



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WORCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM (WSF)

Thursday 4th July 2019
Kidderminster Room, County Hall, Worcester

The meeting started at 2.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE:

WSF Members

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Bryn Thomas (Vice Chair) | - | HT Wolverley CE Secondary School |
| Marie Pearse | - | HT Evesham Nursery School |
| Paul Essenhigh | - | Executive HT Catshill Middle, Catshill First and Nursery Schools |
| Nathan Jones | - | HT Meadow Green Primary |
| Adrian Ward | - | HT Trinity High School |
| Deb Rattley | - | HT Chadsgrove Special School |
| Lorraine Petersen | - | Governor, Bromsgrove |
| David McIntosh | - | Governor, Wyre Forest |
| John Bateman | - | Governor, Aspire Alternative Provision (AP) Free School |
| Stephen Baker | - | Union Representative |
| Tricia Wellings | - | PVI Sector |

Local Authority (LA)

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Nick Wilson | - | Interim Assistant Director Education and Skills Children, Families and Communities |
| Phil Rook | - | Director of Resources (Designate) Worcestershire Children First |
| Andy McHale | - | Service Manager Funding and Policy Children, Families and Communities |
| Councillor Marcus Hart | - | Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills |
| Rob Phillips | - | Schools Finance Team Worcestershire County Council |
| Clive Werrett | - | Corporate Health and Safety Manager Worcestershire County Council (until 2.20pm for Agenda Item 7) |
| Judy Chadwick | - | Group Manager Skills and Investment Children, Families and Communities (2.25pm to 2.45 pm for Agenda Item 8) |
| Penny Richardson | - | Interim Group Manager SEND Children, Families and Communities (2.45pm to 3.35pm for Agenda Item 9) |
| David Monger | - | SEND Consultant (2.45pm to 3.35pm for Agenda Item 9) |

Sarah Wilkins - Director of Education and Early Help
(Designate)
Worcestershire Children First
(from 3.40pm)

1. APOLOGIES

Malcolm Richards (Chair) - Governor, Bromsgrove
Vivienne Cranton - HT Hollymount Primary School
Chris King - CEO Severn Academies Educational Trust
Tim Reid - Church of England Board of Education
Greg McClarey - Archdiocese of Birmingham
Jeff Robinson - Governor, Malvern Hills
Edward Senior - 16-19 Providers
Caroline Brand - Finance Manager
Children, Families and Communities

In the absence of the Chair, Bryn Thomas Vice Chair WSF took the Chair for the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

3. DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTERESTS WITH ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (23rd May 2019)

Agreed.

5. MATTERS ARISING

None.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Local Government Pension Scheme

(a) A member of the WSF requested clarification on the costs for maintained schools for the back-funding contributions required to repay the pension fund deficit. There was a concern on the impact on school budgets and the need to factor this into forward financial planning.

(b) Andy confirmed for academies this is listed individually in the pensions valuation report but maintained schools are part of the overall County Council valuation. The WSF requested attendance from the Pensions Team at a future meeting to discuss further.

RESOLVED –

The Clerk to arrange for attendance as required.

6.2 F40 Group Update

(a) Andy advised on the current F40 notification regarding a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The WSF raised concerns that only one Worcestershire MP had signed the letter.

(b) The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Leader of the Council had briefed the Worcestershire MPs and they are aware of the school funding and High Needs pressures. Members of the WSF reported of meetings arranged with their local MPs.

7. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF HEADTEACHERS FOR PREMISES AND SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The Chair welcome Clive Werrett to the WSF meeting.

7.2 Clive introduced the report which supplemented the guidance on repairs and maintenance matters already included in the Fair Funding Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools. The current level of buy back for Property Services has led to some schools not having a property agent leading to some issues on compliance and as such the paper sets out the expectations.

7.3 Clive confirmed for academies the County Council continues to be the landlord, so compliance is required. Clive advised questionnaires are regularly sent out to schools on key aspects of property matters.

7.4 Andy advised as this update was now referred to in the above Scheme, for which maintained members have approval powers, it needed to be discussed by the WSF.

7.5 The Chair thanked Clive for attending the meeting.

Clive Werrett left the meeting at 2.20pm

8. APPRENTICESHIP LEVY UPDATE FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

8.1 The Chair welcomed Judy Chadwick to the WSF meeting.

8.2 Judy introduced the report detailing the current position, the work with Worcestershire Apprenticeships, the range of providers and subjects together with arrangements for quality assurance.

8.3 The WSF raised issues including: -

- There have been issues on awareness and accessing the levy funds.
- Where are the areas of under engagement in the range of subjects – some areas such as site management are not permitted.
- It is difficult for part time staff to access.
- Some providers want minimum numbers.
- Schools in financial difficulty are not being allowed to recruit under the terms of their deficit recovery.
- Schools cannot readily afford the salary costs involved particularly as minimum wage costs increase over time.
- Is there a need to offer employment after the apprenticeship?
- Under senior leaders is it possible to explore relevant qualifications such as NPQH and NPQSL?

- Is it possible to explore opportunities for the PVI sector delivering early years education on behalf of the LA?

8.4 In response Judy commented: -

- Information is published on the School's portal and via Education and Skills newsletters.
- There needs to be development for TAs aspiring to be teachers.
- Worcestershire Apprenticeships can support and on advise on a range of issues.
- Anyone can be an apprentice, but it must be on a relevant framework, learning new skills and have a 20% release time.
- There is the opportunity to explore NPQH and NPQSL.
- The idea is to offer employment, but this can be restricted to a year.

8.5 The Chair thanked Judy for attending the meeting.

Judy Chadwick left the meeting at 2.45pm

9. HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

9.1 The Chair welcomed Penny Richardson and David Monger to the WSF meeting.

9.1 Task Group 18th June 2018

(a) The WSF noted the presentations to the Task Group and were appreciative of all the work completed so far.

(b) The WSF further noted the draft notes of the meeting.

9.2 Draft Recovery Plan Update

(a) Andy introduced the issues and detailed the current and projected position in several other LAs.

(b) David introduced the report including further information on the national position and the demand led elements. The WSF noted it is unclear what the final effect of the DfE HN NFF will be for Worcestershire. In Worcestershire the proportion of EHCPs in mainstream was low compared to national and at least a £9m structural budget pressure remains in 2019-20 across non-maintained and independent school fees, post 16/post 19 provision and special provider top ups.

(c) David advised on the need to rebalance the continuum of the current profile particularly at the point of transition and significant numbers in post 16 together with addressing the growing trend in ASD, where there is no continuum of provision, and SEMH. David further advised setting targets to reduce reliance on non-LA placements was required but would be challenging.

(d) Penny discussed the issues for developing local capacity and advised this was influenced significantly by the legislative framework for SEND including parental use of legal support. It had never been the intention for students to move from mainstream to the independent sector or for the significant majority of post 16 and 19 to continue with their EHCP until age 25, but this has happened. Also, the previous efficient use of educational psychologists had been lost. To support the discussion a summary of the 6 building blocks for recovery was tabled.

(e) Members of the WSF commented as follows: -

- There are concerns on managing parental expectations.
- There is a need to build confidence and provision but accommodation and space in schools is a significant barrier.
- The commissioning of services outside of the LA e.g. EPs has had significant consequences – these skills have now been lost.
- This is the consequence of flawed Government policy – it should be about what is required to meet the significant growth in need and to provide services to meet that.
- Given the demand pressures it is difficult to sign up to a £9m+ reduction albeit this would be overtime.
- Where are the contributions from health and social care?
- Demand management is crucial but there is ethos of a fractured system and unfunded government policy has impacted significantly.
- Some schools are not engaging in the inclusion agenda.
- There needs to be joined up thinking in supporting schools – provision planning, SEND, accommodation, etc.
- Capital and revenue planning and funding need to go together.
- The wealth of experience and expertise in the LA and schools needs to be used.

(f) In response the LA commented: -

- There needs to be challenge and review much earlier in the SEND processes.
- There is the impact of Government policy and LAs are being squeezed financially.
- The issue of insufficiency in the national quantum is well documented – even with more resource there are still demand and capacity issues.
- Reductions in out county provision will take time.

(g) The Chair summarised requesting the WSF to consider the next stages with the need to support the notion of a full recovery plan but with the need to raise concerns of its effectiveness. Andy advised although a DfE submission is not required now, the structural deficit will probably require one in the future, so using their template would be useful. Also, the WSF is not required to approve a recovery plan but endorsement of the principles would be helpful. Nick confirmed the need to move to a full plan was paramount given the cost pressures, in line with the 6 building blocks.

RESOLVED –

The WSF supported the development of a full action plan as recommended in the report for discussion at the next meeting in September 2019.

(h) The Chair thanked Penny and David for attending the meeting and the Task Group for all the work completed so far.

9.3 DfE Call for Evidence

(a) Andy provided the WSF with a summary of the electronic DfE questionnaire.

(b) The WSF noted the range of areas and the difficulties in making a response on behalf of the WSF. All WSF members were encouraged to complete as required by 31st

July 2019. Andy provided the link to the questionnaire and that it was possible to complete electronic drafts on the DfE system prior to final submission.

RESOLVED –

WSF members to respond to the call for evidence as required.

Penny Richardson and David Monger left the meeting at 3.35pm

10. MAINTAINED SCHOOL BALANCES 2018-19

10.1 Andy introduced the report which detailed the revenue balances position for **maintained schools only** as at 31st March 2019.

10.2 The key headlines were: -

(a) From the LA: -

- It is a reducing picture with a significant reduction in balances of £3.8m from £9.4m to £5.6m from the previous year.
- Balances have reduced significantly over the last two-year period.
- The number of schools in deficit had increased from 26 to 33 and the value of the deficits had increased significantly by from £5.4m to £7.2m, mainly in the primary and secondary sectors.
- The light touch challenge to those schools with excess surplus balances would continue.

(b) From the WSF: -

- The increase in deficits is a concern and there are some small schools in particular in this position.
- However, some schools continue to hold significant surplus balances.
- Some schools are allocating reserves to balance in year budgets, which is not sustainable in the long term.
- Some schools are carrying balances as 'teaching schools' on behalf of other schools or saving for capital projects.
- It would be useful to see projections for 2019-20 from school budget plans, although it was recognised these will change significantly during the year.
- The yet unannounced teachers' pay award could impact significantly.

11. DSG OUTTURN 2018-19

11.1 Andy introduced the report which confirmed the DSG Reserve position as at 31st March 2019.

11.2 With the funding of the HN overspend and other DSG adjustments the DSG reserve was now **£0.632m in deficit** as detailed in **Appendix B**. This also confirmed the HN structural deficit of £9m. The WSF noted this and the allocations made to schools accessing through the Pupil Growth Fund for basic need in **Appendix C**.

RESOLVED –

The WSF: -

- **Noted the details of the DSG Centrally Retained Services in Appendix A.**

- **Noted the DSG C/Fwd position for 2018-19 as at 31st March 2019 and allocations made for the Pupil Growth Fund in Appendices B and C.**

11.3 Given the HN pressures Nick confirmed that a top slice from the Schools Block to High Needs for 2010-21, would need to be considered in the Autumn Term 2019. Many LAs had done this so there is some national custom and practice. The current limit is 0.5% of the Schools Block which for WCC is about £1.6m and requires WSF agreement. If this is not forthcoming and LAs want to proceed or want a higher amount this requires referral to and approval from the Secretary of State. Andy advised this could impact on the ability of the current local schools funding formula arrangement that replicates fully the DfE NFF parameters.

12. WSF MEETING SCHEDULE ACADEMIC YEAR 2018/19

12.1 The WSF noted the proposed schedule and potential agenda items.

12.2 The WSF requested that electronic meeting requests be sent for the meeting schedule.

12.3 Under the proposed work programme on national decisions for 2020-21, Andy advised no policy direction had been confirmed by the DfE apart from another year of the 'soft' local formula arrangement. The local schools funding formula position in WCC continuing to use the NFF would therefore need to be considered in the Autumn Term.

The meeting closed at 3.55pm

The date of the next WSF meeting is: -

Thursday 26th September 2019 at **3pm – please note the later start time**
Kidderminster Room
County Hall
Worcester