

**ST. HELENS COUNCIL**  
**SCHOOLS FORUM**

**Draft minutes of the Meeting of the Schools Forum**  
**Held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 4.30 p.m. via Teams**

**Members:**

**Primary School Head Teachers**

- \*Mr D McCann, The Federation of St Mary's Catholic Schools
- \*Mrs S Birchall, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary
- \*Mr I Wellens, Bleak Hill Primary
- \*Mrs A Hymers, St Mary's Birchley
- Mrs D Holcroft, Grange Valley Primary/Wargrave CE Primary

**Secondary School Head Teachers and Representatives**

- \*Mr A Rannard, De La Salle
- \*Mrs C Twist, St Cuthbert's Catholic High School

**Special School Head Teacher**

- \*Mr W Brooks, Mill Green

**Primary School Governors**

- \*Mr W Leatherbarrow, Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary
- Ms A Wardell, Willow Tree Primary
- Mr F Taylor, Eccleston Lane Ends Primary
- \*Ms L Moore, Broad Oak/Bleak Hill Primary
- \*Cllr T Long, Carr Mill Primary

**Secondary School Governors**

- \*Ms S Begum, Cowley International College

**Special School Governor**

- \*Mr W Bradbury, Mill Green School

**Nursery School Head Teacher/Governor**

- \*Ms E Nicholson, Rainhill Nursery

**14-19 Partnership**

- \*Ms M Williams, Carmel College

**Union Representative**

- \*Mr B McConnell

**PVI Early Years Provider Representative**

Vacant

**Diocesan and Archdiocesan Representative**

Vacant

**Academy Representatives**

- Mr S Hughes, Hope Academy
- \*Ms K Sawe, The Three Saints Academy Trust
- Mr R Owens, Rainhill Learning Village Multi Academy Trust
- Mrs J Tallant, The Sutton Academy
- \*Ms A Marsh, Rainford High School

**PRU Representative**

Vacant

## **Elected Member Observer**

Councillor Groucutt

\*Denotes Members Present

**Also Present:** Mr G Tyrer, Business Support Manager  
Mr S Webb, Finance Manager  
Mrs J Davies, Senior Assistant Director, Education & Children's Health  
Mrs D Gilchrist, Principal Accountant for Schools  
Ms K Knowles, Rainford High School  
Mrs L Bundock, Governor Services Officer

### 1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Mr Leatherbarrow was elected Chairperson and Mr Bradbury was elected Vice Chairperson for the year.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Chisnall and Mr Taylor.

### 3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record

### 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising

### 5. Terms of Reference

Mr Tyrer explained that the Terms of Reference requires an annual review. The only change is to the membership of the Forum. Membership must reflect the number of pupils in maintained schools and academies, and therefore has had to be updated to increase the academy representation and reduce maintained secondary school representation.

The Forum approved the Terms of Reference

### 6. School balances 2019/20

Mr Tyrer referred to the Scheme for Financing Schools which requires the local authority to oversee the level of school balances, and includes a clawback mechanism for excess balances. Balances are considered to be excessive if they are above certain thresholds – 12% for primary and special schools and 8% for secondary schools. The clawback mechanism allows the Director to exclude any school from the mechanism which is what has happened for the last few years.

Mr Tyrer explained that if clawback was applied to the 2019/20 school balances, the amount that would be clawed back would be approximately £51,000 which is not a material amount in relation to the total level of balances and the total funding distributed to schools. The view of the Department for Education (DfE) is that local authorities should leave schools to manage their own budgets / balances. As a lot of schools with high balances have forecast deficit balances in future years, and schools may be

facing financial pressures due to Covid-19, Mr Tyrer stated that the local authority do not intend to clawback any balances from schools from 2019/20.

Mr McConnell requested that if any schools were facing staffing restructures could they please let their unions know early so that they can plan with schools and staff / members.

#### 7. DSG outturn 2019/20

Mr Tyrer referred to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn report which sets out the final position for 2019/20.

Section 3 of the report sets out the overall position for 2019/20, and shows an overall in-year overspend of £2.728m. Appendix 1 sets out the detailed variations. The main pressures have been associated with the high needs block e.g. out of borough placements and top-up payments to maintained schools, with a continuously increasing demand for funding for pupils with high needs.

Mr Tyrer stated that cumulative DSG balances from previous years have almost all been applied to offset the in-year deficit. Reserves at the beginning of 2019/20 were £2.9m, of which £2.7m was used during 2019/20. Pressures referred to in the report have continued into the 2020/21 financial year.

Mr Tyrer explained that the DfE have introduced the requirement for a recovery plan to be submitted if an authority has a deficit or has used a significant amount of balances. The local authority will need to demonstrate how they intend to bring the budget back into balance, though this will be over several years.

Investigations are taking place into the possibility of increasing the number of special school places and free special school places within the borough, which are more cost effective than sending children to special schools outside of the borough.

Mr Leatherbarrow asked if a recovery plan had been to Council Cabinet, to demonstrate to the DfE that funding has been managed diligently via the Schools Forum and Council Cabinet.

Mr Tyrer confirmed that the deficit/deficit recovery plan will be noted in the next Financial Monitoring Report presented to Cabinet in October.

The Forum noted the contents of the report and the significant reduction in the remaining accumulated prior year DSG balances.

#### 8. Funding updates

Mr Tyrer explained that there had been a strong indication from the DfE that a hard National Funding Formula (NFF) will not be in place for 2021/22, and it is unlikely that it will be in place for 2022/23.

The DfE have confirmed that the Teacher's Pay and Pensions grants will be rolled into the DSG in 2021/22 using a per pupil amount. Minimum Funding Levels for 2021/22 have also been confirmed at £4,180 per pupil for primary schools and £5,415 per pupil for secondary schools (both figures include the pay and pension grants). These figures will start to be included in school projections. The full position regarding pay awards is still unknown.

The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) used in the school funding formula is due to be updated next year. The current dataset being used is based on 2015, this will be updated to 2019. Also, as exams did not take place during summer 2020, the Low Prior Attainment indicator will continue to be based on 2019 data for the 2021/22 calculations.

Mr Tyrer confirmed that the DfE Covid-19 Exceptional Costs funding has now been received. Most schools had made claims from this fund, but not all. Although the initial deadline has passed there will be a second opportunity during the autumn term to make a claim. All unclaimed costs should be submitted during this second claims window.

Extra money is to be allocated to schools through a Covid-19 Catch-Up Premium, which equates to £80 per pupil for primary and secondary schools during the academic year 2020/21. Special schools will be paid £240 per planned place.

Non-teaching pay award has been confirmed at 2.75%, teacher's pay award is due to be confirmed during October. School budgets include non-teaching pay award estimates of 2.5%, so there will be a slight additional cost to schools.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November at 4.30pm