

# Stoke on Trent Council Schools' Forum



City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

**Date:** Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November 17'  
**Time:** 9 a.m.  
**Venue:** Watermill Special School  
**Chair:** Jonathan May

In Attendance: Mrs L Hughes (**Special Schools Representative**) Mr N Lowry, Mr M Bennett, Mr M Rayner (**Secondary Academy Representatives**) Mrs E Gater, Mrs S Thursfield, Mrs R Lee (**Primary Maintained Representatives**) Mr I Beardmore, Mr J Baddeley, Mrs S Moran (**Primary Academy Representatives**), Mr J Lovatt (Primary Governor), Mrs L Sarikaya (**Nursery Representative**) Mr H Gurden (**Union Representative**) Mr M Kent (**16-19 Partnership Representative**)

Mr R Johnstone (RJ), Miss H Meigh (HM), Mrs L Rees (LR), Mrs J Lomas (JL), Mrs S Robinson (SR) and Mr A Brindley (AB) attended on behalf of the Local Authority.

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Janine Bridges – Cabinet Member for Education and Economy.

**Minutes:** Miss S Morris

## MINUTES

		<i>Action</i>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Apologies received from: Mr D Gray, Mr C Smith, Mrs P Williams and Mr G Jones.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b>	
	<p><b>Schools Forum Minutes – 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017</b></p> <p>Schools' Forum Constitution and Membership had not been recently reviewed.</p> <p>Minutes and actions approved by all attendees.</p>	Carry forward to next meeting.
<b>3.</b>	<b>School Funding Formula 2018-19</b>	
	<p>HM explained the report is for Forum to decide whether to formally adopt the funding formula that has been out for consultation based on principles which were decided upon by the Formula Working Group.</p> <p>It was emphasised this is purely about the funding formula</p>	

	<p>principles and nothing to do with the £3 million transfer to the high needs block.</p> <p>Mr M Rayner stated that on behalf of Melissa Roberts, head of St Joseph’s College, that their school would not receive the minimum funding.</p> <p>HM responded that it was an optional factor for 2018-19 for both primary and secondary phases.</p> <p>This position was supported by Mr I Beardmore who confirmed that it was previously discussed in detail and it was decided not to take that option due to the difference being so minimal.</p> <p>A vote was held and the Funding Formula for 2018-19 was agreed 11 for and 2 against. It will now go through the council’s process to get approval at Cabinet.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Early Years Funding Formula 2018/19 – paper to be tabled</b></p>	
	<p>HM apologised for the lateness of the paper.</p> <p>HM went on to say that the Early Years Working Group haven’t reconvened this year to review the formula but the proposal is to proceed with the rates as last year. As the formula was changed last year, it was felt best for stability to maintain the current rates. We are required to distribute 93% of allocation to early years this year and then 95% for 2018-19. We have actually distributed 95% this year. If we maintain the same values we will meet next year’s threshold of 95%.</p> <p>Mrs S Moran stated that she would like to be involved in the Early Years Working Group. Pupil Premium is limited and there is concern regarding pupil top slice.</p> <p>There was discussion and debate about the reasons why the EY Working Group had not met. Forum representatives were concerned at the apparent lack of communication over meeting dates, and felt they could not take an informed position without input from the Group. It was agreed a meeting of the EY Working Group would be held as soon as possible. Feedback could then be circulated to the forum and an electronic vote held. This would allow the council’s timescales for report approval to be met.</p> <p>It was suggested that the local authority should send out working group meeting dates for the High Needs Working Group, Schools Formula Working Group and Early Years Working Group and then put them in the calendar. If meetings are not needed, they can be cancelled. This was agreed.</p> <p>HM then progressed onto the second part of the report concerning the centrally retained element of Early Years DSG.</p> <p>RJ confirmed the local authority continue to restructure and reform LA internal teams to make sure that schools are offered the best support possible in the most cost effective way to meet demand and need.</p>	

	<p>Mr J May stated that the issue needs looking at carefully and requested that the item be added onto the agenda for the EY Working Group meeting being scheduled. This was agreed.</p>	<p>Discuss centrally retained element at meeting.</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Central Schools Block Items 2018/19</b></p>	
	<p>HM introduced the paper and said that the way DSG has been split up for 2018-19 has changed. Four blocks have been created which consists of the schools block, high needs block, early years block and now the central block.</p> <p>She went on to say that the LA has conducted a baseline exercise regarding the amount of funding in each block.</p> <p>HM advised that Schools' Forum approval is required for the central block. We are asking for no more than what has been asked for in previous years and the elements mainly relate to decisions originally approved by Schools' Forum prior to April 2013. Central licences for schools are charged by the DfE to the central block.</p> <p>HM requested a vote on a line by line basis for each item</p> <p>AB advised the Government's intention is that this funding will not be part of the school block when the national schools funding formula is fully implemented.</p> <p>It was confirmed the central block included equal pay and historic pension costs.</p> <p>Mrs S Moran requested more detail in relation to admissions as schools pay a service level agreement for admissions support but we are also being charged for a top slice through the central schools block.</p> <p>Mr I Beardmore noted that Catholic Schools organise their own admissions.</p> <p>It was agreed the local authority would clarify the position at the next meeting.</p> <p>In a lengthy discussion, the local authority confirmed that if the central funding is not approved it is returned to the DfE and does not stay within funding for the city.</p> <p>HM responded and said we can bring that back but we do need a vote today. None of this will go back into the school block, DfE have given this funding for a specific purpose.</p> <p>A vote was held and the central block funding for 2018-19 was approved 12 for, 3 abstentions and none against.</p> <p>Mr N Lowry expressed his concern about transparency and presentation of school funding information in meetings involving</p>	<p>LA to seek information and clarity.</p>

	councillors.	
6.	<b>SEND Strategy Update – Presentation by J Lomas</b>	
	<p>JL introduced the SEND strategy update around the developments through the SEND Strategy Group and High Needs Working Group.</p> <p>She went on to say that it is very important that pupils remain close to the city and their family networks. We have a lot of representation from primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>She went onto to say that the first high needs meeting only just took place. The group have split into working groups as well, one is looking at the matrix – set of requirements and responsibilities. There is good representation from primary and secondary schools, but more is welcome. She also said they had looked at different models from other authorities.</p> <p>JL went onto to say that there is a need to look at multi agency support and where there are success stories. Also there is a need to hold some partners to account. Schools are aware of what their duties and support are. All groups have met apart from multi agency group which is tomorrow. A number of head teachers are also leading the groups. There is also a need to expand our current provision and options are being considered.</p> <p>RJ added there is a need to clarify how the provision will work so students can access the provision urgently.</p> <p>In response to queries, JL confirmed that the focus must be on increasing provision within the city and reducing reliance on expensive out of city placements. The DfE has given approval to a 100 place Alternative Provision and this will be a key part of plans. Provision mapping, which will be brought back to the forum. It is vital to see the whole picture and not take decisions in isolation, so there will also be elements of the overall plan that look at improving SEND support in mainstream.</p> <p>Mr M Kent asked what kind of planning is going on for the transitional stage for 16-19 as they go to Sixth Form College.</p> <p>JL advised she would send Mr M Kent information on the agreed action plan from the pathway meeting.</p> <p>Forum members also discussed the issue of whose roll pupils would be on. There are different models which have advantages and disadvantages. Issues of accountability for performance are a concern. Standards across all different types and configuration of provision will need to be closely monitored.</p> <p>RJ commented that historically this is something that has not been tackled before. This is a long term strategy and will take affect over the next 5-10 years. It is one of the biggest challenges we face in the city at the moment.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley also raised the point that he is concerned that we</p>	<p>JL to send MK action plans from meeting.</p>

	<p>may see permanent exclusions go up in the city causing further stress in the system.</p> <p>Councillor Bridges advised we should explore all avenues for capital funding to support the plans.</p>	
7.	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	<p>Mr N Lowry asked for an update regarding the £3m top slice from the schools block that had been discussed at the last meeting.</p> <p>LR responded that the council understood and appreciated the strength of feeling from schools about the £3m transfer proposal. The council was in an untenable position where it simply could not afford to pass the costs of the projected High Needs overspend onto the council's General Fund. In an ideal world we would not have put forward the proposal. The council values the strong relationships it has with schools, which have been developed and maintained through challenging times. Whatever difficulties we face, and however much we disagree, it is important to maintain dialogue and continue to work together on solutions.</p> <p>Since the forum last met, representatives will be aware that there is a meeting scheduled shortly between the local authority, SASCAL, SHAPE, and the city's MPs. The council will be happy to consider any viable alternative proposals before making its submission to the Secretary of State on 30 November.</p> <p>Mr N Lowry felt that the council's wish to maintain positive relationships was naïve, and that the views of headteachers and MPs had been ignored.</p> <p>LR restated that the forthcoming meeting may be helpful in exploring other options, and despite the difficulties we needed to continue to work together. The city council's financial position was that it had made savings of over £150m in recent years, was delivering another £20m this year and developing proposals for yet further significant reductions in coming years.</p> <p>JL added that the finances are incredibly challenging but the issue with the High Needs overspend has to be addressed. These are all Stoke-on-Trent children and jointly, schools and the local authority share the responsibility for coming up with a financially sustainable model that builds on some of our schools' inclusive practices and delivers the best possible outcomes.</p> <p>RJ confirmed this was not going to be a 'quick fix' but would take 3-5 years to fully put in place and realise all the savings needed beyond that period.</p> <p>In response to a further question, LR confirmed that the final decision rested with Secretary of State. Should the authority's request be declined, the council would need to consider a broad range of proposals, none of which would be palatable, to balance its budget. The public consultation on its budget proposals (not including DSG) is due to be launched next week.</p>	

	<p>Councillor Bridges confirmed this position and advised the forum that the council has seen another reduction in Government funding, with more to come. The meeting with MPs next week will be a chance to have a full discussion and address all the issues.</p> <p>Mr J Baddeley reminded the local authority that he had not yet had a response to his question for information on local authority balances, which he had raised at the Corporate Consultation Group with trade unions and elected members.</p> <p>LR agreed to follow this up.</p>	<p>LR to follow up.</p>
	<p><b>Date of the Next Meeting</b></p> <p><b>Watermill Special School 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at 9.30am</b></p>	

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