

# GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 15 November 2018  
in the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

## **Present:**

Colin Belford	-	Secondary School Headteachers
Matthew Bishop	-	Primary (Maintained) Governor
Sara Byrne	-	Primary School Governors
Graham Doswell	-	Primary School Governors
Elisa Entwistle	-	Alternative Provision Schools
Andrew Harris	-	Secondary Head Teachers
Amanda Horniman	-	Early Years Providers
Rachel Howie	-	Gloucester Diocese
Dan Johnson	-	Primary School Headteachers
Lisa Jones	-	Primary School Headteachers
Liam Jordan	-	Clifton Diocese
Gwyneth Keen	-	Early Years Providers
Karen Lewis	-	Primary Head Teachers
Will Morgan	-	Secondary School Headteachers
Alexander Norman	-	Secondary School Governors
Sue Padfield	-	Secondary School Governors
Jacqui Phillips	-	Secondary Governors
Steve Savory	-	Primary Head Teachers
Clare Steel	-	Special School Headteacher
Andrew Steward	-	Trade Unions
Stuart Wilson	-	Secondary Head Teachers

**Substitutes:** Elaine Marshall in place of Kate Hawkins, Special School Governors

**Observers:** Cllr Lynden Stowe, Cabinet Member: Economy, Skills and Growth  
Sarah Murphy, District Secretary for Gloucestershire NEU

**Officers:** Tim Browne, Director of Education  
Stewart King, Lead Commissioner: Education Strategy and Development  
Neil Egles, Finance Manager, Schools Strategy and Capital  
Suzanne Hall, Finance Business Partner  
Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser and Clerk to the Forum.

**Apologies:** Cllr Richard Boyles, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

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Penny Chislett, Post-16 Education  
Kate Hawkins, Special School Governor  
Ian Marshall, Primary School Governors  
Chris Spencer, Director of Children's Services

### **33. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

There were no nominations received for the election of Vice-Chair. The Chair emphasised the importance of having a Vice-Chair in place, and it was agreed that the election of Vice-Chair would be added to the agenda for the next meeting, for one more time, in a final attempt to appoint to the role.

**ACTION: Joanne Bolton**

### **34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **35. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

35.1 No public questions had been received.

35.2 At this juncture Jacqui Phillips, Secondary (Academy) Governor representative, asked for clarification on how the School Funding 2019/20 consultation document had been circulated, and to whom it had been circulated to. In response Stewart King, Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development, explained that the document had been circulated to all headteachers via email, and published in the 'Heads Up' and 'What's Up Gov' bulletins. Jacqui Phillips contended that Stroud High School had not received the document and she stressed the importance of ensuring that chairs of governing bodies at all schools received the document as well as headteachers. It was agreed that officers would look into the process of how the document was circulated. **ACTION: Stewart King.**

(Post Meeting Note: Officers have received confirmation that the consultation document was circulated to headteachers via email on 1 November 2018, and that it was received by Stroud High School on 1 November 2018. A link to the consultation document was also published in the 'Heads Up' bulletin on 1 November and the 'What's Up Gov' bulletin on 8 November 2018).

### **36. MINUTES**

36.1 In considering the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting of 20 September 2018, Steve Savory, Primary (Academy) Headteacher representative, made the point that in his view the minutes did not convey strongly enough, the strength of feeling amongst Forum members that all of the proposals set out in the School Funding 2019/20 and High Needs reports, to address the High Needs Block shortfall, were unpalatable.

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36.2 It was agreed that the following point he had made at the meeting would be included in the minutes of the previous meeting:

31.9 'A member emphasised the point that none of the proposals set out in the report for managing the High Needs Block shortfall, would support schools which had a disproportionately large number of pupils with High Needs in comparison to other schools'.

36.3 Subject to the amendment outlined above, the minutes of the previous meeting of 20 September 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **37. SCHOOL FUNDING 2019/20 AND HIGH NEEDS**

37.1 Stewart King, Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development, introduced the report. He explained that a consultation document outlining the possible options for school funding in Gloucestershire in 2019/20 had been circulated to schools via email and published in the 'Heads Up' and 'What's Up Gov' bulletins. In addition, three consultation meetings had been held for schools and stakeholders in the week commencing 15 October 2018. As at 14 November 2018, a total of 80 responses to the consultation document had been received. The Forum noted the closing date for responses was 12pm on Tuesday 27 November 2018. Officers estimated around 90 people in total had attended the three consultation meetings.

37.2 The Forum considered a summary of the responses which was tabled at the meeting. *(For Information: A copy of the summary has been uploaded on the Council's website and is included in the signed minute book)*. There was a degree of concern expressed amongst Forum members that the total of 80 responses received so far seemed quite low in comparison to the number of schools in Gloucestershire. There was concern that the document may not have reached all schools via email.

37.3 Members of the Forum questioned whether schools could make informed responses to the questions in the consultation document, as the average cash impact on schools of any transfer from the School Block had not been conveyed. In response, officers explained that it was not possible to calculate the budget impact for each individual school at present. He stressed that the cost impact would vary for each school.

37.4 The Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development explained that overspending in the High Needs Block was a national issue. Gloucestershire discretionary spending with the High Needs block (which funds the protection arrangements for schools with exceptional numbers of high needs children) was the fourth highest out of the 150 local authorities. 63 authorities allocated no discretionary funding. He explained that funding out of county placements for children with complex high needs was a major budget pressure. He stressed that 36 local authorities for 2018/19 budget setting, had sought approval from their School Forums to make a transfer from the Schools Block. He anticipated a sharp

increase in the number of Schools Forums making this request for 2019/20 budget setting.

- 37.5 Forum members had a wide-ranging and challenging debate on the options set out in the report. One particular view expressed was that the options for addressing the High Needs Block shortfall did not support schools which had a disproportionately large number of pupils with high needs. There were also concerns raised that the proposals would, if adopted, result in all schools becoming less able to provide the crucial support services for children with high needs.
- 37.6 The overwhelming view expressed by Forum members was that the government was significantly underfunding high needs, which was undermining the ability of schools and local authorities to meet the needs of children with SENDs.
- 37.7 Clare Steel, Special School Headteacher representative, emphasised just how much pressure there was on special schools to accommodate the increasing number of children needing a special school place. She explained that she was experiencing an increase in the number of enquiries from very concerned parents hoping to move children into a special school after learning of the proposed changes, but there were no places available. She emphasised the point that there were just not enough places available for children with complex needs.
- 37.8 Members expressed how severely their school budgets had been already squeezed, and strongly emphasised that their schools could not absorb any further budget reductions without damaging educational consequences. Some members felt strongly that by accepting the recommendations in the report then they would be accepting underfunding, which left them with no choice but to reject the proposals.
- 37.9 The general consensus view was that greater political weight should be given urgently to recognise the funding for high needs had become an issue of national concern. In particular, the Forum should lobby government for an improved settlement for Gloucestershire as a whole to contain the deficit in the High Needs Block, which was being caused by an unprecedented increase in demand, in addition to a general improvement in funding through accelerating the rate of implementation of the National Funding Formula.
- 37.10 Officers explained that allowing the High Needs Block to go into deficit was not a viable option for the local authority. The DfE was introducing a new reporting regime; this included a requirement that deficits were repaid within three years.
- 37.11 Lynden Stowe, Cabinet Member: Economy, Skills and Growth, informed the Forum that a deficit budget could not be set as the shortfall in high needs funding was a trend rather than a blip. The high needs shortfall would only accelerate without action being taken now. He recognised the difficulty Forum members faced, but emphasised that he hoped they could take a pragmatic view, and provide a steer on the options set out in the report.

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37.12 The Forum considered recommendations 2, 3, and 4 as set out in the report. The Forum:

37.12.1 Approved the proposed change in the support arrangements for schools with exceptional numbers of EHCPs from '1 in 75' policy to '1 in 40'. It was noted that this change would reduce costs falling to the High Needs Block by £1.9M.

37.12.2 Did not support any transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

37.12.3 Considered how the high needs shortfall could be addressed, including discussing the proposal to reduce top-ups by approximately 12%. The Forum however, rejected the proposal to reduce top-ups. Officers were, instead, asked to explore reducing the lump sum figure to all schools to calculate whether this option was viable to address the High Needs Block shortfall.

**ACTION: Stewart King/Neil Egles.**

37.13 Officers informed the Forum that they would now consult with the Council's Cabinet members on how to deal with the High Needs Block shortfall. The consultation would examine a reduction in top-ups, and whether to make a disapplication request to the Secretary of State for Education to make a transfer from the Schools Block. The Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development confirmed that the deadline for making a submission to the Secretary of State was 30 November 2018.

37.14 In considering the School Funding Formula the Forum agreed a top-slice from the Schools Block for growth in 2019/20 of £1.054M.

37.15 The Forum considered the proposals for de-delegations. Andrew Steward, Teaching Union representative, introduced his colleague Sarah Murphy, who he explained would be taking over from him as the Forum's Union representative, with immediate effect. Ms Murphy presented the report on Local Authority Teaching Union Facilities 2018. She emphasised the importance of the de-delegation provision for union facilities, explaining that the funding allowed teaching unions to provide Gloucestershire schools access to effective statutory and collective consultation, bargaining and individual representation from trained and accredited local teaching union officials. School leaders and managers also had access to a valuable resource in the resolution of workplace issues and disputes, often before the need to escalate to a formal stage. The Forum noted the report.

37.16 The Forum considered the proposals for de-delegations. The Forum's maintained schools' representatives present at the meeting (by sector) agreed de-delegation at the per pupil rates shown in the report for:

In-year increases in pupil numbers – primary

Targeted intervention – primary

Union facilities – primary

Local authorities' duties (primary and secondary).

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37.17 The Forum agreed the allocation shown in the report for the Central Schools Services Block.

37.18 The Forum noted that it would make its final recommendations on the funding formula at its meeting on 10 January 2019, ahead of the submission of the final formula to the DfE on 21 January 2019.

### **38. GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOL PLACES STRATEGY 2018-2023**

38.1 Sandra Donaldson, Place Planning Manager, presented the report outlining the draft strategy and the implementation plan for Gloucestershire 2018-2023.

38.2 The Forum noted that the strategy set out the demographic trends in Gloucestershire, including a summary of major new house building, details of current school and post-16 provision, an analysis of the latest pupil projections, emerging proposals and guiding policies and principles upon which decisions would be informed. The Place Planning Manager explained that the documented information was a tool to support dialog with schools and would inform the capital programme.

38.3 Members were informed that comments were invited on the draft strategy up until the deadline of 21 November 2018.

38.4 The Forum noted that the Council's Cabinet would receive a report on the proposed implementation plan in December 2018.

38.5 The Forum noted the report.

### **39. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL PAY AWARD AND REVISED NATIONAL PAY SPINE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF**

39.1 In accordance with paragraph 3.6 of the Constitution the Chair agreed that this item would be considered by the Forum in private. The press and public were therefore excluded.

39.2 Colin Parkin, Assistant Head of Human Resources, provided a verbal update on the National Pay Award and Revised National Pay Spine for Local Government Staff.

39.3 The Forum was informed that the first year of the national agreement was already in place, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, with a pay increase of 2% for most employees. The second year of the pay award was effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 and involved more fundamental changes to the National Pay Spine, and a review of the grading structure. The Forum was informed of how the changes would affect schools; the Forum was assured that the proposals would not require job re-evaluation.

39.4 The Forum noted that Unions were currently being consulted, and schools would receive information on the changes before the Christmas break.

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**40. F40**

40.1 Stewart King. Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development informed members that the f40 had now published its outline campaign strategy and this would be circulated to Forum members.

**ACTION: Stewart King.**

40.2 He notified members that there was now a vacancy on the f40 Executive Committee for a Gloucestershire representative, and he was looking for a volunteer. No members put themselves forward on this occasion. A representative would be sought.

**ACTION: Joanne Bolton/Stewart King**

**Chair**

Meeting concluded at 4.55 pm