

LEEDS SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 14 June, 2018 at Civic Hall (4:30PM – 6:00PM)

<u>Membership</u> (<i>Apologies in Italics</i>)	
<u>GOVERNORS</u>	<u>HEADTEACHERS</u>
Primary (6 seats)	Primary (7 seats)
Phil Hirst Christ Church Upper Armley Sue Knights Little London & Alwoodley Gillian Simpson Shakespeare Sara Nix Rawdon Littlemoor Deryn Porter Cobden Primary Richard Halls Windmill Low Rd Federation	Peter Harris Farsley Farfield Sarah Griggs Valley View Julie Harkness Carr Manor Helen Stout Meadowfield John Hutchinson St Theresa's Claire Harrison Wetherby Deighton Gates Helen Stott Allerton C of E
Secondary (2 seats)	Secondary (3 seats)
Doug Martin Pudsey Grange Janice Rush Allerton Grange	Delia Martin Benton Park Vacancy Vacancy
Special (1 seat)	Special (1 seat)
Amanda Jahdi East SILC	Diane Reynard East SILC
Non School	ACADEMIES – Mainstream (8 seats)
Peter Best PVI Providers Susan Knowles PVI Providers Patrick Murphy Schools JCC Richard Noakes Diocese of WY & Dales Steve Kelly Leeds College of Building Angela Cox OBE Catholic Diocese	David Gurney Cockburn School Mike Gidley White Rose Academies Trust Ken Morton Brigshaw LP MAT & Ashtree Adam Ryder Bruntcliffe Academy John Thorne Co-op Academy Priesthorpe Emma Lester Woodkirk Academy Ian Goddard Ebor Gardens/Victoria Primary Siobhan Roberts Cockburn John Charles
	Academy – Special
	Scott Jacques Springwell Leeds Academy
	Academy – Alternative Provision
	<i>To be confirmed</i>
Local Authority Reps:	
Steve Walker, Director Children & Families	Louise Hornsey, Principal Financial Manager
Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer Partnerships	Simon Criddle, Head of Finance
Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Strategy & Resources	
Minutes:	
Mark Thompson, Leadership Assistant	

Item		Action
1.0	Apologies, introductions & future membership	
1.1	Peter Harris (Chair) extended a warm welcome to members and observers, and formally introduced new representatives. Apologies were noted.	TP
1.2	PH reported on his recent part-time secondment to the Children and Families directorate, and advised members this would be his last Schools Forum meeting as Chair, due to his term of office reaching two years and his secondment. Schools Forum agreed to his chairing of this meeting.	
1.3	Tim Pouncey asked members to consider nominating themselves for the positions of Chair or Vice Chair, as both are now vacant. We have historically rotated between head teachers and governors, which we would ideally like to maintain. Discussion followed on the workload involved. PH advised it is not overly time-consuming and typically consists of a useful pre-meeting with Simon Criddle/Louise Hornsey to discuss the papers and make revisions as appropriate. One member expressed an interest, but would like to give it some more consideration.	
2.0	Minutes of the 22nd February 2018 meeting	
2.1	The minutes were agreed as a true record, subject to the amendments detailed below.	
2.2	<p>PH reported on an e-mail he had received from Sir John Townsley objecting to items 2.5 and 2.6. It was suggested the minutes be revised as follows (revisions are in <i>italics</i>), which Schools Forum agreed to:</p> <p>2.5 Discussion was had around AIPs and the in-year underspend against the exceptional place funding. PH requested more detail around the underspend and felt there should be sizeable clawback. Helen Stott (Allerton C of E) queried how much of it relates to places at The Stephen Longfellow Academy. AE advised that the base funding element ultimately comes from the High Needs Block <i>from Sept 2019</i>. PH asked what amount of the underspend had been returned to the High Needs Block, but Simon Criddle advised the figure was not yet available.</p> <p><i>Requested clarification: Sir John Townsley, CEO of TGAT, wrote to Peter Harris on Wed 13th June on this issue. He has requested that it is noted that an additional £3.5 million will have come into the city in the first two years of the Stephen Longfellow Academy, as well as £10.3 million of capital funding.</i></p> <p>2.6 Further discussion ensued on The Stephen Longfellow Academy and a <i>reported</i> disproportionate representation of GORSE Academies Trust and partner school/academy pupils. AE advised this matter had been challenged, but Stephen Longfellow is an academy and can essentially choose its own admissions criteria. SW added that the local authority plans to look into this issue. PH queried whether members could have access to the original proposal or agreement to check whether the school was delivering on the admission arrangements that had been agreed initially. David Gurney (Cockburn School) reported on capacity issues caused by temporary accommodation, which should hopefully be alleviated once permanent accommodation opens in September. Members requested an update in due course.</p> <p><i>Requested clarification: Sir John Townsley, CEO of TGAT, wrote to Peter Harris on Wed 13th June on this issue. He has stated that the secondary provision was always intended for TGAT and partner schools' students, whereas the admissions policy for primary age children</i></p>	

	<p><i>is more open to pupils across the city. He reported that the primary pupil profile in Stephen Longfellow is more reflective of the wider city. He states that the LA endorsed this policy at the time of the free school application and has never challenged any disproportionate representation of TGAT students in Stephen Longfellow since it opened.</i></p> <p>In addition, PH requested that a future update be given on The Stephen Longfellow Academy by means of a dedicated agenda item.</p>	SW
2.3	Item 4.7: Tim Pouncey circulated a handout detailing the Northpoint Wellbeing contract.	
2.4	Item 6.9: Simon Criddle advised that a high-level update had now been produced around the medium-term financial plan for the High Needs Block, and that a more detailed report would be presented at October's Schools Forum meeting.	
3.0	Matters arising	
3.1	No items discussed.	
4.0	School and extended school balances 2017/18	
4.1	Prior to presenting the report, Louise Hornsey reported on a verbal update received from the ESFA around implementation of the national funding formula. We are currently in a transitional period (which applies to 2018/19 and 2019/20), and the full national funding formula was expected to be in place for 2020/21. However, we have now been verbally told this may be delayed. An update will be provided once more is known. PH asked about the cap on gains, to which LH advised it is likely to continue to apply. Steve Walker met with DfE and ESFA national representatives, who were sympathetic to our situation, but no indication was given that we would receive any additional funding.	LH
4.2	LH presented highlights from the School and Extended School Balances 2017/18 report, which provides an update on closing balances for the previous financial year.	
4.3	LH advised that there was a net surplus balance of £25.4m at the end of 2017/18 for schools and extended schools, which is a reduction of £4.2m compared to 2016/17 (£29.6m). Within this, balances for schools have decreased from a surplus of £20.6m at the end of 2016/17 to £18m at the end of 2017/18. This is an improved position compared to the budgets set with schools at the beginning of 2017/18, which had indicated that school balances would fall to £10.7m.	
4.4	In terms of 2017/18 school balances, the average balances for schools by phase are primary schools carry an 8.3% surplus, secondary schools a 0.4% deficit, and special schools a 1.7% deficit.	
4.5	LH reported there are 23 schools in total where balances are above 15% of the school budget share at the end of 2017/18. There are eight schools where balances have remained greater than 15% over three successive financial years, so they have been asked to complete an application if they wish to retain this excess balance. LH advised that these applications will be considered by the Schools Forum Panel before the final decision is made by the Director of Children and Families.	

4.6	The remaining 15 schools (all primaries) that have balances over the 15% threshold are not subject to clawback, as the balance has not been over the 15% threshold for three consecutive years. However, the LA has still written to these schools asking them to explain how this balance has arisen and detail their plans for spending this.	
4.7	Although there was an overall surplus of £18m for schools at the end of 2017/18, within this some schools have been operating with deficit balances. The number of schools with a closing deficit balance has increased by one since the end of 2016/17, with a total of 27 schools carrying forward a deficit from 2017/18. The value of the deficit balances has increased by £1.7m during 2017/18 to a closing balance of £5.7m.	
4.8	The balances for individual schools are detailed in the appendix to the meeting papers. LH invited members to ask her any questions they might have.	
4.9	LH spoke about deficit balances and the work ongoing to develop budget action plans with schools in deficit and ensure an appropriate level of challenge and support is being provided. There are a number of actions the LA can take when a school is in deficit (outlined in the report). A further update will be provided to Schools Forum on deficit action plans later in the year.	
4.10	PH asked how many schools had requested support this year. LH advised that a final position was not yet available, but there was likely to be more call this year on schools in financial difficulties funding.	
4.11	Ken Morton (Brigshaw LP MAT & Ashtree) remarked on secondary school deficits and the need to proactively manage risk. Simon Criddle assured members of an awareness within the LA of this risk, and advised that the deficit policy is being reviewed.	
4.12	Claire Harrison (Wetherby Deighton Gates) questioned why LA finance officers don't appear to have the impact on secondary schools that they might in primary. LH advised that secondary schools are struggling more financially than primary, and acknowledged that the LA needs to ensure appropriate support is provided, hence a review of the deficit policy.	
4.13	PH drew attention to the significant change in some school balances detailed in the report's appendix, and asked whether the finance team was aware this was happening, and what could be done to stop it from happening. LH advised that she could not go into detail on individual schools, but it could be down to factors like than an adverse Ofsted judgement.	
4.14	Adam Ryder (Bruntcliffe Academy) remarked on primary school surpluses, and asked whether primary and secondary schools are funded under the same mechanism. LH advised that there were a number of differences in both the funding (e.g. different rates of aged-weighted pupil funding) and also in cost pressures between primary and secondary schools, which mean that, whilst there are financial challenges for all schools, the scale could be greater for secondary schools.	
4.15	David Gurney (Cockburn School) remarked on the significant deficits in some special schools and questioned whether this was down to the underfunding. SC advised that there is currently a review on SILC funding and a letter had also been written to the Secretary of State for Education over the underfunding of the High Needs Block in Leeds. Sue Rumbold added that a report will be presented at October's meeting on the funding review.	

4.16	Scott Jacques (Springwell Leeds Academy) remarked on the continuing trend of surplus balances for Area Inclusion Partnerships, and noted that this is High Needs funding. LH advised that there had been a clawback of £250k, but some of the surplus is around contingency planning.	
4.17	Adam Ryder (Bruntcliffe Academy) asked what plans are in place to meet basic needs. SW said that this was a key priority for the Council, but that there was a significant shortfall in the funding provided by the government through the Basic Needs Grant compared to the costs of providing the additional places.	
5.0	Free school meal eligibility changes	
5.1	LH presented highlights of the Free School Meal Eligibility Changes report, in response to a query raised at the previous Schools Forum meeting by John Thorne (Co-op Academy Priesthorpe) regarding the proposals.	
5.2	In November 2017, the DfE started a consultation on new eligibility criteria and had predicted that their proposals would mean around 50,000 more children would receive free school meals by 2022. However, it was not clear whether pupil premium rates would stay the same or whether rates would reduce due to increased demand for funding. The DfE has now published a response to the consultation which provides details of changes to eligibility criteria and funding arrangements. Within this there is no indication of any changes to pupil premium rates, and the published rates for 2018/19 are at the same level as they were for 2017/18.	
5.3	LH also reported that the consultation response states that the DfE will provide additional funding to schools to recognise the increase in the number of free school meals they will be providing. This will be in the form of an additional school-level meal cost grant for 2018/19 and 2019/20.	
5.4	Schools Forum was asked to note the DfE changes relating to eligibility for free school Meals.	
6.0	SEMH provision set-up funding	
6.1	LH presented highlights of the SEMH Provision Set-Up Funding report, which was requested by members at the Schools Forum meeting in February. This request was made following a report to Schools Forum on set up funding available to new mainstream schools through the Growth Fund. The report sets out details of the revenue set-up funding paid to Springwell Leeds by the LA, the process by which this was approved, differences in funding compared to the Growth Fund, and the arrangements for monitoring outcomes for pupils.	
6.2	LH advised that the revenue funding provided for Springwell Leeds for set up costs is detailed at item 2.1.3 in the report.	
6.3	In terms of comparison with the Growth Fund, new mainstream schools set up by the local authority receive some set up funding through the Growth Fund, which is established each year through a top slice of the Schools Block following approval by Schools Forum. Up to £115k is payable to a new single site mainstream school, depending on size and phase. Additional funding is also available for rental costs due to growth, and to provide equipment for pupils.	

6.4	LH explained that funding for special schools is provided through the High Needs Block and there is no requirement for the LA to develop a Growth Fund for special schools. Any decisions on set up funding are instead made on a case-by-case basis and in line with the council's formal decision making process. The unique and complex nature of the project to develop the Springwell Leeds multi-site SEMH provision has meant that the set up costs for this have been higher than those payable to a mainstream school under the Growth Fund. Details of the reasons for this are set out in the report, and include the nature of the project and pre-opening staffing costs.	
6.5	LH assured Schools Forum that monitoring arrangements are in place in terms of outcomes and performance.	
6.6	Diane Reynard (East SILC) commented on a poor BESD provision and buildings being in a poor state, and questioned what the LA could do to ensure a situation like this does not happen again. SW acknowledged the challenges faced, but assured Schools Forum that the LA is determined to support schools as best it can. He added that the issue had been raised with the DfE, but the national picture is one of insufficient funds going into schools.	
7.0	DSG outturn report 2017/18	
7.1	Simon Criddle presented highlights of the DSG Outturn Report 2017/18, which details the final 2017/18 outturn on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and provides a high-level update on some key issues that are likely to have an impact on the 2018/19 financial position.	
7.2	SC reported on an overall in-year underspend of £0.782m on general DSG. This has been used to reduce the deficit balance brought forward from 2016/17 of £4.161m, which means there is a deficit balance on general DSG of £3.379m to be carried forward to 2018/19. This is an improvement of £0.554m on the position that was reported to Schools Forum members in February, which equates to 0.13% variance of the projected expenditure. The most significant area of overspend is on the High Needs Block, though the overspend is less than forecast in February.	
7.3	There was an in-year overspend of £0.103m on de-delegated DSG. A surplus of £0.528m was brought forward from 2016/17 making a total year end surplus of £0.425m to be carried forward into 2018/19.	
7.4	SC referred members to section 1.5 of the report, which provided a summary of the outturn position. SC advised that there is no significant change on what was projected. He added, however, that one of the reasons for the underspend is because the deficit on repaying North West SILC has been deferred until 2018/19.	
7.5	PH remarked on the £418k SEN Inclusion Fund underspend, and asked what would be done to encourage greater take-up. It was advised that the process for requesting SENDIF has been simplified for 2018/19 with settings able to apply directly to the fund rather than a professional referral being required. The rate is set at a level just below the value of FFI, in line with the tiered approach of support available to SEN.	
7.6	DR commented on some services receiving an increase for pay award, yet schools have not received it. SC advised that an assumption was built in to those costs of 2% to represent the pay award when the five-year budget model was worked on.	

7.7	DR also commented on the outside placements and external residential placements budget overspend. SC advised this is a reflection of the associated high cost. Although a number of placement pupils have been brought back into Leeds, it has not been possible to reduce the costs sufficiently to prevent this overspend. SR reported on plans to potentially open a new residential children's home in Leeds. Schools Forum requested a paper outlining the types of fees being charged for external placements.	SC
7.8	DG remarked on the new secure residential free schools that the government has announced and asked about the LA's view. SW reported on the current facilities available at Adel Beck Secure Children's Home and discussions taking place with its manager on whether we would look into it.	
7.9	AR asked for an update on the North West SILC conversion to academy status and what steps were being taken to prevent the deficit increasingly markedly again. SC advised that if conversion does happen, the cost will have to come from the High Needs Block. Work is ongoing with the SILC on the 2018/19 budget, though there is a risk that the deficit could increase. DR provided a brief update on future plans for the SILC and efforts being made to recruit staff and pupils.	
7.10	SC provided an update on the High Needs Block and overall DSG future year projections. Based on current estimates and assuming a contribution of £1m a year to reduce the deficit DSG, further savings or increased funding is required to balance the high needs budget in the next three years. For 2019/20 this could be achieved by transferring funding from the schools and central services to schools blocks, although this would be subject to further consultation with schools and approval from Schools Forum. However, this option is unlikely to be available for future years.	
7.11	SC reminded members that there is still a high level of uncertainty on funding levels from 2020/21 onwards, as this is subject to a comprehensive spending review. It is assumed that the 3% cap on gains will remain and the estimated value of this cap is shown in the report's appendix.	
7.12	Options for balancing the DSG will be reported at the October 2018 Schools Forum meeting. Members requested that options are modelled and presented to Schools Forum in a timelier manner than they were this academic year.	
8.0	AOB	
8.1	SW formally thanked PH for chairing Schools Forum over the past two years.	
8.2	SW reported on the recent appointment of a new Deputy Director for Learning (Phil Mellen), who is hoped to be in post by September.	
9.0	Meeting dates for 2018-2019	
9.1	Schools Forum agreed to the following meeting dates for 2018/19: - Thursday 04/10/2018 - Thursday 22/11/2018 - Thursday 17/01/2019	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Thursday 21/02/2019- Thursday 13/06/2019	
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