

THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS' FORUM

Draft MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

**27 November 2020
via Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT

**Richard Aindow (Special Academies)
Lisa Balderstone (PRU)
Alison Claricoats (North Maintained Primary)
Louise Donnelly-Stott (Small Schools)
Stephen Gilby (North Maintained Secondary)
Matthew Hardwick (South Maintained Secondary)
Daniel Hinton (Special Schools)
Steven Holmes (South Secondary Academy)
James Jackson (West Secondary Academy)
Chris McAree (North Secondary Academy)
David Nattrass (North Maintained Primary)
Vanessa O'Dea (CE Diocese)
Jennifer Rowlands (West Secondary – representing Judith Schafer)
Alan Rutter (Teachers Professional Associations and Chair of Forum)
Sue Sanderson (Cabinet Member – Schools and Learning)
Cathy Styles (South Maintained Primary)
Ruth Webster (South Maintained Primary)
Kris Williams (North Secondary Academy)**

Officers in Attendance:

Dan Barton	(AD – Education and Skills)
Marie Barnes	(Senior Adviser South and Assistant Manager, Learning Improvement)
Susan Milburn	(Group Finance Manager)
Amanda Chew	(Finance Manager)
Nicola Shiels	(Forum Support)

Observers:

Sandy Todd (CASH)

Apologies for Absence

**Matthew Jessop (South Maintained Primary)
Judith Schafer (West Secondary)**

PART 1: ITEMS LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

1. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was agreed that all items would be considered in the public domain.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this stage.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 21 October 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. School Funding Formula 2021-22

On 21 October 2020, Schools Forum agreed that all Cumbrian primary and secondary schools and academies should be consulted on the school funding formula for 2021-22; to apply the National Funding Formula in full in 2021-22 with any remaining balance up to 0.5% transferring to the HN Block after taking into account the growth fund budget . The consultation was launched on 22 October with a closing date of 13^h November and included a comparison between the actual Cumbria school funding formula in 2020-21 against the proposed school funding formula for 2021-22 which mirrored the NFF as applied by the DfE and included the mandatory MPL of £4,180 per primary and £5,415 per secondary pupil and a MFG of +2% per pupil increase against 2020-21 baselines.

A report was presented that asked Schools Forum members to review the results of the consultation and to make a recommendation to Cabinet as to the formula that should be used in 2021-22 to allocate funding to Cumbrian schools.

The consultation closed on 13 November 2020; 41 responses had been received from mainstream schools, academies and special schools. This had reduced from 78 in the previous year and was likely due to schools prioritising their response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

All 41 (100%) respondents agreed with the recommendation of the Schools Forum that the national funding formula should be used to allocate funding to schools in Cumbria in 2021-22. When asked if a transfer of up to 0.5% should be made from the Schools Block to the HN Needs Block after allocating the NFF in full 30 (73%) respondents were in favour and 11 (27%) respondents were not in favour.

A summary of the results and comments made by respondents were set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

The report included two options for the 2021-22 financial year and Schools Forum were asked to recommend one of the options to Cabinet. It was noted if Schools Forum recommended Option 2, the increase in school budget shares would be locked in for the calculation of the MFG and may make the NFF unaffordable in future years.

In discussing the report, there were some concerns about the continuing application of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) meant that ongoing issues and inequality of funding were not addressed; the MFG was intended as a protection mechanism to reduce budget imbalance between schools.

Schools Forum recommended to Cabinet that:

- i) the national funding formula was implemented in full in Cumbria in 2021-22, impacting maintained schools from April 2021 and academies from September 2021, and after taking into account the growth fund budget, any residual surplus remaining in the Schools Block up to a maximum 0.5% was transferred to High Needs Block to support the Recovery Plan;
- ii) to allocate the excess to school budget shares by increasing the AWPU; and
- iii) in the case of a deficit following full application of the NFF, to reduce the growth fund budget to a level that makes the NFF affordable and then to reduce the MFG protection below +2% if it was still unaffordable.

5. **De-Delegation 2021-22**

De-delegation continued to be an option for maintained schools in 2021-22. Funding of de-delegated services was allocated through the Schools Block but could be de-delegated for maintained primary and secondary schools with Schools Forum approval.

At the meeting held on 3 July 2020, schools forum members had considered a paper detailing the differences between the current Council arranged insurance and the new government Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA), which had been extended to allow maintained schools to join from April 2020. The RPA was not mandatory, and the schools could continue with the existing insurance arrangements where it provided good value for money. The schools forum representatives for maintained schools considered the options and decided to continue to de-delegate the budget for insurances and that the Council should continue to arrange insurance services on behalf of maintained primary, secondary schools and PRUs, special schools and nursery schools.

Indicative budget figures were provided for 2021-22 which anticipated no significant change from 2020-21 for contingencies, staff costs and library services.

The maintained schools' representatives recommended that the following services should be de-delegated for 2020-21:

De-Delegated Service	Primary	Secondary
Contingencies	Yes	Yes
Staff Costs	Yes	Yes
Library Services	Yes	No

6. **DfE Financial Transparency Consultation – Outcome**

On 17 July 2019 the DfE had launched a consultation about Financial Transparency of local authority-maintained schools and academy trusts.

The key changes to the current financial transparency arrangements were reported the Schools Forum budget working group in September 2019; the local authority had

submitted a response to the consultation. A report was presented that updated Schools Forum on the outcome of the government consultation and the key changes specifically impacting maintained schools.

One of the key changes required all maintained schools with a deficit above 5% to submit a recovery plan to their local authority. The LA Scheme for Financing for Schools published in August 2020 had been updated to include this directed revision which would be effective from 31 March 2021.

It was also noted that DfE had decided against the inclusion of the requirement that every maintained school be subject to internal audit at least every 3 years.

A summary of the key changes specifically impacting on maintained schools would be communicated via the School Portal and further details about the practicality of implementing the additional financial transparency requirements would be communicated as appropriate.

Schools Forum noted the report, the key changes specifically impacting maintained schools and the effective dates for these changes.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Schools Forum would be held on Wednesday 13 January 2021. The meeting would be held via Microsoft Teams. Arrangements and start time would be advised prior to the meeting.

A schedule of proposed dates for meetings to be held in 2021 would be drawn up and circulated to Forum and Working Group members; meetings would continue to be held via Microsoft Teams for the foreseeable future.

8. Any Other Business

The Chair thanked members for attending. There were no other items of business.

SAA/NS
January 2021