

Warrington Schools Forum

Minutes – 19 January 2021 (Held via Zoom – due to Covid-19)

Membership

Membership with differentiated voting rights ~ Total Membership of 26, 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							
			13 October 2020	19 January 2021	23 March 2021	22 June 2021	12 October 2021	2022 date TBC	2022 date TBC	2022 date TBC
Maintained Nursery School Senior Staff (1)	Primary Headteachers Group	Marcia Atherton (MA) <i>From 19/01/2021</i>	P	P						
Special School Staff (1)	Special School Headteachers Group	Lucinda Duffy (LD)	P	P						
Special School Governor (1)	Governors Forum	Mike Frost (MF)	P	P						
PRU (1)	PRU Management Board	Lindsay Regan (LR) <i>From 19/01/2021</i>	A	A						
Academy – all phases (8) Agreed this should be: (5 secondary including UTC) (3 primary)	Academy Schools	Gwyn Williams (GW)	P	P						
		Tim Long (TL)	P	P						
		John Carlin (JC)	A	P						
		Jon Wright (JonW)	P	P						
		Gary Cunningham (GC)	P	P						
		Paula Warding (PWa)	P	P						
		Cath Cooke (CC)	P	P						
	UTC	Amanda Downing (AD)	A	X						
Maintained Primary School Sector (7)	WAPH and Governors Forum	Jacqui Wightman (JacquiW)	P	P						
		Lesley McGann (LM)	P	A						
		Lyndsey Glass (LG)	P	P						
		Ian Moss (IM)	P	P						
		Janet Lazarus (JL) <i>Governor</i>	P	P						
		Craig Burgess (CB) <i>Governor</i>	P	P						
		Donna Kendal (DK) <i>Governor</i>	-	P						
Maintained Secondary School Sector (2)	WASCL	Chris Hunt (CH)	P	A						
		Ed McGlinchey (EM)	A	X						
Private Voluntary and Independent Providers (1)	PVI Providers Forum	Kelda Willians (KW)	A	X						

Representing	Member	Dates and Attendance							
		13 October 2020	19 January 2021	23 March 2021	22 June 2021	12 October 2021	2022 date TBC	2022 date TBC	2022 date TBC
<u>Non-Schools Members (4)</u>									
Anglican Diocese (1)	Jane Griffiths (JG)	P	P						
Roman Catholic Diocese (1)	Chris Williams (CW)	P	A						
16-19 Institutions (1)	Damian McGuire (DM)	P	P						
Parent Governor (1)	Vacant	-	-						

Independent Chair	Maureen Banner (MB)	P	P						
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Representing		13 October 2020	19 January 2021	23 March 2021	22 June 2021	12 October 2021	2022 date TBC	2022 date TBC	2022 date TBC
<u>Warrington Borough Council</u>									
Director, Early Help, Education and SEND	Paula Worthington (PWo)	P	P						
Finance Manager	James Campbell (JC)	Z	P						
Senior Accountant (Schools)	Garry Bradbury (GB)	P	P						
Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services	Cllr Matt Smith (CllrMS)	A	A						

Key

P ~ Present

S ~ Substitute

A ~ Apologies

- ~ Vacancy

X ~ Absent with no apologies

O ~ Observer

Z ~ no connection to Zoom

Trades Union

Laura Watson

(NASUWT)

Lucie Humphreys

(NEU)

Present

Helen Fleming

WBC (presenting item 3)

Alison Weir

WBC (presenting item 4)

Louise Atkin

WBC (presenting item 5)

Ellen Parry

WBC (presenting item)

Apologies

Kellie Williams

WBC (presenting item 5)

Minutes

Gill Sykes

1. APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

The chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted. Bev Scott-Herron decided to step down because of the numbers and Schools Forum would like to thank her for her contribution and hospitality.

2. MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING (13 OCTOBER 2020)

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting and the following was noted:

- P8 – Andrea Riley was due to come back to the January meeting. Noted that there is an Early Years meeting in February about the nursery.
- P10 – a meeting of the school meals working group was convened as an action from the last Schools Forum but Damian McGuire and Gary Cunningham did not attend.

3. TRADE UNION FACILITIES TIME

Helen Fleming presented her report to the forum and the following was noted:

- The purpose of the report is to request that the maintained school sector commits to the de-delegation for teacher trade union facilities time for the 2021/22 financial year with effect from April.
- Historically the figure was set at £3.67 and last year the figure was revised down to £1.62 mainly due to a significant underspend in the budget. To make sure schools are only paying what they need to pay a review of the contribution has been undertaken. There is an estimated underspend from 2020/21 of approximately £13k. If this underspend is carried forward, the calculated contribution rate from April for participating schools would be £2.93.
- The report outlines the proposed figure and seeks agreement from the forum to carry forward the underspend in order to set the contribution rate at £2.93. Should the forum choose not to use the 2020/21 underspend to reduce the per pupil contribution rate the cost would rise to £3.37.

Questions/comments were invited by the Chair.

- Tim Long noted that the principle of facilities time is not something they are against, they want a better understanding of how the money is spent, how it is calculated and what they get back in terms of support before the trust can commit to the process. The trust has to account for value for money and a calculation based on the number of members in schools and the number of pupils in school might not be the best measurement. Also noted that not all unions are supported in the facilities time.
- Helen noted that the current trade union facilities agreement is due to be reviewed this year. They are starting to plan a consultation with stakeholders and Schools Forum in connection with the document. The process won't be ready in time for the new facilities arrangement that starts this April, but should be in place for September depending on progress with the consultation.
- It has not yet been agreed what the process will look like. There will be preliminary discussions on the policy document before going through the mechanism of consultation. Stakeholders will be involved in the process. Tim asked for the forum to be given more detail about what the process will look like along with timeframes. Helen informed that they will provide details of the process and how they intend to move forward as soon as it is available.
- Gary Cunningham noted that the current cost saving is from the district secretary retiring and queried if there is a rate that the local authorities and Schools Forum agree with regard to each area or is it dependent on who is in post. Helen noted that we reimburse whoever is elected by the trades union in the role. Historically the NEU rate has cost more based on the person in post.
- Garry Bradbury noted there can't be a national decision as the de-delegation process is a local provision.
- Jacqui W queried whether the salary was capped at M6 in the past. Helen agreed to find out.
- Laura Watson noted that if you capped the pay you would restrict who would apply. Some people wouldn't undertake the role at M6. The role can be 7 days per week and depending on what is going on with your staff can be 8.00 am on a Monday or 11.00 pm on a Sunday night. It is a very varied role and

the service isn't just about reading policy documents it is about preventing issues coming to you in the first place.

- Jon Wright informed that Omega value the facilities time and value the work done together. There is an allocation in the schools funding to facilitate this and it is something we should be doing. The academy trust is able to buy in and appreciates the work the team has done and appreciates the work of association colleagues.
- Jacqui noted if we are all agreeing to this we need to confirm that the reduced rate is only going to apply to those schools who contributed and if schools want to come in afterwards we need to decide what figure they will join at. Jacqui proposed accepting the recommendations and Lyndsey Glass seconded.
- Chris Hunt emailed on behalf of secondary maintained colleagues with their acceptance of the recommendations.

Recommendations:

- (1) Schools Forum are requested to agree to carry forward the predicted 20/21 under spend into 21/22 in order that this can be used to reduce the per pupil cost for participating schools and academies for next financial year. **AGREED**
- (2) Taking into account the carry forward, it is therefore proposed that Schools Forum agree, on behalf of the maintained school sector to de-delegate £2.93 per pupil for the purposes of teacher trade union facility time in 2021/22. Participating academies are asked to contribute at the same rate. **AGREED**
- (3) This reduced rate will apply only to those schools that have supported and contributed to the shared facilities time arrangements historically. **AGREED**

4. SCHOOL INSURANCE

Alison Weir introduced herself and presented her report to the forum and the following was noted:

- A paper was prepared for Schools Forum last year outlining the proposed extension of the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) to maintained schools. We are trying to establish if there is an appetite to continue with the council or if schools are starting to look at RPA.
- If there is sufficient movement into RPA it might be difficult for the council to cover the remaining schools. There may be a tipping point about whether we continue as we are.
- Key concerns are about the cover and the price for the cover.
- Premium costs have increased as the whole insurance market is really challenged. We are talking to brokers about whether there is anything more cost effective for schools.
- We offer wraparound cover for VA schools and our cover steps in where the Diocese cover stops.
- If schools would prefer the certainty of a flat rate charge per pupil, this could be introduced, although different rates would be required for maintained schools, RC schools, and CE schools because of the differing arrangements in place for property insurance across voluntary aided schools.
- Noted that the service offers advice and support as well as the insurance.

Questions and comments were invited by the Chair.

- Noted that this relates to maintained schools.
- It is worth exploring the options on the final bullet point of the report. If schools return to council arrangements there needs to be something to return to.
- Alison noted that as schools converted to academies it was relatively straightforward to take them out of the process on an incremental basis. It is fine to add the odd school in, but if there is annual movement in and out we may have to agree a period of time to be out before coming back in.
- Lyndsey queried if it needs consideration by WAPH and noted that against having to arrange yourself it has been working well.
- Alison informed that previously the only change was schools converting to academy, but now RPA has been opened up to maintained schools. General view now seems to be an overriding view for change. If levels continue with pressures on premiums it could be a more difficult decision for schools to take.

The Chair asked if the maintained sector were accepting the report and this was agreed.

The following considerations are available to the Forum:

- (1) To continue with the Council's current arrangements for providing and charging for insurance or to explore options for change, which range from review of charging arrangements to procuring alternative arrangements through the RPA.
- (2) To consider whether opt into the RPA should be on a collective basis (which would require a decision to de-delegate insurance), or an individual decision for each school.
- (3) To recognise that any decisions to opt in to the RPA either collectively or individually may have implications for the Council's LTAs with insurers.
- (4) To recognise that arrangements will need to be agreed for covers which are not available under the RPA.
- (5) To recognise that the Council will continue to retain some liabilities for schools which opt into the RPA and to commission further work to consider how these liabilities will be managed and funded.
- (6) To recognise that arrangements will need to be agreed for schools which have opted into the RPA and subsequently wish to return to the Council's arrangements.

5. SPECIAL SCHOOL REVIEW AND BROADER HIGH NEEDS ISSUES

Louise Atkin presented the report to the forum with Ellen Parry as Kellie Williams was unwell and had sent her apologies. The following was noted:

- Schools Forum are asked to consider a holistic review of special educational needs provision. It has been a number of years since Warrington has had a comprehensive review. It will be an opportunity to review some of the initiatives put in place e.g. committed to inclusion and to inform future planning.
- The proposal to the forum is to support the SEN review and to note that this could potentially have an impact on the high needs budget. Noted that everyone will be kept informed whatever the findings are.
- We are looking to review placements in the short, medium and long term and looking at capacity of special provision for forecast numbers. There will be a site review and the resources needed to meet special educational needs moving forward with consideration of therapeutic resource now and what may be required for the future. Banding and top up funding will be reviewed as well as the demand for outreach support.
- The project initiation document (PID) has been included to forum members to support special needs review.

Questions and comments were invited by the Chair.

- Regional benchmarking is taking place within the North West, looking at banding and funding across regional local authorities. The DfE host the NW meetings and we have some statistical neighbours we can compare with.
- The NW authorities are all reviewing SEN due to pressures on budgets and the need for special needs places. We are all committed to sharing resources and good practice.
- Noted that communication with mainstream settings about possibly fundamental changes needs to be very clear.
- Craig B asked if the review is going to be time-consuming and cost money, will there be outcomes you can implement. Louise noted we will be giving priority to short, medium and long term measures and looking at designated provision places to support children with additional needs moving forward. Craig B noted that we shouldn't forget the good practice which sometimes costs more and to be careful not to let budget cuts impact on the children in our local authority.
- Lyndsey noted it was really important to keep the review in-house and use people we know so it doesn't cost vast amounts of money. Some reviews in the past used costly external consultants. Ellen confirmed that external consultants had been considered but it was decided to keep the review in-house.
- The forum queried what was planned for consulting with families. Louise confirmed that the PID shows all stakeholders we will be consulting with families, people's voice, SENDIASS and WARRPAC. In view of Covid-19 the local authority is liaising with special provisions about the best way to seek family view. This can be individual to each school and there will be a combination of surveys and where appropriate face to face discussions. The review team will be talking to school leaders about the best way to contact to families.

- Craig B echoed that we need to be really careful when approaching stakeholders with the message that we are trying to provide the best possible service for Warrington children. All families will fear cuts and the review team should speak to WARRPAC first for the best way to get the message across without frightening families.
- Ellen noted that Kellie Williams has regular meetings with WARRPAC and a newsletter goes out to all families.
- The Chair noted that within some of our wards are families who are not conversant with the language in the report and asked if the review team will be asking schools to ensure they have someone in place to help families who can't grasp what they are being told. Louise confirmed that they are talking to school leaders about the best way to communicate with the parents. We are aware of some of the difficulties and barriers to communication and hopefully can overcome these for a successful review.
- This will also be a time to celebrate some of the outstanding practice across Warrington and explore where we need to make a difference.

Recommendations - Schools Forum is asked to:

- (a) Note the proposal outlined in section 2. **NOTED**
- (b) Support the proposal for a review of provision for children and young people with special and additional needs. **AGREED**
- (c) Support the process for the reviews by committing to the schedule of activities. **AGREED**
- (d) Have consideration of the impact the review may have on the High Needs Block. **NOTED**
- (e) Note that the council will work with all stakeholders during the review including SENDIAS, WARRPAC, parents / carers and with WAPH, WASCL, school leaders and governors. **NOTED**

6. **MEMBERSHIP** – updated membership was agreed by the forum

7. **DSG SETTLEMENT AND SCHOOLS FUNDING 2021/22**

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

- The DSG allocations were notified in December. There is increased funding across all the blocks, however the EY block in total is still less than last year. The additional funding is negated by a reduction in numbers from the census between January 2019 and January 2020. There is a per pupil increase, schools block factors have increased and IDACI has changed. The teacher pay grant and pension grant is included in the formula for mainstream and no longer a separate allocation. There will still be a separate allocation for special and nursery.
- Growth funding has reduced. There is a census reduction in pupil numbers. However, FSM numbers have increased by approximately 20%. When we ran the NFF for updated data there was a slight affordability issue and had to use all the growth funding to make NFF affordable.
- Although the EY block hourly funding rate has increased the actual aggregate of funding has reduced because of the decline in numbers reported at the October Schools Forum meeting. A meeting of the EY funding formula group is planned for February and its recommendation will be reported back to the next Schools Forum.
- The HN block showed a substantial increase, partly as a consequence of the FSM increase.
- The school budgets 2021/22 consultation delivered a clear message in favour of 2.4 (from the report) being implemented. If we do that after using most of the growth funding it would leave unallocated element of £53K. The forum needs to make a decision about what to do with the unallocated element and there are a number of options. It could be used for contingency or added to AWPU. As most schools are protected by the sector minimum or MFG only 13 schools (7 primaries and 6 secondaries) would see the benefit of a small allocation. Alternatively, this could be transferred out of the schools block into the HN block or could be transferred to the EY block. As discussed the EY block has become a concern in terms of funding levels because of the structure and the number of 2, 3 and 4 year olds.
- Maintained schools need to make a decision on the remaining de-delegations. For the last couple of years we didn't de-delegate for pupil number contingencies. For information, there is money still remaining from 3 years ago, £93K for pupil number increases and £76K for class sizes. The actual numbers on roll have not increased and in primary have reduced slightly. This contingency has not been drawn upon much and could be topped up or left as is.

- Pupil premium funding rates remain the same. We have now been informed that qualifying data is to be taken from the October census rather than the January census.

Questions and comments were invited by the Chair.

- Jacqui noted that we don't need to consider the amounts of money, we need to make decisions about principles. Propose we agree with the school budget consultation recommendation of Option 1 (the 2% option for MFG). Concerned about EY and their budget as in the past a large proportion was moved out of their block. Need to be mindful of the youngest children and early intervention. Recommend the unallocated element of £53K is transferred to the EY block. The primary maintained sector agrees to the proposed de-delegations, but not for the contingency.
- Lyndsey seconded all the points made by Jacqui and reiterated that EY had taken a big hit with the HN block money and we need to sustain the excellent maintained EY provision including our nursery.
- Gwyn Williams referred to the way the presented results of the consultation were totalled up as votes for primary and secondary. Noted that it is not fair for the primary votes to be worth the same as secondary votes when a secondary school could have ten times more children than a primary school. Garry informed that if the message from the two sectors had been different then this would be a reason for a different analysis. Gwyn wanted to make clear that although it was academic this time it might not be for a different report and this should be borne in mind.
- Damian referred to Appendix 2 and asked for there to be a column with pupil numbers for the calculation so that it gives a better picture for the funding.
- Pupil premium plus in relation to post looked after children was discussed and there were questions around this subject. The Chair suggested a report could be prepared for the next Schools Forum, but following the meeting Paula Worthington emailed forum members to clarify the confusion around pupil premium plus. See email reproduced below in italics.
- Craig Burgess asked about the overspend on the HN block and how does this compare with other local authorities in the North West. Garry informed that it is between £1.3m and £1.5m and some local authorities have overspends of tens of millions. Noted that individual LAs vary in size and characteristics and a £10m overspend in one LA may be proportionate to our £1.5m overspend. There are very few local authorities with less of an overspend than us.

It is recommended that Schools Forum members representing mainstream schools:

- (1) Note the contents of the report; **NOTED**
- (2) Consider the budget options in the light of this evening's discussion of the autumn funding consultation outcome, and recommend which MFG option to include for 2021/22, and agree an appropriate use of the allocation of headroom funding; **AGREED WITH OPTION 1 (THE 2% OPTION FOR MFG), AGREED THE UNALLOCATED ELEMENT OF £53K IS TRANSFERRED TO THE EY BLOCK.**
- (3) For maintained sector representatives, agree de-delegations, where appropriate, for the various services discussed in section 4.5. **AGREED**

The following update to discussion was emailed to Schools Forum members from Paula Worthington outside of the meeting on 21/01/2021:

I was only able to join the meeting late having only finished at University just after 5.30. I understand that there was some confusion about Pupil Premium Plus and I wanted to confirm the position. There appeared to be an assertion that the LA is now in receipt of Post Looked After Pupil Premium funding instead of this funding going to schools. This is incorrect. This funding is still going to schools based on school census returns. It is the school's responsibility to identify and claim for post-looked after children.

Guidance published on 17th December 2020 states "Schools get £2,345 for every pupil who has left local authority care through adoption, a special guardianship order or child arrangements order."

In 2020/21, the funding for Warrington schools is £778,540 (which comprises £426,790 to maintained schools and £351,750 to academies) to support 332 post-looked after children.

If you would like to discuss this further please can I ask you to contact Simon Lennox Virtual Headteacher in the first instance simon.lennox@warrington.gov.uk

8. AOB

Proposal for Free School Meals funding from academy schools – follow-up report

Ellen Parry presented her report to the forum. It was noted that the feedback from Omega MAT was only available to forum members on the morning of the Schools Forum meeting and it was felt there was not enough time to consider it fully. The following was noted:

- The school meals group convened a meeting as an action from the last schools forum but the academy reps did not attend. Noted that the headteacher working group for school meals meet on a regular basis and bring up anything they are not happy with.
- Query raised of Omega MAT about whether they received their voucher money back from the government or if they didn't use the national voucher scheme. For the reduced service during lockdown, queried if their vulnerable or key worker children had free meals and extra drinks packages.
- Noted that it would not be fair for maintained schools to be paying for academy schools when this service has already been provided.
- Damian noted that TCAT fully support everything within the Omega MAT document. TCAT were the first to make an offer about how much it would contribute and note that it is not a FSM issue it is a service issue. When their calculation was made the actual amount is lower than what was estimated by the local authority.
- Noted that reps need to be at the meeting to have some control over the decisions and the service. If you feel the service is not value for money, you need to share that with the group. It was felt strongly that academies shouldn't withhold the money.
- It was noted there possibly needs to be a review of the service, with a different SLA for academies. The council cannot continue underwriting overspends of the service.
- Ellen noted there needs to be some funding coming back from the academies and any issues should have been raised as soon as they come about. We disagree with some of the information e.g. around hot meals. Schools were contacted and the service were tailoring the needs of each school. Some schools said no to hot meals.
- Damian informed that they made an offer in July and there has been a lack of communication following their offer so to be pushed for a decision now is wrong.
- Jon Wright noted that the Omega MAT paper was a very honest overview of a complex issue. He stated that it was trying to support the LA and support the school meals service. This seems to have been missed by people who have read it. It is not about the quality of the service although that was raised. It is other issues about academies who lost funding on their own school meals services as well as the LA. Academies have to go to the trust and explain what they can pay. Money is allocated in different ways and the conditions of the grant for academies is different from the grant for maintained schools. The intention was to try to help the forum get a balanced view.
- Gary C noted that the school meals service have been flexible and supportive and noted that they are not refusing to pay but need clarity around the figures. Gary proposed a meeting is held where CFOs and FDs from the trusts meet with Garry Bradbury and School Meals reps to agree a fully accounted solution. We may then come to a common agreement across all academies, whilst at the same time address local issues regarding individual school meals' balances and potential inaccuracies. If an agreement is reached, this can then be signed off by trustees at each of the MATs. It was agreed for this meeting to take place as soon as possible and in the meantime the recommendations below were deferred.

Action: Ellen to arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

Schools Forum is asked to:

- (a) Note the proposal outlined in section 2. **DEFERRED**
- (b) Support the proposal for academies to transfer all of their free school meal funding allocations to the School Meals Service each academic year from 1st September 2020. **DEFERRED**
- (c) Support the proposal for the transfer of academy FSM funding from the start of the first lockdown until the end of the academic year (July 2020). **DEFERRED**

9. MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2021

- 23 March 2021 at 4.30 pm via Zoom
- 22 June 2021
- 12 October 2021

All Tuesdays at 5.15 – 7.00 pm unless held virtually and will then start at 4.30 pm
(Venue or virtual arrangements TBC)

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