

Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting held on 3 October 2017

Present: Steve Barr (Chairman)

Attendance

Wendy Keeble	Kevin Allbutt
Richard Osborne	Steve Swatton
Wendy Whelan	Judy Wyman
Lesley Wells	Liz Threlkeld
Richard Redgate	Nicky Crookshank
Alison Gibson	Richard Lane
Stuart Jones	Lesley Morrey (Substitute)
Philip Tapp (Vice-Chairman)	Tim Hopkins (Substitute)
Wendy Horden	
Chris Wright	
Jonathan Jones	

Observers: Mark Sutton, Philip White and Richard Hinton

Also in attendance: Alison Barnes, Will Wilkes, Julie Roberts, Andrew Marsden, Tim Moss and Paul Senior

Apologies: Kirsty Rogers, Ally Harvey, Sara Bailey, Claire Evans and Matthew Baxter

PART ONE

69. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

On nominations being requested, Mr Kevin Allbutt proposed and Ms Judy Wyman seconded that Mr Steve Barr be elected Chairman for the ensuing year and Mr Steve Barr proposed and Mr Chris Wright seconded that Mr Philip Tapp be elected as Vice Chairman for the same period.

There being no other nominations it was:

RESOLVED – That Mr Steve Barr and Mr Philip Tapp be elected as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively for the ensuing year.

70. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman, Steve Barr, and Judy Wyman both declared an interest in minute 78 being in receipt of some Union Duties funding.

71. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 4 July 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

72. Matters arising and Decisions taken by the Chairman

With regard to redundancy arrangements, this issue had been put on hold and a letter had been circulated to schools from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

Members were informed that a meeting of the Sub-Regional School Improvement Board had taken place and priorities for the Strategic School Improvement Grant had been agreed. Schools had received more detailed information via the E-bag.

[Ian Wilkie, Principal Business Partner, Entrust, in attendance for discussion on this item of “Matters Arising”]

Further to Forum’s request that compensation be sought from BT Openreach for the delay in transition to new broadband services, advice had now been received from Udata Infrastructure (part of Capita plc). Discussions had taken place with BT Wholesale, who were clear that they could only look at anything that was a direct failure of work that BT Wholesale were responsible for. As the project had involved multiple third parties it would be a very significant task to identify and provide evidence of a direct loss attributable to a single party. A copy of the letter would be circulated to members for information, and they would be kept informed of any further developments.

There had been limited response to the questionnaire in the Self-Assessment Toolkit in the EFA’s Revised Guidance on Schools Forum, but this had been overwhelmingly positive. In response to comments the following actions would be taken:

- a link would be included on the website to the four recently updated EFA documents;
- the website would be more clearly signposted;
- the category of schools which members represented would be included on their nameplate;
- the Constitution would be updated; and
- subject to members’ permission, email contact details would be included on the website.

73. My Finance

[Chris Finnegan, Programme Change Manager, Curium Solutions and Judith Billington, Entrust Project Manager in attendance for this item]

Forum received a presentation on the new system for managing finance in maintained schools. The planned launch date had now been put back to 6 November, due to system stability issues. More time was needed to fully test the system and ensure that it would be able to handle the volume of activity from Staffordshire County Council and schools. The two change freeze periods would also change and would be notified to schools the following week. The date for the Master Data Freeze would now be Monday

16 October, when there would be no changes to “master data” in SAP such as adding customers and new vendors from this point onwards. Requests for the set-up of new vendors in My Finance via the Accounts Payable Team would be possible from 6 November. The date for the Financial Transaction Freeze would be Monday 23 October, when it would not be possible to purchase/pay/take any action in SAP from this point onwards. Members were given advice on how to prepare for this period, and informed that for urgent purchases or payments during the freeze period they should use P-Cards, or for anything not covered by these to contact the Entrust Education Finance Services Helpdesk. Cash receipting would have to be completed before “Read Only” access began on 24 October. After this date cash could be banked, but a record would need to be kept to input this into the new system upon launch on 6 November.

Concern was expressed that communication over delays had been poor, however it was explained that communications had been sent at the earliest opportunity. Forum asked for and was given reassurance that schools would be given as much information as possible as soon as it was available.

Bursar training had been completed between 12 June and 21 July, overall feedback of courses was 4.2 out of 5, and approver training was completed between 11 and 21 September. Refresher training would be rescheduled in line with the “go live” date, currently ten sessions, planned to be 27 November to 1 December inclusive. Additional sessions would be added depending on support desk call volumes. Two staff would be on the telephone helpdesk, and this would be extended beyond the planned two months if required. There would also be details of Frequently Asked Questions on the Entrust portal and the SLN.

RESOLVED – That the arrangements and timescales for the launch of “My Finance” be noted.

74. Fairer Funding

Forum considered a briefing note on the new National Funding Formula (NFF), the impact this would have on Staffordshire schools, and the options available.

Since consultation 2 had taken place in January a number of high level changes had taken place. The Government had pledged an additional £1.3bn by 2019/20, with £416m being announced for 2018/19. There would be minimum funding of £4,600 and £3,300 per pupil for secondary and primary pupils in 2018/19, which would rise to £4,800 and £3,500 by 2019/20. All schools would be allocated a rise of 0.5% per pupil in 2018/19, rising to 1% per pupil in 2019/20, which would replace the funding floor. The differences from consultation 2 were that the additional money was to be included within the per pupil factor and an element of funding from FSM had also been moved to per pupil factors.

The impact on Staffordshire was that schools would receive a gain of £9.5m, or 2.1%, from the 2017/18 baseline position. Secondary schools were the biggest gainers (2.9% gain) due to the increase in per pupil allocations for KS3 pupils. Middle schools were the smallest winners (0.9% gain), due to the reduced lump sum for secondary schools and the effect of a lower per pupil funding rate for a primary pupil. This was counter acted by an increased KS3 per pupil rate. However at consultation stage 2 it had been

anticipated that 79% of the middle schools were due to be losers. The following is a breakdown across the phases:

Row Labels	Sum of 2017/18		Gain from new formula	% gain from new formula	Gainers				Total
	Baseline Position	NFF allocation			<1%	<2%	<3%	>3%	
Middle	23,981,000.00	24,191,000.00	210,000.00	0.9%	10	3	1	-	14
Primary	240,692,000.00	244,493,000.00	3,801,000.00	1.6%	105	73	117	-	295
Secondary	191,241,000.00	196,756,000.00	5,515,000.00	2.9%	5	3	47	-	55
Grand Total	455,914,000.00	465,440,000.00	9,526,000.00	2.1%	120	79	165	-	364
					33%	22%	45%		100%

Members were informed that for 2018/19 and 2019/20 there was the option of the “soft landing”. In these years local authorities could still use their existing formula or transition to the new NFF. Under the existing Staffordshire formula, even with the injection of the extra money, some schools would continue to lose. Conversely, some gainers would gain more than their final NFF allocation, so would require a reduction in funding once the “hard” formula was put in place. After January’s consultation it had been anticipated that the existing Staffordshire formula would be kept in place. However, the latest announcement had no schools losing in funding terms under the new NFF, ie all budgets would increase, the smallest increase being 0.2%. It was therefore recommended that Staffordshire schools transition to the new formula.

“The Schools and Early Years Financial Regulations 2017” and “Schools Revenue Funding 2018 to 2019: Operational Guide” stipulates that schools (Maintained and Academies) and Schools Forum must be consulted on any changes in the formula and that these must be politically ratified. The timeline for this was therefore that consultation would be posted out to schools during the week commencing 16 October 2017, for a period of five weeks (to include half term). Following analysis of this consultation a proposed formula would be taken to an Extraordinary Meeting of Schools Forum, to be held in the first two weeks in December, then taken for political approval to the January meeting of the Cabinet. This would allow for the local authority to submit the APT to the EFSA by 19 January 2018. Members noted that the technical guidance had just been released by the DfE, and that the local authority was interpreting this lengthy and complex document to arrive at the DfE’s provisional allocations. Flexibilities would need to be applied within the formula in order to ensure that collectively the schools budgets did not exceed the overall allocation.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) Staffordshire Schools should transition to the new NFF;
- b) The timeline for consultation outlined above be approved; and
- c) The above recommendations be included with the consultation paperwork circulated to schools.

75. School attendance matters: Staffordshire's Education Welfare Team

[Paul Senior, Education Lead for Vulnerable Learners 0-25 and Karl Hobson, County Manager – Targeted Services in attendance for this item]

The Local Authority (LA) considered that school attendance and its improvement was an integral part of their raising achievement agenda. The LA was committed to providing

an ongoing programme of support aimed at working in partnership with schools, children, young people, parents and a wide range of partner agencies to achieve improved attendance levels across the County, therefore enabling children and young people to have the best chance to fulfil their potential, irrespective of gender, race, creed or religion.

Through school attendance, the progress of all children could be tracked, including vulnerable groups such as children in care and those subject to a Child Protection Plan and children missing education, as well as other groups at significant risk of slipping through the net. Children not attending school regularly could also be an indicator that there were concerns at home.

In order to bring about significant educational improvement it was believed that good habits needed to be formed at an early age. Robust arrangements should be in place to support children and young people at all transitional stages. Parents and carers, whose own experience of school may have been less than positive, must be encouraged to actively engage in ensuring their child attends school on a regular basis. The Service was committed to enabling all children and young people of school age to enjoy and benefit from the educational opportunities available to them.

Education Welfare Workers (EWWs) currently fulfilled both statutory and non-statutory functions in relation to compulsory school aged children and young people, addressing issues related to:

- Attendance registration
- School attendance and absence
- Elective home education
- Children missing from education
- Child employment
- Child entertainment
- Issuing licenses for chaperones

The team provided a specialist group of staff who were qualified and experienced in working with schools to develop systems, procedures and interventions, and work in partnership with organisations to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. The team advised schools and academies and alternative education providers, as well as parents/carers, other professionals and employers regarding legislation in these areas and supported them in fulfilling their legal responsibilities.

Forum considered the responsibilities of schools and academies around attendance, and the statutory role of the Council in relation to this. They then considered the EWW offer for 2018/19, which comprised of a Core Offer around statutory services and four additional options.

Statutory Services - The Core Offer (£480K) would be an entitlement to all local schools in response to a clearly defined need. EWWs would be responsible for delivering the statutory requirements of the LA for attendance, these included:

- Reviewing and processing cases for prosecution for irregular attendance under section 444 (1) and (1A)
- Issuing Penalty Notices for:
 - Unauthorised leave in term time
 - Persistent absence and lateness

- Being in a public place during the first five days of exclusion
- Undertaking police and criminal evidence interviews for S444 (1A) prosecutions
- Initiating and processing School Attendance Orders for pupils not on a school roll
- Undertaking Parenting Orders and assessments requested by magistrates
- Preparing papers to put before the Family Court for an Education Supervision Order and to then manage the Order
- Casework for children identified as Children Missing Education
- Annual Register inspections (maintained schools only)
- Child Employment and Licensing, which involves:
 - Administration and issuing of work permits and visits to workplaces
 - Administration and issuing of licences for children to participate in entertainment performances
 - Administration and issuing of Licensing chaperones for children in entertainment
 - Undertaking venue checks for children in entertainment

The Core Offer Plus: Option 1 (£890k additional funding) would allow for the continued provision of the current service, which would seek to provide local schools with a range of additional services that went beyond the core/statutory offer. Based on assessed needs, schools would proportionate to investment to access a range of bespoke interventions from the EWW. Should this option be commissioned, each locality would be provided an allocation of time proportionate to the investment made in the service from the locality and this information and progress on school utilisation of the allocation in each locality would be reported to the respective DIP. In the event that the demand for the school had the potential to exceed funded capacity, then the DIP would determine priorities for any remaining EWW resource to enable the allocation of EWW resource around locality priorities.

The Core Offer Plus: Option 2 (£695k additional funding) would provide a scaled down offer of Option 1 across the County for pre court case activity. Based on assessed needs, schools would be able to access a range of bespoke interventions proportionate to investment from the EWW, following the schools undertaking tier two interventions with the pupil and family.

The Core Offer Plus: Option 3 (£200k additional funding) would be to provide school attendance clinics across the County. The EWW would meet with the parent(s) in a formal setting within the school, to undertake a structured conversation in which the parent(s) would be challenged to explain their child's absence and supported to agree a plan to bring about immediate change. This would require the school to undertake the administration of the clinic, using the letter template provided by the EWW and to provide a suitable room. The school would support the process by sending a list of students whose parents had been invited one week in advance of the attendance clinic, so background checks could be completed by the EWW. Clinics could last for half a day or be over a full day and each school would be able to book in advance 2 full days or equivalent half days over the academic year. This would have to be managed on a demand basis and planned across the whole year, with schools being prioritised on need and first response basis.

The Core Offer Plus: Option 4 was for No non-core offer service provision from the County Council. This would mean that schools would have to provide all case work and

support to parents who have not ensured that their children regularly attend school. Schools or school led consortia would be required to lead on providing and/or commissioning directly any required education welfare activity not provided by the Core Offer from the service in discharging all statutory and special duties. The LA Education Welfare Offer would be the Core Offer option as outlined under Statutory Services above.

Forum approved the Core Offer at a cost of £480k. In wide ranging discussion about the four other Options members were informed that de-delegation of the budget could have serious implications for some of the smaller schools. Costed per pupil, Option 1 was £17.77 per child, Option 2 was £13.88 and Option 3 was £3.99. However, members expressed a number of concerns over the quality and effectiveness of the service which had been provided thus far. It was acknowledged that there had been disquiet and concerns about the service in the past, and that outcomes had not been good in some instances. In response to these concerns a clear Quality Assurance Framework had now been put in place, there would be accountability in localities, there would also be greater rigor in how the service would be managed, and lessons had been learned from other authorities. Members expressed the view that the funding could be better and more effectively used through the schools themselves, particularly in the light of the increasing collaboration between large and small schools. In relation to Option 1 concern was also expressed that Primary schools were not well represented on DIPs and consequently would not have a voice in influencing how the funding was spent. There was also a view that a number of the preventative activities outlined in this Option were already being undertaken by schools themselves. It was suggested that Forum may wish to defer their decision for a further year in order to provide an opportunity for the improvements and reforms to make a difference. However members were of the view that they had given the service sufficient opportunity to raise standards.

Representatives of maintained schools were invited to vote on the four options, with the following outcome:

- Option 1 – 2 Votes**
- Option 2 – 0 Votes**
- Option 3 – 1 Vote**
- Option 4 – 8 Votes**

It was queried how performance on the Core Offer would be measured. Members were informed that this could be evidenced by the number of requests to proceed through court which were dealt with and also it would be possible to report on the issue of penalty notices. It was pointed out that the service would have minimal contact with schools, but that activity would all be measurable and could be reported back to Forum. It was agreed that this should be done on an annual basis.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) The Core Offer on Statutory Services, at a cost of £480k be approved;
- b) Option 4, as outlined above, be agreed; and
- c) The service report to Forum on an annual basis.

76. Feasibility Report

[Mick Harrison, Commissioner for Safety, Children and Families and Natasha Moody, Early Years Commissioning Manager in attendance for this item]

Members considered two options for the best use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from April 2018. Option 1 was for schools to determine how they spend their allocation of the DSG independently to the County Council's support or guidance. Option 2 was for the County Council to act as a broker, offering earliest and early help provision through new commissioning arrangements based on needs in the district. For each of the options members considered an analysis of strengths, threats and further considerations.

The total DSG budget was £1.448m, the breakdown of this by district was as follows:

Sum of LST funding per FSM (Ever 6)	
District2	Total
Cannock Chase District	199,718
East Staffordshire Borough	229,091
Lichfield District	136,535
Newcastle Borough	234,522
South Staffordshire	144,463
Stafford Borough	167,317
Staffordshire Moorlands	154,677
Tamworth Borough	181,677
Grand Total	1,448,000

If the DSG was to be allocated to individual schools it would range from £63 - £12,146 for primary and £3,841 - £27,561 for secondary.

It was suggested that the Schools Forum consider Option 2 as the best way forward in ensuring that the funding is spent on the most appropriate resources available to children and families across a district. Through the Place Based Approach (PBA) it was intended to target support to reduce demand on the highest level of the system and use the resource to prevent children and families needing statutory services. PBA was a collaborative approach using the right resources (multi-skilled teams, universal services, voluntary sector, communities etc.) at the right time to improve outcomes for children, young people, families, vulnerable people and communities in an identified locality. It was intended that existing quality assured commissioned providers would be utilised as well as the developing relationships with partners, together with shared locality budgets. It was suggested that this approach would provide a real opportunity for schools to shape provision for children and families across a district, it connected resources and would ensure added value whilst supporting the aims of schools so children could fulfil their potential and prosper. If approved, further analysis and agreement would need to be completed in each district with the PBA implementation, this would determine how the district allocation was divided and if any other opportunities would be suitable. As an example, members were provided with a brief profile of Tamworth, together with a diagram which demonstrated how the DSG could add value to the wider PBA.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) Option 2, as outlined above, be agreed; and
- b) An update on progress be brought to the meeting of Schools Forum to be held in the Summer Term 2018.

77. School Quality Assurance and Intervention - Options for Devolving the Funding for School Improvement

At their meeting in October 2016 Schools Forum asked for options to be provided for devolving the funding for School Improvement. Three options were put forward for consideration, as follows:

Option 1: All members of Schools Forum agree to devolve the funding for School Improvement from Central Expenditure at a reduced level (expected to be £450k) so that the contribution from Central Expenditure and the School Improvement Grant (SIG) that the local authority (LA) receives from the DfE (expected to be £350k, based on the number of maintained schools as at September 2017) is equivalent to £818k.

The LA would continue to commission Entrust to provide the school improvement to maintained schools based on a school category of concern.

Once a decision to reduce the Central Expenditure element of school funding has been made, this cannot be increased in subsequent years.

Should all members of the Schools Forum agree this option, there should be no direct impact on the levels of support and interventions schools currently received. The LA would continue to use the funding to commission from Entrust the support and challenge for the different categories of maintained schools, including school reviews and access to bespoke support. The LAs Commissioning Managers would continue to undertake quality assurance activity to evaluate the impact on outcomes for learners and where necessary escalate or deescalate levels of concern and associated intervention.

Option 2: All members of Schools Forum agree to devolve the funding to all schools. Maintained Schools Forum members agree to de-delegate approximately £400k for school improvement services. This was based on approximately £7.56 per pupil using October 2016 census figures. This funding and the LA SIG of £350k would provide a total value of £750k to be used to commission Entrust to provide school improvement support to maintained schools based on a school category of concern.

Through de-delegation, the maintained schools' members vote by phase on any areas proposed for de-delegation. Therefore a different decision for maintained primary and secondary schools was possible with this option. The outcome of the vote was binding for all maintained schools within the phase.

Once a decision to remove the school improvement element from the Central Expenditure has been made, this cannot be reversed in subsequent years.

Option 2 would result in a reduced value of funding from £818k to £750k. Maintained Schools Forum members would need to approve the value of the de-delegated amount. The specific reduction of the level of support would need to be negotiated with Entrust to

reflect the reduced value. The LA would continue to use this funding to commission from Entrust the support and challenge for the different category of maintained schools as in Option 1 but at a reduced level.

Option 3: All members of Schools Forum agree to devolve the funding to all schools. Maintained Schools Forum members do not agree to de-delegate funding for school improvements services. Maintained schools would be required to commission school improvement support to address their own school improvement priorities or concerns identified. The LA would seek to use the SIG to commission Entrust to monitor the effectiveness of maintained schools.

With Option 3 the funding would be devolved to schools via the current agreed formulae. Schools would then be required to commission their own support to address areas for improvement or aspects of concern. The LA would have no funding to commission school improvement support on behalf of schools.

It was queried who was responsible for measuring the effectiveness of support from Entrust. Members were informed that this was done through Entrust's own quality assurance processes and also by the LA, and that it was possible to provide data on this through the school's categorisation process.

Members were invited to vote on the three options, with the following outcome:

Option 1 – 2 Votes

Option 2 – 0 Votes

Option 3 – 13 Votes

RESOLVED – That Option 3, as outlined above, be agreed.

78. Schools Budget 2018-19: De-delegation, Central Expenditure and Education Functions

The Schools Forum is required by the Finance Regulations to annually approve:

- Central Expenditure budgets
- The amount of funding to be retained centrally to fund services previously funded by the ESG retained duties.

Maintained school members only are required annually to:

- Vote on each de-delegated budget heading by phase
- Approve a levy per pupil to fund duties performed by the Local Authority (LA) and previously funded by the ESG general duties rate.

For 2018-19 the allocations to LAs would be made using the new National Funding Formula (NFF). DSG allocations would not be known until December, and LAs needed to submit school budgets to the EFA by 19 January 2018. This timescale meant decisions on budget areas need to be made at this time to enable schools and services time to plan for their budgets and responsibilities for 2018-19.

De-delegation

Under the national funding arrangements the government wanted schools to have the opportunity to have as much funding and responsibility delegated to them as possible. Each year the Schools Forum representatives for maintained primary and secondary schools were required to vote on behalf of the schools they represented to determine whether or not a range of costs currently met centrally would transfer to maintained schools for them to manage themselves. The budget for these costs would transfer to schools on a formula basis. Academies were not part of these arrangements since these responsibilities and the funding for them were automatically delegated to academies through the EFA use of the local funding formula.

The budgets de-delegated last year are set out in the table below. The values were 2017-18 budget levels for all primary and secondary schools (ie including academies) to provide the context of values involved. Actual figures for 2018-19 were not yet known and would be finalised over the next few months as the settlement and school census became available.

Areas proposed for de-delegation for 2018-19

Budget Area	Primary £m	Secondary (including middle) £m
Insurances (mainly premises related)	1.834	2.479
Staff costs (Maternity Pay)	1.189	1.010
Staff costs (Union Duties)	0.142	0.060
School Specific Contingency	0.390	0.185
Support for ethnic minority pupils or under-achieving groups	0.877	0.319
Licences and Subscriptions	0.505	0.205
Behaviour Support Services	0.529	Delegated
FSM eligibility	0.028	0.016

Having considered these areas, the voting Forum Members for each phase agreed that the decision taken last year for each phase and for each area should stand again for 2019-19, subject to clarification on the licence for "My Finance" and the figure for the Primary Behaviour Support Services.

Central Expenditure

There were some areas of central expenditure which needed to be considered by the Schools Forum and the draft Finance Regulations set out the requirements for approvals/consultation. It should be noted that final regulations had not yet been issued, so in the event that these were different there could be changes.

Part 1 – Central Services

There were a number of headings within this part of the regulations to which the following rules applied:

- a) The level of expenditure could not be increased above 2017-18 levels
- b) The expenditure against these budgets must be as a result of arrangements that already existed before 1 April 2013 – historical commitment
- c) The Schools Forum must approve the amount of the budget set for each heading

The headings under which Staffordshire currently retained funding to spend centrally are set out in the table below, together with indicative 2018-19 budget levels:

	2017-18	2018-19 indicative £
Admissions & appeals	786,050	786,050
Maintenance and servicing of Schools Forum	11,780	11,780
Prudential borrowing	924,130	924,130
Combined Services		
Families First - Targeted Services (LST)	1,448,000	1,448,000
Entrust - – Contribution to School Improvement Division Service Delivery Agreement.	818,250	discussed separately
SEN transport	250,140	250,140
	4,238,350	3,420,100

Schools Forum approved the continued funding of these areas centrally at no higher than the indicative amounts, with final values to be confirmed at the March meeting. In consideration of the previous item, Forum had decided to devolve School Improvement funding and associated responsibilities to schools.

Part 2 – Central Schools Expenditure

Staffordshire did not retain significant amounts of funding under these headings, to which the following rules applied:

- a) The Schools Forum must approve the amounts of funding to be retained centrally
- b) For the pupil growth fund and infant class size funding any underspend from the previous year must be added to the ISB
- c) For the pupil growth fund, falling roll fund and new school fund the Schools Forum must approve the criteria used and be consulted before expenditure was incurred

	2017-18 £	2018-19 indicative £
Infant Class Size	95,000	95,000
Significant Pupil Growth / New school funding	500,000	500,000
Falling rolls fund	n/a	n/a
	595,000	595,000

Schools Forum approved the continuing use of the pupil growth and class size funds at the indicative levels set out above.

Part 3 – Central Early Years Expenditure

There was a requirement for the Schools Forum to approve the central expenditure. This was not the expenditure provided to settings for their running costs in providing the free entitlement for two, three and four year olds but was in respect of support services for providers of early years' education. The 2017-18 central early years expenditure was limited to 7% following the introduction of the Early Years Funding Formula. The requirement was for central overheads to be limited to 5% of the Early Years Block Funding in 2018-19. The 5% was anticipated to be £2,055,964, a reduction of circa £500k, or 20% from 2017-18's central allocation. Members approved the proposed level of central support services for early years' provision.

Education Functions

Central Services to education were funded by a combination of council tax and DSG. The Teachers' Pension Added Years had been funded through Council Tax. This was an annual liability of circa £7.1m. The County Council would continue to fund this in 2018-19. Members considered the functions provided to all schools and previously funded by the retained duties ESG rate. Schools Forum approved the allocation in the central schools block for retained duties.

Members considered a list of the functions provided to maintained schools only and previously funded by the general duties ESG rate, along with the levy per pupil that would be required to fund each of these services. Maintained Schools Forum members agreed to the levies per pupil outlined to fund the costs of the associated services.

Schools Forum had considered options in an earlier item on the agenda in relation to non-statutory education welfare and maintained Schools Forum members had agreed to Option Four.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) The areas proposed for de-delegation 2018-19 be approved by maintained Schools Forum members, subject to clarification on the licence for "My Finance" and the figure for the Primary Behaviour Support Services;
- b) The indicative central expenditure budget amount set out above be approved;
- c) The amount included in the Central Schools Block to fund services previously funded by the ESG retained duties rate be retained centrally for this purpose;
- d) The levy per pupil in 2018-19 to fund statutory duties performed by the Local Authority and previously funded by the ESG general duties rate be approved by maintained Schools Forum members; and
- e) A decision in principle on the above four issues be agreed for 2019-2020 in order to assist with budget and service planning.

79. Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing of Schools

[Deborah Fern and David Gumsley, Entrust, in attendance for this item]

Any amendments to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools require the approval of Schools Forum. Members considered amendments to section 4.10.2 – borrowing for the purpose of funding premature retirement and redundancy costs.

The authority offered a facility for schools which required a loan to fund premature retirement and redundancy costs attributable to the school subject to the following criteria:

- The school is not in an Ofsted category of concern (special measures/serious weakness);
- The school is not eligible for intervention;
- The school is not subject to an academy order through sponsorship;
- The required loan is not less than £5,000.

Where the loan request does not meet any of the above criteria, the loan will be at the discretion of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

Loans that do meet the above criteria are offered on the following basis:

1. The maximum period over which schools can repay any loan is five years.
2. The loan shall be interest bearing and the rate shall be determined by the Director of Finance and Resources.
3. Schools will not be required to submit an application, but will be required to indicate their intention to take out a loan and its repayment period upon the issue of Section 188 notices.

In relation to point 2 above more clarity was requested regarding the interest rate to be determined.

[Note by Clerk: Clarification was provided after the meeting that the interest rate would be base plus 0.5%]

RESOLVED – That the revised Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools be approved.

80. Notices of Concern

Since the last Schools Forum meeting no new Notices of Concern had been issued.

Since the last meeting of the Schools Forum the County Council has withdrawn the following Notice of Concern for the reason given:

Bishop Rawle Primary 01.09.17 Sponsored by Moorlands Primary Federation

RESOLVED – That the withdrawal of the Notice of concern to the school listed above be noted.

81. Work Programme

Forum members requested the following additions to their work programme:

- a) A progress report on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant to be included for the Summer Term meeting; and

- b) An annual report on School Attendance Matters and Staffordshire's Education Welfare Team be requested.

82. Date of next meeting

RESOLVED – That:

- a) An Extraordinary Meeting of Schools Forum be held during the first two weeks of December 2017 to consider proposals for a new NFF; and
- b) The next ordinary meeting of Schools Forum be scheduled for Tuesday 16 January 2018, at 2.00 pm at the Kingston Centre, Stafford.

Chairman