

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

**Draft minutes of the Meeting of the Schools Forum**  
**Held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at 4.30 p.m. at the Town Hall**

**Members:**

**Primary School Head Teachers**

- \*Mrs C Cropper, St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary
- Mrs C Gowan, Eccleston Lane Ends Primary
- Mrs J Sweeney, Rectory CE Primary
- Vacant
- \*Mrs A Richardson, Rainford 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**

Mrs J Johnson, Penkford School

**Primary School Governors**

- \*Mr W Leatherbarrow, Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary
- Ms L Cunliffe, The District CE Primary
- \*Mr F Taylor, Eccleston Lane Ends Primary
- \*Ms L Moore, Broad Oak, Bleak Hill Primary
- Ms D Bate, Rainford CE Primary

**Secondary School Governors**

Mr S Neal, St Cuthbert's Catholic High School  
Ms N Winstanley, Haydock High School

**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**

Mrs N Politis, Portico Day Nursery

**Diocesan and Archdiocesan Representative**

Mr T Warren

**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

**PRU Representative**

Mrs D Clayton

## **Elected Member Observer**

Councillor S Murphy

\*Denotes Members Present

**Also Present:** Mr S Webb, Business Support Manager  
Mrs D Gilchrist, Principal Accountant for Schools.

### 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 Ms M Williams, Ms N Winstanley, Cllr S Murphy, Prof S O'Brien, Ms D Bate, Mrs K Hall, Ms N Politis, Mrs J Tallant and Mr W Brookes.

### 3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

### 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

### 5. Terms of Reference

Mr Webb explained that the Terms of Reference requires an annual review, though the content this year remains unchanged.

The Forum approved the Terms of Reference

### 6. School balances 2018/19

Mr Webb informed the Forum that this item was to be deferred.

At a meeting of the Schools Forum last year there had been discussion and debate around school balances, and the Forum requested that the Strategic Director of People's Services attended a Forum meeting when school balances were to be discussed again. As the Strategic Director was unable to attend this meeting, the item has been deferred until the next meeting.

Mr Taylor asked if the Strategic Director had visited some schools to see why some balances are as high as they are, and if she had a plan regarding how to move things around.

Mr Webb informed the Forum that the Strategic Director had formed a view and would explain this at the next meeting.

Mr Bradbury raised his concerns that some school balances were very low.

Mr Leatherbarrow stated that as a Forum we would like any explanation to have substance rather than retrospective action.

The Forum acknowledged that the Strategic Director was unavailable for this meeting but would welcome her attendance at the next meeting.

7. DSG outturn 2018/19

Mr Webb reminded the Forum that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant which is provided to local authorities to fund schools and some central services. The grant is subject to external audit and grant returns.

He explained that section 3.1 of the report sets out the outturn position, and Appendix 1 sets out Section 251 data.

Although the 2018/19 underspend is £737k this is primarily attributable to Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE). Mr Webb explained that the process to determine the final level of Early Years Block funding in respect of FEEE is quite complicated, and although the 2018/19 provisional grant had been made available, it would be adjusted in 2019/20 financial year to reflect the January 2019 census numbers.

The underspend on FEEE is £756k and the local authority expects a significant proportion of this to be recovered by the Department for Education (DfE) to reflect the decrease in January 2019 pupil numbers.

Although there is an overspend on the high needs block, Mr Webb explained that without the additional high needs funding from the DfE this would have been significantly higher. Mr Webb confirmed that high needs top ups and independent school fees were the most significant pressures on the high needs block.

He explained that the true underspend on the DSG would be considerably less than currently reported after the FEEE recoupage, and proposed that this is transferred to balances to offset the pressure on high needs funding in future years.

The Forum agreed to any remaining underspend being transferred to balances.

8. DfE Consultation 'Call for Evidence'

Mr Webb advised the Forum that the local authority had forwarded this consultation by email to all schools on 18<sup>th</sup> June. The government have acknowledged that schools across the country are experiencing difficulties with high needs. In response they have launched this consultation, not relating to the total amount of funding available which will be discussed at the next spending review, but about how the funding is distributed.

The local authority will be submitting a response to the DfE and urge schools to respond also. The deadline for responses is 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019.

Mr Leatherbarrow requested that the consultation is also circulated to all governors.

9. Any other business

Mr McConnell stated that the local authority is encouraging schools to off-roll pupils, but that Sutton Academy had been penalised for this by Ofsted. He explained that schools were struggling with alternative provision for students and that Mrs J Davies, Senior Assistant Director Education & Children's Health, had advised that the local authority would be looking at providing their own alternative provision. Mr McConnell asked where this was up to.

Mr Webb advised that it would be more appropriate for a colleague from this service area to respond to this.

Mr McConnell raised the issue of term time only employees who may have had their holiday pay calculated incorrectly, and referred to the recently reported case in Greenwich.

He asked that if support staff in schools were owed pay would this be funded by the local authority or school budgets.

Mr Webb confirmed that this would need to be looked into further and that he currently had no information on this topic to share with the Forum.

At the last meeting of the Schools Forum primary and secondary school representatives requested that discussions take place with headteacher colleagues before a decision could be made on de-delegation of services. Both primary and secondary representatives had subsequently indicated to the local authority that de-delegation would continue on the same basis as last year.

This decision was ratified by the relevant members of the Forum.

10. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019