

Minutes of the Meeting of the Solihull Schools Forum held 17th October 2011

Members Present Derek Smart (Chair) Louise Minter Jenny Godsall Roberta Narroway Karen O'Keefe Diane Newton Antoinette Fisher Mike Goodwin Lynda Mackay Janet Marsh Professor Derek Sheldon Roy Baylis Bill Sedgwick Steve Howells Tony Morrison Vivienne Stone-Fewings Jane Davenport Andrew Wilkins Cllr Nick Stephens Cllr Alan Rebeiro Cllr Norman Davies David Lewis Ian Backhouse Gina Godwin Observers: Martin O'Connor Others Present: Cllr Joe Tildesley Stewart Crowe Steve Fenton	Arden Streetsbrook I & N Knowle CE Primary Valley Infants Oak Cottage School Yew Tree I & J Dorridge J & I Langley Primary School Knowle CE Primary Sharmans Cross Junior Lyndon Secondary Grace Academy Alderbrook Academy Alderbrook Academy Park Hall Academy Tudor Grange Academy Reynalds Cross Hazel Oak SMBC SMBC SMBC ATL NAHT Whitesmore Neighbourhood Nursery Connexions Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services Forum Co-ordinator Business & Performance Manager
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Minutes taken by Sarah Arthur, Senior Forum Administrator

Item	Discussion	Action
1	<p>Ratification of appointment of Forum Chair and election of Vice Chair</p> <p>SC confirmed that D Smart was appointed as Chair of Solihull Schools Forum for the academic year 2011/12 at the Forum meeting held in July subject to ratification at the first Forum meeting of the academic year and SC asked Forum to indicate their agreement to this election which members duly did by a show of hands. DS then confirmed that Bill Sedgwick at Alderbrook Academy was willing to remain as Vice Chair of Forum for the coming year and this appointment was seconded by L Minter. No other nominations for Vice Chair were received and BS was appointed to the position.</p> <p>DS welcomed Cllr Alan Rebeiro, Andrew Wilkins and Roy Baylis to their first Forum meeting and recorded apologies from the other new Forum members, Mark Pratt (Sharmans Cross) and Julie Cobby (Yorkswood).</p> <p>DS recorded apologies from Chris Palmer who is unwell and will therefore not be available to present his item on Shaping Solihull and schools/Local Authority relationship. This item was linked to a presentation from Deb Wilson outlining proposed functions of the Strategic Accountability Board. DS felt it would be unsatisfactory to have the debate on these issues in isolation of a presentation from CP and has therefore stood DW down for tonight's meeting. However DS suggested that Forum still receive the brief paper from DW on proposed functions of the Strategic Accountability Board and on behalf of CP and DW, DS will feed back any questions or comments Forum members may have to those groups continuing the Shaping Solihull debate. DS confirmed this will be a key agenda item for the December Forum meeting. Members agreed with this approach.</p>	Wrk Plan
2	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from Mark Pratt (Sharmans Cross), Jane Hutchinson (Monkspath J</p>	

	& I), Julie Cobby (Yorkswold Primary), Charlotte Shadbolt (Heart of England), Paul Ashdown, Solihull Sixth Form and Chris Palmer Service Director Learning & Achievement.	
3	Minutes of previous meeting (11th July 2011) – These minutes were agreed as an accurate record and received.	
4	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>AST funding – SF confirmed this will be discussed at the Non delegated DSG T & F Group meeting on 3rd November. SF will feed back to Forum in December.</p> <p>SIAS funding – this is being reviewed by the Non delegated DSG T & F Group.</p>	<p>MG SF MG</p>
	<p>Cabinet Member Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JT warmly thanked colleagues from schools he has visited to date for their warm welcome, open exchange of views and unstinting efforts for the children in their care. JT reiterated his intention to personally visit all schools. • JT offered congratulations on behalf of all Elected Members to colleagues for this year's GCSE results which are up 1.5% this year for five A-C including Maths and English. • JT echoed the importance of continuing the discussions on the future relationship between the Forum, LA and all schools in the Borough regardless of status, in the context of the debates taking place through the Shaping Solihull group. JT stressed the continuing involvement of the LA in helping schools to achieve the best outcomes for their children and reminded colleagues they are always welcome to contact him to discuss any issues they may have. JT confirmed that Elected Members are discussing their representation on the Strategic Accountability Board which will be the overarching body for the collaborative groups. In conclusion, JT commended the work of the Shaping Solihull process and welcomed further debate on this in December. • Children & Young People's Trust Board – JT acknowledged the difficulties that have been encountered, but thanked JG and LM as the Forum representatives on the CYPTB for attending these meetings during its period of review this year. Following review if the role and outcomes from the CYPTB are not felt to be constructive the appropriate steps will be taken. • JT confirmed that following the retirement of Lesley Heale, Vanessa Bishop will maintain the role of Acting Head of Children's Services but the other element to this role of Head of Adult Services has been taken on by another member of the senior management team. <p>DN expressed her concern at the level of pressure that senior officers are finding themselves under with long hours and potentially stress and sickness levels rising. There was general support for this concern and JT acknowledged these issues are ones that the Elected Members are aware of and do try to address.</p>	
5	<p>Work Group reports – All reports are self-explanatory with questions invited:</p> <p>School Improvement WG – Roberta Narroway RN was asked to clarify the item on the change of date for Nursery admissions. RN confirmed concerns had been raised on the level of consultation and that by moving the date forward it may not allow schools sufficient planning time to organise staffing. DS asked SA to contact Lois Brough and request a little more detail on the reasons for changes to admission deadlines which can then be fed back to the School Improvement WG.</p> <p>Finance Work Group – Mike Goodwin There was some discussion concerning the last line of the report. This stated that where funding was delegated for a specific central service, if individual schools did not buy back this service which then resulted in a redundancy, they would in turn be responsible for these redundancy costs. SF clarified that the discussions at the Finance WG meeting were in fact referring to a specific issue concerning collaborative group buy back of a service such as a Family Support Worker with their delegated funding and not in respect of LA services. To protect the collective group's decision to purchase this person/service, should an individual school within the collaborative choose to opt out and remove their delegated funding which in turn led to this person being made redundant, under school funding regulations it explicitly states that individual school would be responsible for those redundancy costs.</p>	<p>SA</p>

	<p>Colleagues welcomed this clarification but questioned if schools were aware of this, the potential impacts of which would need to be a focal point of any future discussions on joint staffing and funding particularly given that some collaboratives will have higher levels of funding than others in some areas such as Extended Schools and may be making decisions accordingly. SF raised a key issue with services such as Extended Schools where the majority of the existing staffing are based at a host school who employs a person on behalf of a cluster of schools and holds that funding. There is a risk to this host school that through delegation of funding responsibility for redundancies could fall to them. There needs to be a clear distinction between schools directly employing a person and a school who because of a particular service covering a number of schools, employs that person on their behalf. SF/MG will circulate a form of words to Head Teachers to clarify the status around these contract/funding issues.</p> <p>SEN Work Group – Professor Derek Sheldon DSh recorded his thanks to colleagues who have previously Chaired this group on a rota basis and felt the first meeting of this academic year had produced useful and collaborative discussions between members. DSh confirmed that Jane Davenport, HT at Reynolds Cross has been appointed as Vice Chair of the SEN Work Group.</p>	SF/MG
6	<p>Feedback from Education & Early Years Safeguarding Group – Diane Newton DN drew attention to item 3 where Steve Martin stressed how careful recruitment panels should be in taking all these steps listed and verifying candidate details during the interview process and not at a later date. DS thanked DN for representing Forum on this group. GG highlighted the Early Years safeguarding training which has been provided by the LA to the PVI sector and has been excellent.</p>	
7	<p>Oaklands Campus Monitoring & Progress Group – Diane Newton DS summarised that the original T & F Group for Lanchester Campus had completed its work and brought a final report to Forum in July. It was felt worthwhile to retain a Monitoring & Progress Group to report back to Forum on progress at Oaklands Campus until the point the Interim Executive Board is stood down and a Governing Body is in place. The Terms of Reference for the Monitoring & Progress group have been taken to Executive with minor amendments following discussion at Forum in July and Forum were invited to endorse the final version which they did so.</p> <p>The Oaklands Campus Monitoring & Progress Group met on the 4th of October and DN highlighted key points of the report circulated to Forum. Feedback is, on the whole, positive with teaching posts filled although there is some concern there are four teachers currently absent. DN highlighted the good news that a number of children are being brought back to school from out of borough placements generating substantial savings in some cases. There are still some unfilled places but this is normal, leaving room for emergency placements during term time.</p> <p>DN referred to the recommendation by the group that short term contracts are issued to teachers rather than ad hoc agency staff appointments to provide consistency to the staffing team and pupils at the campus. The IEB meets this week and it was agreed to report this recommendation to them for consideration but on balance it would seem a sensible route to progress. Forum endorsed this proposal from the Monitoring & Progress Group.</p> <p>YALE – DN confirmed this stands for Year 11 Education Learning Environment. TM outlined this is a collaboration between North secondary heads to identify provision for Year 11 students at risk of exclusion in their last year. This facility creates provision and encourages the re-engagement of students currently disengaged from secondary mainstream. This is the second year of the pilot and has seen encouraging results for progression to year 12, employment or training. The scheme has the commitment of LA funding and an element of AWPU funding from the schools involved.</p>	TM
8	<p>Ratification of Terms of Reference for Finance, School Improvement and SEN Work Groups and Capital Review Group (sub group of Finance WG) Terms of Reference have been discussed by each work group concerned and contain minor amendments mainly in relation to membership and aligning the work groups with the arrangements of Forum concerning academy membership. Forum endorsed and accepted</p>	

	<p>revised Terms of Reference for the three Work Groups.</p> <p>MG confirmed that the Capital Review sub group will report to Finance WG and has been established to allow sufficient time for discussion of the capital funding regime to include the Primary Maintenance Pool. The Terms of Reference for the Capital Review sub group were accepted and endorsed by Forum.</p>	
9/10	<p>Facing the future – Shaping Solihull and Schools/Local Authority relationship and update on Strategic Accountability Board</p> <p>DS invited members to receive and comment on the first draft of the proposed functions of the Strategic Accountability Board (SAB) or if wished feed any comments/questions directly to C Palmer and D Wilson. DS commented that in bullet point 4 – it may not be appropriate to use “ensure” as whilst a correct objective, effective resourcing to schools may not be within the gift of the SAB and may be better substituted with “encourage”. DS added that other terminology might be reviewed to ensure that proposed objectives and accountabilities were within the power of the proposed Board to deliver.</p> <p>DS apologised that this item could not be debated tonight but confirmed it would be a key focus of the December Forum meeting at which point the SAB will also have met again. Members commented it would be helpful to identify elements such as how the functions of the various bodies in existence, including Forum, fit together and the mechanism by which issues that relate to schools collectively can be represented. This will be in the context of ensuring the structure and process does not encourage additional layers of bureaucracy.</p>	Wrk Plan
11	<p>Report on breach of Central Expenditure Limit – Steve Fenton</p> <p>Some members have reported difficulty in accessing the relevant reports for this and the following three agenda items. SF confirmed that Forum is not being asked to reach any decisions on the items for discussion today and all four reports will be circulated to members by e-mail tomorrow.</p> <p>Forum are asked to agree the use of contingency funding to pay for a difference of £10,000 in DSG from the original report to the final figure confirmed by the DfE. The alternative would be a recalculation of all school budgets and Forum endorsed the use of contingency funding for this relatively very minor sum.</p> <p>SF commented on key points from this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The calculations would normally come to Forum as part of the budget deliberations as an appendix together with a completed S251 return. SF apologised for the timing of this report but reminded Forum that they had agreed to the principle that there would be a breach of the CEL when they agreed the budget strategy in previous debates. • SF pointed out that with the academy programme the calculations and returns were complex and do not adjust on a like for like basis seeming therefore to show a 10% reduction in schools budgets which is not the case but rather a transfer of £20 million of funding to academies. • The report does discharge the responsibility of Forum to review the calculations having already agreed to a breach of the CEL and is in many ways a technical exercise to assure the DfE that dialogue has taken place between the LA and schools on the balance between centrally held and delegated funding. • SF pointed out that with a large number of schools converting to academies and an increase in central expenditure of 33% consisting of £1 million SEN, £2.4 million mainstreaming of grants of which £1.4 million Extended Services and £1 million contribution to prudential borrowing funded from schools amalgamating in Northern regeneration programme, a breach had been inevitable. • The other reports presented tonight to Forum show how moving forward, an environment of significant delegation is being created that will impact on the CEL for 2012/13. <p>SF confirmed that as the situation currently exists the level will be judged against 2011/12 for next year and therefore the significant increase of central spending will produce a new base line for subsequent years. However SF asked Forum to consider that having approved the budget with a robust and thorough debate these figures are presented as a statistical requirement and are inevitable in a context of difficulties already highlighted with the</p>	SA

	<p>calculation and further delegations not yet in place.</p> <p>DL pointed out that unless the causes for the breach outlined in the report such as out of borough placements are addressed and with less income coming into the Centre these fixed costs will continue to have to be met resulting in a continued breach of the limit.</p> <p>DS concurred with SF's assessment of the difficulties around the current calculation and felt the focus should be rather than monitoring the CEL numbers, to be rigorous on where the funding is being spent under delegation or central spending as part of the budget preparation discussions. SF confirmed the grants held centrally are elements such as Extended Services £1.4 million and all grants mainstreamed and DSG grants retained centrally were detailed in full in the budget report to Forum in March.</p> <p>Forum noted and accepted the contents of this report detailing a breach of the CEL.</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p>Report on non delegated spend within DSG – Steve Fenton</p> <p>Forum received a paper on this area of funding at the meeting in July and this is a summary with final confirmed S251 data. It sits within the context of the CEL report, showing academy LACSEG relevant items which in the following reports will be discussed as potential areas for delegation. The right hand column figures are those currently under explicit review through Schools Forum, either through SEN Work Group or the Non delegated DSG T & F Group. This report is only intended to set the scene and order of magnitude of scope for items up for delegation and to assure Forum that adequate arrangements are in place to review certain areas of non delegated funding. Forum is not being asked to reach any decisions on these budget lines tonight.</p> <p>The Non delegated DSG T & F Group are reviewing all items of non delegated expenditure other than SEN, which is being considered by the SEN WG and a number of items in the Combined Services, Contingency and Miscellaneous which are reviewed as an annual item by Schools Forum. The appendix to the report details which group are considering each element of non delegated DSG. SF confirmed that the T & F Group hope to present a final report to Forum for the December meeting.</p> <p>SF pointed out that the reports discussed so far are aimed at providing Forum with an overall view on what elements are causing a breach of the CEL and looking at the order of magnitude of non delegated budgets in this context. Should Forum feel any area needs further debate there are groups as detailed above who are reviewing these areas of spend. SF pointed out that some of these reviews will be overtaken by the new focus on increased delegation from 1st April next year which will be discussed in a further report tonight. SF asked Forum if they were comfortable that adequate arrangements are in place in respect of review of these non delegated items and to accept this report as a summary of the situation to date.</p> <p>SF reassured Forum that the whole series of reports tonight are to provide some detail and set the scene for further debate but Forum is not being asked to reach any decisions on any of the items under discussion this evening. SF confirmed that he will be taking follow up work and reports back through the Finance WG.</p>	<p>MG</p> <p>SF</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>National Funding Consultation (2nd stage) – Steve Fenton</p> <p>The submission date for this consultation was in advance of tonight's meeting and the paper with attached submission is as an information item only for Forum. SF commended the work of the T & F Group Chaired by D Lewis, who considered the responses to the consultation on Forum's behalf.</p> <p>SF drew out key themes that are emerging from this consultation. The Government clearly feel the current funding system is broken and through the national funding formula wish to try and address funding for all schools including academies and free schools as well as SEN and Post 16. However the government are not proposing to introduce a national formula for individual schools and however schools are funded there will be an element of local funding in that formula. The focus of the debate therefore will be how that element of local discretion will look without moving back towards a national funding formula. The outcomes of this future debate will influence the areas Forum will need to consider in the future.</p>	

	<p>On this point SF raised a concern that potentially an outcome of local versus national funding and flexibility versus standardisation may result in local authorities receiving similar levels of funding but which translate into big differences at individual school level because of constraints placed on local authorities as to how that funding is directed through the formula factors that can be used. In Solihull’s case whilst we have already reviewed the number of factors in our funding formula, we and other local authorities have specific and historic elements (class size 30, small schools, specialist school funding etc) that we may wish to continue to direct funding towards but which may not be included in a national funding formula review. SF welcomed a simplification of the funding formula but not at the expense of causing instability at individual school level. Currently there is no way of predicting or modelling impact at this point. In addition the language throughout the funding consultation seems to favour simplification over purity which SF felt would not be a sufficiently robust approach to meet the needs of individual schools across the country.</p> <p>In terms of the SEN funding strategy it is not entirely clear what the government proposals are and what the possible impact might be with potentially some focus on improving the market to commission services but it is difficult to ascertain the implications as yet.</p> <p>SF was asked to comment on whether the question of inequality of funding per pupil between authorities was still under debate and SF felt that a focus of the funding consultation was certainly to introduce as much transparency and simplicity as possible and remove these types of inequality of funding. However even with a proposed transition period any changes will inevitably produce new inequalities and winners and losers. Whilst there is consensus that elements of the funding system may be unsatisfactory there are key issues that remain difficult to resolve and meet the requirements of individual local authorities.</p> <p>Forum are asked to receive this report and endorse the work set in motion to date by Finance WG which they were happy to do so. DS echoed SF’s thanks to DL and the T & F Group and Forum would note with interest further updates from SF, although the timescale on further information from government remains unclear.</p>	
<p>14</p>	<p>New delegations and funding formula review – Steve Fenton</p> <p>This final report encapsulates the context of the other reports which have described a picture of a high level of funding held centrally for a variety of reasons and the need to review grant funding held centrally which Forum, through its budget strategy, had agreed to only hold back for one year. Whilst the national funding consultation will be considering elements for delegation this has led to a focus locally on what areas would seem appropriate for delegation in advance of any national decisions, based principally on elements that are already successfully delegated to academies and could be extended to all maintained schools. This direction also gives detail and emphasis to the conversations taking place through Shaping Solihull to give all schools regardless of their status, opportunity to access as much funding as possible and make their choices on its uses.</p> <p>3.8 in the report lists 11 areas which are falling within scope for delegation from 1st April 2012 and SF briefly highlighted the following:</p> <p>Primary and Special School Meals is a major service but has shown very successful dealings and buy back with academies and there is a strong link to secondary schools through the introduction of cashless catering and a catering provision at the same point,so should be a service that can be delegated successfully.</p> <p>Extended Services funding is a significant amount and will need to be discussed fully so that existing arrangements which schools wish to retain are not lost.</p> <p>Insurance – the LA will continue to offer a package of insurance services to schools which it was noted have been taken up by Solihull academies and highly commended elsewhere.</p> <p>Licenses and subscriptions – economies can be obtained through buy back from the LA or schools can buy direct.</p> <p>Delegation of SISS support services is being discussed through the SEN WG.</p> <p>PFI funding gap of £460,000 relates to four schools only with a PFI contract and that will be delegated to these schools on an actuals basis and will be a significant delegation.</p> <p>CRB, Occupational Health and Employee Benefits - have been held centrally as previously agreed at Forum for one year but can be delegated on a per pupil basis with</p>	

	<p>schools having the option to retain central services or make other choices. Primary and Special ICT support functions - which relates to infrastructure and will therefore need to be handled carefully.</p> <p>These services represent a significant amount of funding for delegation by 1st April 2012. SF stressed this would be a voluntary local decision which it is felt would support the principle of delivering choices to schools and within a local designated timeframe rather than wait for 2013 and have to combine local and national decisions. SF stressed this was the main driver for earlier delegation but the emphasis would be on maintaining stability across all schools. SF confirmed that none of the services offered had a limit or restriction on buy back although there may be staffing implications for certain of the services discussed if buy back was below certain limits.</p> <p>Funding Formula Review The funding consultation outlines limiting the number of factors used in a funding formula and through the Finance WG SF has been asked to model certain elements of our local funding formula including the phasing out of class size 30 and small schools factors. SF stressed this would be to simplify this LA's funding formula but not to cause any turbulence to individual school budgets. The factor elements under review will either be straight forward to remove or phased out with transition and funding converted to AWPU.</p> <p>SF mentioned specialist school funding as an example where secondary colleagues will be invited to identify how this can be managed or whether the solution will be identified through the national funding formula consultation. In some cases this is significant funding to schools and will need to be considered carefully.</p> <p>DS asked that reports from the Finance WG for these specific areas for delegation are brought to Forum in perhaps an individual format rather than one large report. SF confirmed this debate will be held alongside consultation with head teachers in full collaboration and then a series of reports will be brought to Forum by the February budget meeting for approval or further discussion. SF confirmed that a series of communications with school colleagues are planned for after half term and he will be speaking to various groups. SF confirmed that in terms of the budget strategy discussion, as a two year budget based on a straight roll over from last year's budget the detail of this year's budget discussion will focus on the elements reviewed tonight.</p> <p>Forum is asked to approve through the various presentations by SF tonight that this is the right direction in terms of the services discussed and approach detailed without specific details for approval at today's meeting. This was agreed by Forum.</p>	<p>SF</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Date of next Forum meeting – Monday 5th December 2011, 6.00 pm, Chamber</p>	