

ST. HELENS COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Schools Forum
Held on Thursday 1 December 2016 at 4.30 p.m. at the Town Hall

Members:

Primary School Head Teachers

Mrs C. Cropper, Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary
Ms R. Dean, Federation of St Mary's Infants and Juniors
*Mr I. Williams, Sutton Oak CE Primary
*Mrs C. Gowan, Eccleston Lane Ends Primary
Mrs K. Hall, St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary
*Mr S Smith, Chapel End Primary (representing Mrs Cropper)

Secondary School Head Teachers and Representatives

Mr I. Murphy, Haydock High School
Mr C. Sheeran, Cowley International College
*Mrs C Twist, St Cuthbert's Catholic High School
(Representing Mr C Sheeran)
Mr I. Young, Rainford High Technology College

Special School Head Teacher

*Ms J. Johnson, Penkford School

Primary School Governors

*Mr W. Leatherbarrow, Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary
*Mr K. Aspinall, Rainford Church of England Primary School
*Mr R. Ferry, Carr Mill Primary School
Mr A. Simpson, Garswood Primary School
Vacant

Secondary School Governors

*Mr E Bate, St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High
Vacant
Vacant

Special School Governor

*Mr. W. Bradbury, Mill Green School

Nursery School Head Teacher/Governor

Mrs. M. Smith, Rainhill Community Nursery School

14-19 Partnership

Ms. M. Williams, Carmel College

Union Representative

Ms S. Duncan, Newton le Willows Primary School
*Mr P White (Representing Ms Duncan)

PVI Early Years Provider Representative

Mrs N. Politis, Portico Day Nursery

Diocesan and Archdiocesan Representative

Mr. T. Warren

Academy Representative

Mr. K. Maddocks, Hope Academy
Ms. A Sherman, The Sutton Academy

PRU Representative

Ms. L. Munro, Rainhill High School Media Arts College

Elected Member Observer

*Councillor A. Bowden

*Denotes Members Present

Also Present: Mr G. Tyrer, Business Support Manager
Mrs J. Davies, Senior Assistant Director, School Support Services
Mr A Roscoe, Democratic Services Officer.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Cropper, Ms Duncan, Mrs Politis, Mr Sheeran and Mr Simpson.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 September 2016

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

4 School Funding 2017/18

A report was provided to inform the Forum about a number of school related issues for 2017-18, in advance of approving the school funding formula in January 2017.

Mr Tyrer explained that following the Department for Education (DFE) announcement in July, it was now expected that a national funding formula for schools would be introduced in 2018/19. There were unlikely to be any significant changes to school funding arrangements for 2017/18 and therefore, the Authority Pro-forma Tool (or APT) which set out the local formula would be presented to the Schools Forum in January 2017. This was in accordance with the usual DFE timescales.

Mr Tyrer drew attention to a number of financial pressures that existed within the Dedicated Support Grant (DSG), predominantly relating to high needs pupils. The main issues were detailed in the report and covered:

- Special school planned places;
- Independent Special School Placements;
- Independent school fees budget pressures;
- Proposed approach to funding high needs pressures and Impact of proposals.

Mr Tyrer explained in detail the proposed approach to funding high needs pressures, and indicated the additional temporary funds that had previously been earmarked in respect of high needs budget pressures.

Mr Tyrer stressed that the funding identified to date was one-off and had helped to ease the financial pressure in 2016/17. However, a longer-term funding solution was needed to be identified whilst work continued to reduce the cost pressures, particularly in respect of out of borough educational placements.

The Forum discussed the growth in independent school fees budget pressures indicated in the three year forecast detailed in the report. Particular concerns were in relation to the 2017/18 forecast. In response to questions, Mr Tyrer indicated the cost per pupil placement, and Members were given examples of 'out of borough' provision which incurred high costs.

It was confirmed that collaborative working with two partner authorities was at a well advanced stage in relation to addressing SEN issues, and St Helens was exploring the provision of particular SEN elements that could be developed in-borough.

Mr Tyrer then summarised the budget pressures and suggested funding approach in respect of additional Special School places at Lansbury Bridge and Mill Green Schools, and three elements within Independent Special Schools.

The impact of the proposals was also explained to Members.

Mr Tyrer indicated that Pupil Premium Grants would not increase in 2017/18, although this was yet to be confirmed. The current rates were detailed in the report.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the contents of the report be noted; and**
- (2) **the Forum approved by a majority vote, in principle, the proposed suggested approach to funding the 2017/18 high needs budget pressures.**

5. School Clothing and Footwear Grants

The Forum was made aware that the Local Authority was undertaking a public consultation exercise with families upon discretionary clothing and footwear awards made by the Council.

Their views were being sought upon the impact of a potential withdrawal of the grant, and the closing date for submissions was 16 January 2017.

In response to a question, Mr Tyrer confirmed that the potential saving to the Local Authority would be in the region of £250,000.

A question was raised as to whether certain groups could apply for funding, for example asylum Seekers. It was confirmed that a further option could be considered to restrict grant applications to certain groups, and a severe hardship fund would also be available in the future.

A further question was raised as to whether any schemes existed within the voluntary sector in relation to the supply of school uniforms. It was confirmed that various schemes were in place in schools, such as donations of school uniforms by parents for re-use.

ACTION: The Forum agreed that promotion and publicity of such schemes in schools could be undertaken within their own organisations, and acknowledged the roles of schools and their Governing Bodies in managing issues.

6. Any other business

(i) Academisation & PFI Costs / Liabilities

Mr Bradbury raised his concerns over PFI liabilities placed upon schools following the academisation conversion process being agreed and completed by other schools.

Mr Tyrer confirmed the position of PFI liabilities following the decisions taken by schools to convert to academies, and indicated that only 1 school in St Helens was currently PFI funded.

Mr Tyrer also explained the financial commitments for St Helens Schools under the duration of PFI projects, and indicated that the academisation process would not change this arrangement. However, they may be affected by forthcoming NFF changes.

(ii) Expression of thanks

The Chairperson expressed thanks to both Mr Tyrer for the production and presentation of his comprehensive reports, and also to Mrs Davies, for their valuable clarifications and contributions into discussions that had arisen.

7. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday, 12 January 2017