



**West  
Northamptonshire  
Council**

**West Northamptonshire Schools Forum**

Minutes of a meeting of the West Northamptonshire Schools Forum held remotely via Zoom and <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDyc2cNcl19OvcGOCuZDTBQ> on Tuesday 14 December 2021 at 2.00 pm.

- Present**
- Peter French, Church of England (chair) (PF)
  - James Shryane, academy alternative provision (JS)
  - Dan York, maintained primary (DY)
  - Sandra Appleby, academy (SA)
  - Lyndsey Barnett, maintained nursery (LB)
  - Vanessa Bradley, academy (VB)
  - Lee Hughes, academy (LH)
  - Rachel Martin, PVI (RM)
  - Jon Lake, maintained primary (JL)
  - Karen Lewis, academy special (KL)
  - Iain Massey, academy (IM)
  - Jenny Thorpe, 16-19 (JT)
  - Hayley Walker, PVI (HW)
  - Rod Warsap, academy (RW)
  - Eliza Hollis, maintained primary (EH)
- Substitute Members:**
- Joshua Coleman, academy (JC)  
substituting for Paul Wheeler
- Also Present:**
- Councillor Fiona Baker, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education
  - Councillor Daniel Lister, Assistant Cabinet Member for Education
  - William Healey, Education, Skills and Funding Agency
  - Dan Perriman, NASUWT (DP)
  - Richard Poole, Unison (RP)
  - Elaine Coe, NEU (EC)
  - Rachelle Wilkins, GMB (RW)
- Apologies:**
- Paul Wheeler
- Officers**
- Chris Kiernan, Assistant Director, Education (CK)
  - Beth Baines, Senior Finance Business Partner (BB)
  - Emily Taylor, Strategic Finance Business Partner (ET)
  - Alison Golding, Assistant Director, HR (AG)
  - Rosemary Kavanagh, Assistant HR Business Partner (RK)
  - Kelly Mills, Early Years Business Compliance and Funding Support Service Manager, NNC (KM)
  - Chris Wickens, Capital Programme Manager, Schools (CW)
  - Paul Hanson, Secretary (PH)
  - James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager (JE)
  - Kathryn Holton, Committee Officer (KH)

1. **Apologies for absence and Forum Membership Changes**

Apologies for absence were received from Paul Wheeler and thanks were extended to Joshua Coleman who attended as a substitute.

James Shryane was welcomed to Schools Forum as the new member for Academy (Alternative Provision).

It was reported that Nikki Lamond had resigned from West Northamptonshire Schools Forum, but was continuing as a member for North Northamptonshire. Recruitment for vacant academy positions would take place in the new year.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. **2021-22 DSG Monitoring**

ET advised that the report detailed the latest forecast outturn position for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). There had been no change in the overall forecast position since the last meeting, with an overspend of £2.4m reported for the high needs block (HNB). This represented 1.78% of the budget after academy recoupment and 0.62% of the gross budget which was below the threshold requiring a Department for Education (DfE) recovery plan. The overspend was structural in nature, so a plan was needed to address this to avoid pressures in future years. Whilst there was no overall movement in the £2.4m deficit, there had been movements within the HNB. The main swing from the previously reported position was in out of county placements which had almost doubled (£1.25m). There was also a £1m increase in provision for pupils in schools as a result of the increase in pupil numbers.

In relation to the increased forecast costs of out of county placements and following mention at the last meeting of a local authority (LA) strategy in respect of special school places, DY asked what was being done to address this.

CK advised that the most pressing issue was the lack of specialist places. By 2025 it was estimated that West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) would be short of 500 places. There were plans to increase provision from September 2022. Capital was available in the budget but there was a shortfall of £3m for the 200 places to be provided over the next 3 years. The LA would be seeking Council approval to borrow capital money for these places, without which a balanced budget would not be able to be achieved. Additionally another special school was needed in West Northamptonshire. The DfE would be approached regarding money for a free school but if this was not forthcoming the Council would need to sponsor a special school

and fund the capital to pay for it - potentially £12m. This could result in between £3m and £15m which would need to be borrowed between now and 2025-6.

Since it appeared that this issue was not going to be addressed within a year, DY asked whether schools would have to factor it into their budgets both for this year and next year. CK advised that schools would not be asked to factor it in at this stage. A review of the first year was needed before proceeding.

**RESOLVED:**

That Schools Forum noted the forecast outturn position for the year ending 31 March 2022.

**5. 2022-23 WNC Schools Funding Consultation**

BB advised that each annex a) to e) covered a different part of the consultation.

**5a Split site funding policy and permanent exclusion clawback policy**

BB advised that the background had been covered at the previous meeting. It was proposed to roll forward the split site policy from Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) keeping the rates the same. The permanent exclusion clawback policy was proposed to be changed to be in line with legislation for 2022-23.

There had been 9 responses to the consultation overall, one of which covered several schools from the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust. Not all those responding answered every question.

There were 8 responses to the permanent exclusion clawback policy question "Do you agree with implementing the legislation?". 5 of these agreed to the change. One disagreed on the basis that the funding will have been used in supporting the child before exclusion. Unfortunately the legislation does not allow for this to be taken into consideration. Two others agreed in principle, but stated that the LA should only be able to claw back if funding had been received for that child, which required the child to have been on the previous census. BB confirmed that this would be done if the legislation allowed.

For the split site funding feedback, 5 were in agreement, 1 disagreed and considered that the rates should be 50% of the current rates in 2022/23, reducing to zero in 2023/24. Another response considered that there were many other significant additional costs for schools in addition to split site. BB noted that the National Funding Formula (NFF) was intended to cover these costs and that previously separate funding streams had been rolled into the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) and lump sum when the NFF was first formulated. One of the areas not included was the split site funding and this was still a separate formula factor that could be used by LAs to support schools with those additional costs.

LH considered that 9 responses was not many, and requested clarity on why the trust was treated as one and not 15 schools. If the trust had collated responses from individual schools this would be different from submitting a single response from the trust. BB stated that the LA was aware that this one response represented a number of schools, although their individual circumstances might be different. EH noted that

all head teachers had the option to respond individually. PF agreed with LH - 9 responses was disappointing. CK noted that if the issue was not a priority, people were less likely to respond. WNC had publicised the consultation through many different routes (Head West, direct emails to schools and at bursar seminars) and had sought to maximise responses. Any further ideas to encourage increased participation would be welcomed. Cllr Baker endorsed this.

In response to a question from VB, BB confirmed that the permanent exclusion clawback policy would be effective from 1 April 2022.

**RESOLVED:**

That Schools Forum members agreed the proposed Split Site Policy and rates.  
That Schools Forum members agreed the proposed Permanent Exclusion clawback policy.

**5b Place Planning and Growth Funding (Weighted Numbers)**

CW reported that it was intended to fund a number of new year groups at seven schools across West Northamptonshire. Schools requested to provide additional capacity by the LA would have access to revenue funding at the rates given. All schools were asked whether they agreed to roll forward the current Growth Fund Policy inherited from NCC and whether to use the same rates applied in 2021/22. 5 responses agreed with the Growth Fund Policy and to fund weighted numbers, one respondent selected other, but gave no further response. All respondents agreed to the continuation of the 2021/22 rates.

**RESOLVED:**

That Schools forum members agreed the proposed Growth Fund Policy and rates, the proposed places for new and growing schools and the growth fund budget of £0.99m for the 2022-23 budget.

**5c Funding of Specialist Support and Impairment Services**

CK reported that feedback had been received from one member since publication of the consultation expressing disappointment at the low number of responses received, and also that the specialist support and impairment issue was not more prominent in the consultation and suggesting the list should have been ordered according to the impact on schools. This would be taken into account in future consultations. Of the responses, 6 selected option 2, the trust selected option 3 and one school made comments but did not select an option.

CK congratulated ET and BB for getting to grips with the HNB issues since vesting day. A 5% overspend was low compared with other authorities (one authority was 106%) and at the moment, due to PFI credits, a balanced budget was being reported.

CK advised that WNC wanted to be transparent with the nature of the problem and proposed action plan. The aim was to be back in balance within 4 years. A sub-group of Schools Forum members could be established to look at this.

DY queried the potential impact on schools where despite the uplift there would still be a detrimental effect on their budget. How would the LA support those schools? CK responded that where a school has a high needs problem and a general budget

problem the LA can use top up from the high needs budget. The one-size-fits-all policy cannot be allowed to have a serious deleterious effect on an individual school. Schools should contact CK in the first instance.

EH asked whether this would impact notional SEN in any way. CK advised that this was a separate issue, but it was fair to take account of this spending in the notional pot.

JC advised that all schools have to work within constraints of funding and queried what support was being made available. CK advised that it was generally very small schools which had a problem. Money was not given lightly and schools had to make a strong case, but the LA had to make sure that schools can support their pupils.

In response to JC, BB stated that there were no specific funds allocated to cover schools with financial difficulties. The School Effectiveness Team had a budget which could be used to help schools in severe difficulty. There was no contingency, although Schools Forum could decide to vote for maintained schools to have a pot of money to help.

DY noted that unknown variables such as the impending increase in PFI costs were a particular concern for smaller schools.

**RESOLVED:**

That Schools Forum members agreed the second option put forward in the consultation – to top-slice £2.1m (approximately 0.68%), on the understanding that if it does so, the council will not ask for the 0.5% top-slice allowed by funding regulations.

**5d Schools block 2022-23 central expenditure**

BB noted that there were two parts to the central expenditure – historical and ongoing. The ongoing side included combined services where there was a 20% reduction in funding each year. CK pointed out that central expenditure formed part of the LA's budget and did not come from the DSG.

BB advised that each section of 5d had to be voted on separately.

In response to a question from VB, BB confirmed that all the items listed on the agenda under 5d formed part of the £4.3m Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).

JC referred to Table 3 on page 32 and asked why funding for some areas was increasing, but MASH and safeguarding were not, given the importance of family engagement. CK advised that the figures given were not necessarily the budget for the service, but represented the contribution to that service from central expenditure. PF agreed that sufficient budget for safeguarding was important.

**RESOLVED:**

That Schools Forum voted in favour of each of the central schools service block budgets, on a line by line basis, including each combined service budget, other historical CSSB and ongoing CSSB responsibilities

<b>Central Schools Services Block</b>	2022-23 £m	2022-23 £m
Admissions		0.485
Schools Forum		0.011
National Copyright Licenses		0.306
Ex ESG retained LA duties for all schools		0.875
Teacher's Pay and Pension Grant		0.256
Contribution to DSG / High Needs deficit		0.146
PFI – Greenfields Special School		0.279
Historical Teachers Pension pre-2013		1.147
Schools Standards & Effectiveness	0.434	
Parenting Support Coordinators	0.034	
Moderation	0.015	
Social Care Transport	0.000	
Supervised Contact	0.000	
Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children's Board	0.039	
MASH	0.057	
Education Entitlement	0.178	
Subtotal Combined Services		0.756
Total CSSB		<b>4.261</b>

#### **5e De-delegation: Primary and Secondary maintained schools de-delegation 2022-23 SIG, Trade Union and school redundancies**

##### **Trade Union**

EC stated that all schools were legally obliged to consult with members and Trade Union facility time represented a very straightforward way of meeting this legal obligation. TUs would still consult on policies if local officers were not released on facility time but would have to do that using paid regional officers which would likely result in delayed response times. If cases were referred to regional officers, localism and the opportunity to build closer relationships with schools and resolve issues informally would be lost. Local officers were able to bring their experience of what has worked elsewhere to TUPE negotiations, policy consultations, flexible working appeals etc.

DP agreed with EC and added that facility time had been very important in providing support and dealing with issues during Covid.

RP pointed out that the current rate was £2.10 per pupil. Consideration had been taken of the fact that unitary transition was ongoing and Covid was still an issue, together with National Insurance increases from April 2022. The average contribution for the East Midlands was £3.56, so the £2.10 rate would need to rise in future to cover increasing costs.

##### **SIG**

CK pointed out that historically the SIG budget had been spent. It was used for the direct benefit of schools of concern and went back in full to the block that paid for it. If there was any under-expenditure in a year, the amount requested would be

reduced. Currently the amount proposed for de-delegation to maintained schools was £7.50.

### **Redundancy**

CK advised that the amount required had been calculated at £8. However, following an internal discussion - and recognising that these are extra costs for maintained schools over academies in their delegated budgets – it was considered that the lower amount of £5 was probably manageable. If it transpired that £5 was not sufficient it would be covered in-year and raised next year.

### **RESOLVED:**

That Schools Forum members agreed to the proposed de-delegations:

- a) Trade Union duties de-delegation should be continued with the suggested scheme and rate of £2.10 per pupil;
- b) School Improvement Grant (SIG) de-delegation should be continued with the suggested scheme and rate of £7.50 per pupil;
- c) Redundancy de-delegation should be continued with the suggested scheme and rate of £5 per pupil.

A short break was taken at this point.

## **6. Early Years Funding Consultation**

CK introduced the report outlining the proposed consultation on early years funding. Funding allocations were received late, so discussion was taking place now about the consultation proposals. Consultation would take place from 16 December 2021 and the results reported back at the next meeting. Funding would be delivered from 1 April 2022. As outlined in Section 2.1, 95% of the funding would be passported to early years settings with 5% being kept to cover administration costs.

LB noted that because the consultation start date was the last day of term, there was likely to be a low response. BB explained that if the consultation was not started before Christmas, the budget would not be ready for February thus jeopardising the legal deadline of 31 March. Having consultation responses in January would enable better planning.

LB expressed concern about the funding pressures faced by nursery schools and outlined some of the factors influencing this. LB also had concerns about lack of understanding around the consultation and suggested that work with nursery schools, head teachers and governors could have informed the consultation. BB advised that this was the start of the consultation process – the questions had not yet been set and input would be welcomed. In addition, a detailed paper had been reported to the March 2021 shadow schools forum but no feedback had been received.

RM appreciated receiving the consultation before January, but advised that the consultation was not easy to understand for those without the relevant background and this could deter them from responding.

RM was concerned that there was not enough support for high needs. 10-15% of children in her setting had high needs and this was already understaffed and underfunded. Some children (for example with cerebral palsy) needed constant

support and the funding did not support this. There was no specialist provision for early years and supporting them in mainstream nursery was not sustainable. In addition, payments were not coming in correctly and had to be chased each month, taking management time.

CK advised that the local authority had a legal duty to support high needs. If it could be shown that allocated funding was insufficient, additional funding would be provided.

Following discussion and concerns expressed at the meeting it was agreed to discuss this further outside Schools Forum and to report back to the next meeting that this had been done.

No vote was required for this item, but the feedback would inform the consultation.

**RESOLVED:**

That Schools Forum members noted the report and that further consideration would be given to the wording of the proposed consultation questions to make these as clear as possible.

That a discussion about early years funding would be held between relevant Schools Forum members and officers before the next meeting.

**7. High Needs Places**

BB introduced the paper to consult with Schools Forum on high needs places. By publishing now there was an opportunity for discussion before places were set. This was for information only and no vote was required.

**RESOLVED:**

That Schools Forum members noted and agreed the places presented.

**8. Forward Plan**

This was provided for information.

**RESOLVED:**

That Schools Forum members noted the Forward Plan.

**9. Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_