extremely unhappy at the proposed increase to £280pp, saying 'the GD increase will not only discourage schools to be flexible in expanding numbers,

AMc

	<p>but it will leave vulnerable pupils unable to have the specialist interventions and equipment they require for success – head teachers request that this is reconsidered’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members asked what the consequence of not accepting the higher rate would be for special schools and PRUs. The options include cuts to services or the LA increasing its subsidy. - There was a request for greater clarity around what schools receive for the money. - It was noted that schools (and academies) are facing setting deficit budgets due to increased costs, despite undergoing staff restructuring and cuts. - It was noted that although academies will not be top-sliced for LA General Duties, they do not escape these costs and are top-sliced by MATs by at least a comparable rate. - If schools are to be held to account for the number of exclusions, part-time timetables and attendance of SEND pupils, it is counter-intuitive that special schools could be put in a position where financially they cannot be flexible on expanding numbers. <p><i>Maintained Forum members voted in favour of accepting the £66pp top-slice for maintained schools (5 for, 0 against, 1 abstention)</i></p> <p><i>It was agreed that the proposed increase in the top-slice for special schools and PRUs would be revisited and an alternative proposal brought to the 18 January Forum meeting.</i></p>	
10	<p>Pupil Number Variations for Expanding Schools – Steve Fenton</p> <p><i>Reference ‘Pupil Number Variations for Expanding Schools’ report</i></p> <p>SF referred to point 3.1 relating to a change in the rules around Variations to Pupil Numbers (for school expansions as a result of LA requests to add additional places, in line with the School Organisation Plan) where the LA must present any Pupil Variations to Forum to illustrate the impact on overall funding and to specific schools’ budgets.</p> <p>Seven schools will undertake expansions in 2018-19 (Section 4) at a total cost of £540k. This will result in a total expected spend of £121k greater than the DSG. That figure will then become the new baseline next year.</p> <p>Members did not raise any questions.</p>	SF/SMc Fwd Plan
11	<p>College Update – John Callaghan</p> <p>JC updated Forum on activities taking place, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been growth in the 16-18 cohort at Blossomfield and Woodlands, with students now totalling of 3,600. • Adult education has declined following changes that allow only unemployed adults to receive funding, with everyone else taking a loan. • There has been a significant increase in professional courses. • BA Honours and BSC degrees are accredited through local universities. The College hopes to offer an MSC in Aircraft Maintenance next year. • Staffing for STEM subjects is a concern, with a need to review pay. • There has been a lot of confusion around apprenticeships, which have seen a significant decline nationally, it is hoped this will be reversed. Degree and higher level apprenticeships are a key area and offer a low-cost alternative to university. • New areas of teaching include hybrid and driverless technology, virtual and augmented reality. • A 12-week intensive Construction course is responding to anticipated shortages in this area and the College is offering short courses for English and Maths. • The College has an extensive offering for students with SEND (see information attached to minutes) and is open to working with the LA to potentially locate some specialist provision on-campus. They are also keen to work with the Solihull AP Academy. • Pre-16 engagement is growing, with students, often with behavioural difficulties, attending day or week release and the college environment often proves beneficial. • The merger with Stratford College is expected to be finalised before Christmas, expanding the offering for students living in south-east Solihull and including a range of creative arts facilities. The three campuses will have a £41m turnover, 1,000 staff and around 10,000 students. • Funding is an on-going difficulty; the number of colleges nationally has fallen from around 300 to 190 currently, with further reductions expected. 	Att.

<p>12</p>	<p>Individual Group Reports <i>To be read in conjunction with individual reports. Of particular note:</i></p> <p><u>Finance Work Group</u> – David Lewis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further to monitoring figures reported at the October Forum, an increase in out-of-borough placements has led to increased spend in this area. The increase is linked to lack of available places in Solihull special schools and is most likely to eradicate the planned end-of-year surplus. The FWG will continue to closely monitor this area. <p><u>Capital Work Group</u> – Andrew Wilkins AW presented his report.</p> <p><u>Solihull Schools Strategic Accountability Board (SSSAB)</u> – Louise Minter Due to the timing of the SSSAB meeting, LM presented a verbal report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group was pleased that the cost of TU Facilities Time will be reviewed. The current £7.50pp cost is high nationally and schools are keen to investigate alternatives. • The group is seeking clarification on admissions criteria for Alternative Provision. • A full programme has been confirmed for next term's Heads' Conference and 51 head teachers have now confirmed their attendance. • PL presented findings from the Ofsted SEND inspection. • SF presented an update on changes under the National Funding Formula. <p><u>Education SEND Group</u> – Louise Minter Of particular note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been long-standing concern around post-16 pathways and the group will retain this as a standing agenda item. • The number of children going out of borough is increasing again for a number of reasons - rising demography and an even steeper rise in SEND, the new ARCs have taken longer than expected to become fully operational and our special schools are full. The immediate priority is to draw up a strategy to expand special school and ARC places and work with Solihull's Alternative Provision around their pupils with behavioural difficulties. PL is talking with JC about more effectively using specialist provision that the College could provide and First Planner has met with special heads to look at using their space more effectively, but there is a clear need to add some ASD places in the Borough. AW expressed how the needs of pupils at Hazel Oak – an MLD school – had become increasingly complex in recent years. 	
<p>13</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting Thursday, 18 January at 5.15pm in Room 1, Civic Suite</p> <p>AF wished everyone a very merry Christmas.</p>	