

Warrington Schools Forum

Minutes – 17 January 2023 (Held at University of Chester, Time Square)

Membership

Membership with differentiated voting rights ~ Total Membership of 28, of whom 22 are entitled to vote on funding formula issues										
Sector Representation (22)	Appointed by the Council following election by:	Member	Dates and Attendance							
			11 October 2022	17 January 2023	21 March 2023	20 June 2023	10 October 2023			
Maintained Nursery School Senior Staff (1)	Primary Headteachers Group	Marcia Atherton	A	P						
Special School Staff (1)	Special School Headteachers Group	Lucinda Duffy	P	P						
Special School Governor (1)	Governors Forum	Hazel Coen	P	P						
PRU (1)	PRU Management Board	Lindsay Regan	A	A						
Academy – all phases (9) Agreed this should be: (5 secondary including UTC) (4 primary)	Academy Schools (secondary)	Gwyn Williams	P	P						
		Vacant	-	-						
		John Carlin	A	P						
		Christian Wilcocks	P	P						
	Academy Schools (primary)	Gary Cunningham CHAIR - Schools Forum	P	P						
		Paula Warding	A	A						
		Cath Cooke	P	P						
		Craig Burgess	P	P						
	UTC	Chris Hatherall	A	P						
Maintained Primary School Sector (6)	WAPH and Governors Forum	Siobhan Bentley	P	A						
		Kathryn Berry	A	A						
		Zoe Jones	A	P						
		Ian Moss	A	P						
		Janet Lazarus Governor	P	P						
		Donna Kendal Governor	A	P						
Maintained Secondary School Sector (2)	WASCL	Chris Hunt	P	P						
		Ed McGlinchey	P	P						
Private Voluntary and Independent Providers (1)	PVI Providers Forum	Kelda Willians	P	A						

Representing	Member	Dates and Attendance						
		11 October 2022	17 January 2023	21 March 2023	20 June 2023	10 October 2023		
<u>Non-Schools Members (6)</u>								
Anglican Diocese (1)	Jane Griffiths	A	A					
Roman Catholic Diocese (1)	Chris Williams	A	A					
16-19 Institutions (1)	Damian McGuire	P	P					
Parent Governor (1)	Vacant	-	-					
NEU (Trades Union)	Lucie Humphreys	P	P					
NASUWT (Trades Union)	Laura Watson	P	A					

Representing		11 October 2022	17 January 2023	21 March 2023	20 June 2023	10 October 2023		
<u>Warrington Borough Council</u>								
Director, Early Help, Education and SEND	Paula Worthington	P	A					
Head of Service – Quality Education and Learning	Louise Atkin	A	P					
Finance Manager	James Campbell	S	P					
Senior Accountant (Schools)	Garry Bradbury	P	P					
Executive Member for Children and Young People’s Services	Cllr Sarah Hall	A	A					

Key:

P ~ Present

A ~ Apologies

X ~ Absent with no apologies

C ~ Meeting cancelled

S ~ Substitute

- ~ Vacancy

O ~ Observer

Minutes:

Gill Sykes

1. Apologies and Welcome

The chairperson, Gary Cunningham, welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that apologies would be recorded in the minutes. Noted that this January meeting was taking place as a face to face session and the meetings scheduled for the rest of this year will take place virtually. Gary explained that Simon Lennox and Helen Fleming would not be attending for agenda item 3 and item 4 so that the forum can focus on item 6 at length.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising (from 11 October 2022)

The minutes were accepted as a true record and no one raised any discrepancies. Gary noted he had been impressed with the service provided by Simon Lennox and the attendance team and Louise agreed to feed this back.

3. Update on school attendance SLA

Simon Lennox's report was presented to the forum. Gary assumed everyone had read the paper which noted four schools had not committed to the contribution. Craig Burgess shared that his school had raised concern about what the provision would be and had emailed Simon. Craig confirmed his school will be making the voluntary contribution but not buying in the SLA. Ian Moss shared that the contribution is currently under review with their chair of finance. The chairperson noted that no-one objected to the recommendations.

Recommendations:

- (i) It is recommended that from the 2023-24 academic year onwards we move to a School Contribution: Purchased SLA: LA contribution model, given that the overwhelming majority of schools are happy to proceed as proposed. **AGREED**
- (ii) It was noted in the original proposal that contributions in September 2023 could be higher due to pay award increases, inflation etc. The figures have been reviewed in the light of this and the actual Contribution: SLA figures have been increased by 4%. **NOTED**
- (iii) For clarity, from 2023-24:
 - All schools are asked to pay the Contribution amount for the Universal Service. **NOTED**
 - Schools that wish to purchase the additional Extended Service SLA will choose to pay the additional SLA amount. **NOTED**

4. Trade Union Facilities Time

Helen Fleming's report was presented to the forum. The chairperson noted that all the recommendations were agreed by Schools Forum.

Recommendations:

- (i) Schools Forum are requested to agree to carry forward the forecast 22/23 underspend into 23/24 in order that this can be used to reduce the per pupil cost for participating schools and academies for next financial year. **AGREED**
- (ii) Taking into account the carry forward, it is therefore proposed that Schools Forum agree, on behalf of the maintained school sector to de-delegate £2.44 per pupil for the purposes of teacher trade union facility time in 2023/24. Participating academies are asked to contribute at the same rate. **AGREED**
- (iii) This reduced rate will apply only to those schools that have supported and contributed to the shared facilities time arrangements in the 2022/23 financial year. **AGREED**

5. Membership

The chairperson noted there are two vacancies on Schools Forum, for one secondary academy rep and for one parent governor rep. Paula wants to make sure the forum membership is reflective of the maintained, academy, primary and secondary sectors and will look at this outside of the meeting.

Action: Paula Worthington to check if forum membership is reflective of all sectors.

6. DSG settlement/schools budget consultation and other funding issues

Garry Bradbury presented his report to the forum and the following was noted:

- The funding cycle follows a pattern where we are notified late summer about the rate per head for the following financial year. At that stage we don't have the census for the formula to operate. When we have the new census numbers for October the rates are used for the final settlement. Over the last two years the DfE have provided an additional funding grant which can't go through the funding route. Where numbers on roll are 2% higher than last year the funding is raised 2%, but there are other significant elements that have increased more than 2%.
- At the last meeting it was agreed that once the funding was confirmed and modelling of updated NFF was complete a working party would meet. The growth is £1.5m and we needed £800K to set NFF leaving us with a surplus of funding of £728K. A meeting took place across the phases and for the first time we didn't get a consensus of how to use the funding. Noted that if the forum can't establish a consensus tonight the local authority will have to consider the strength of arguments and pass judgment. Ultimately the decision remains with the local authority, although we would clearly like a unified voice from the forum.
- For the £728K headroom we have three options: (i) to recirculate the additional funding back through the formula and choose one or more of the funding values to increase. (ii) to agree a transfer of the funding into the High Needs Block. (iii) to institute a growth funding mechanism to use some or all of the headroom.
- There are two difficulties with the third option, firstly at the moment maintained primaries de-delegate some funding to operate the system, secondly if the local authority takes advice and agrees to create a growth fund with some or all of the funding it has to form part of the submission or formula. Everything would be subject to ESFA criteria of allocation and would have to be communicated to the ESFA by Friday.

Comments/queries:

- The options were discussed at the working party where it was noted that if we put the funding back into schools through the formula, looking at an increase in MFG, we could increase the AWPU and also increase the lump sum. If we are currently at the NFF limits, by making an increase we would be moving away from NFF. Because the formula has protections some schools with protection would get more through the formula and the protection would be reduced to compensate so lots of schools would get nothing extra. There would be a targeted effect and no more than half of Warrington schools would get something through MFG.
- One option could be for some or all to be transferred into the High Needs Block and allocated in a way to be determined by Schools Forum. This would give no unexpected consequences of the formula.
- One option Damian has mentioned is for some or all of the funding being used to create a growth contingency. There is an issue in that we would need to have a ready solution now and also have to work out how it would impact the existing de-delegation.

The chairperson asked if the forum wished to speak on or propose option one, no-one came forward to propose this option. The chairperson noted that we can't consider the third option until we have decided on option two. Questions and comments were invited by the Chair.

- For option two, Christian Wilcocks asked if there is a business case for transferring the money to the High Needs Block. Garry Bradbury noted that if it is approved by Schools Forum and signed off it doesn't require any further external intervention as the amount is below 0.5% which would require Secretary of State approval. It has the advantage of there being freedom to allocate the funding in consultation with Schools Forum. It could be allocated out in a combination to school budgets while still retaining an amount for growth/emergencies.
- Craig asked if the money can be ring-fenced in the High Needs Block so it is not used for other things. Garry confirmed that it can be ring-fenced and therefore protected.
- Garry informed that we will be reporting back to Schools Forum in March on the usages of the High Needs Block and we can either allocate to school budgets or issue out on the criteria to be determined.
- Option three, a growth fund was discussed and John Carlin gave an example of his school, where since September 2021/22 due to migration, school numbers had grown by over 100 pupils with 80 being unfunded as they arrived post the census date. They agreed with the local authority to go over PAN to meet need and there has also been a desire for in year admissions. John referred to the guidance for growth funding that the local authority has a responsibility with extreme cases. The ESFA and the DfE advise that the only route is

through the local authority and they have funding to fund extreme examples of growth. John referred to the guidance document that states a growth fund is to allow smooth transition across schools and parity across schools. John felt we should create some kind of growth fund and if the criteria in the guidance was adopted it would enable everyone to meet needs and enable the local authority to meet its responsibilities.

- Damian noted that the growth contingency is incorrectly called growth as the contingency also covers falling rolls. There could be schools with a reduction in numbers and the local authority may say they should remain open and to get them through this period they should also be able to draw money from this fund. Damian noted that this money would come from the DSG. Garry Bradbury shared that 99.56% of DSG is committed and allocated through NFF.
- Craig shared that Woolston primary are admitting a lot of children from Hong Kong and are expecting more. Suggested a solution could be to include academies putting into a pot as well as maintained. Garry noted that it would be a voluntary contribution from academies.
- Ed McGlinchey referred to several years ago when there was capital investment for his school to replace mobiles which didn't actually add additional space. There was agreement at the time to take an additional 48 children per year. Ed felt that a growth fund would benefit the growth they had even though it was longer term.
- Ed asked what provision is in place for the children from Hong Kong when they arrive in school and Gary C asked about support with EAL. Louise shared that she has advertised to recruit an EAL teacher and an EAL TA from her education budget to be in post until the end of the summer term.
- Garry Bradbury noted that the lag is an issue and it is only when the children from Hong Kong are included in the census that they will trigger EAL. All the school funding works on the lag basis and the authority don't have any funding for lag.
- Gwyn felt that there is an option to transfer the money into the High Needs Block and decide on criteria and how to use the money at a later date rather than try to commit to something tonight. We would want the local authority to have a pot of money for schools struggling in unforeseen circumstances.
- A forum member noted that to transfer the money to the High Needs Block allows more time to get the decisions right for our children. It feels more strategic to put it in the High Needs Block.
- Noted that schools may be expecting some money coming back to them so we need to be really considerate of all schools and their financial pressures when reporting back to them about forum agreeing to the transfer of funds to the High Needs Block.
- Lucinda noted there have been some really powerful things said, and we need to think bigger than the room as we are representing everyone when thinking about the decisions. There are lots of schools who are vulnerable for a variety of reasons and we need to make sure we take some time to consider that.
- Damian noted that our recommendation to the local authority would be to look at the headroom and transfer to the High Needs Block and use it to create the emergency fund and if there was any money over it could be redistributed to the schools.
- Ian asked for there to be clear communication with schools about why the forum has agreed to transfer the money to the High Needs Block.

The chairperson noted that after discussion, the consensus seems to be to transfer to the High Needs Block and then decide on a criteria and how to use the money going forward.

Schools Forum members voted in favour of transferring £728K into the High Needs Block. For it to be ring-fenced to form an emergency fund and used in conjunction with the local authority to address pressure with unplanned growth. Noted that being in the High Needs Block it will not be subject to external regulations and with Schools Forum agreement, we can decide the criteria and how it is spent. It was agreed to form a working party to discuss the criteria and any other details around this money. Volunteers for the working party were noted as John Carlin, Lucinda Duffy, Hazel Coen, Gwyn Williams, Donna Kendal, Gary Cunningham, Zoe Jones and LA officers, meeting to be arranged as a face to face session. Cath Cooke queried if people not on Schools Forum could be part of the working party.

De-delegations were discussed with maintained colleagues and noted that while de-delegation is an option it is an annual conversation.

It is recommended that Schools Forum members representing mainstream schools:

- (i) Note the contents of the report, including the materiality of the forthcoming MSAG; **NOTED**
- (ii) Recommend an appropriate use of the allocation of headroom funding, and consequently the composition of the Warrington mainstream schools' funding formula for 2023/24; **AGREED AS NOTED ABOVE**
- (iii) For maintained sector representatives, agree de-delegations, where appropriate, for the various services discussed in **section 4.5** of the DSG report. **AGREED**

7. AOB – no items were brought forward to discuss

The chairperson thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was closed.

Meeting schedule for 2023:

- 21 March 2023
- 20 June 2023
- 10 October 2023

All Tuesdays at 4.30 – 6.30 pm via Teams