

**LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 10:00 A.M. ON TUESDAY, 6 JULY 2021  
(Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams)**

Present:

**Schools Members:**

**Primary School Governors**

Stephen Booth  
Gerard Collins  
Robert Waring  
Karen Stracey  
Laurence Upton

**Academy Governor**

Kathleen Cooper  
Helen Dicker  
Louise Shaw  
Chris McConnachie

**Primary School Headteachers**

Daniel Ballard  
Sarah Barton  
Jenny Birkin  
Neil Gurman  
Deanne Marsh  
Keith Wright

**Academy Principal/Headteacher**

Gaynor Gorman  
James Keulemans  
Alan Porteous

**Alternative Provision Academy**

Holly Clark

**Secondary School Governors**

John Davey  
Gill Donohoe  
Brian Rollo

**Special School Academy**

**Special School Governor**

Laura Brennan

**Secondary School Headteachers**

Mark Jackson  
Julie Langham

**Special School Headteacher**

Peter Higham

**Nursery School Headteacher**

Lindsay Ingham

**Short Stay Governor**

**Nursery School Governor**

**Short Stay Headteacher**

**Members:**

**Early Years - PVI**

Sharon Fenton  
Peter Hindle  
Anne Peet

**Other Voting Members**

Rosie Fearn  
CC Sue Hind  
CC Andrea Kay  
Bill Mann

### **Observers**

David Fann (NAHT)  
CC Michael Goulthorp  
CC Jennifer Mein  
Ian Watkinson (NEU)  
Sam Ud-din (LASGB)

In attendance: Paul Bonser  
Dave Carr  
Sarah Callaghan  
Matthew Cornish  
Christopher Coyle  
Matt Dexter  
Millie Dixon  
Jon Howard  
Alison Leach  
Kevin Smith  
Howard Walsh  
Janet Wright

Stephen Booth chaired this meeting of the Forum as apologies had been received from Shaun Jukes.

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Sharon Alexander, Chris Bagguley, Ian Ball, Steve Campbell, Thelma Cullen, Katerina Gale, Eleanor Hick, Jan Holmes, Shaun Jukes, Lydia Mannion, Michelle O'Neil and Louise Parrish.

### **2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Sharon Fenton was present as a substitute for Sharon Alexander. Lindsay Ingham was present as a substitute for Jan Holmes.

### **3. FORUM MEMBERSHIP**

A number of membership changes had taken place since the last meeting. The following members are leaving the Forum, with the thanks of their colleagues:

- Ian Ball, Primary School Governor
- Louise Martin, Primary School Governor
- Eleanor Hick, Primary School Governor
- Katrina Gale, Primary School Headteacher
- Mark Jackson, Secondary School Headteacher
- Anne Peet, Early Years PVI representative
- Sandra Thornberry, PRU Governor
- CC Phillippa Williamson, County Council Representative
- CC David Foxcroft County, Council Representative
- CC Christian Wakeford County, Council Representative

Following the recent local government elections, the county council's representatives on the Forum have been revised:

- CC Jayne Rear, Cabinet Member for Education

- CC Michael Goulthorp, Lead Member for Education and Skills/Children and Families
- CC Anne Cheetham
- CC Andrea Kay
- CC Sue Hind

The county council will seek to appoint replacement school and early years representatives from September 2021.

It was also noted that data has now been received from the January 2021 census and analysed for schools forum membership purposes. No changes to the membership are currently required but further schools are expected to convert to academies over time and the membership balance will continue to be kept under review

### **The Forum**

- a) Noted the report**
- b) Thanked those members leaving the Forum**
- c) Welcomed, or welcomed back, colleagues joining the Forum**

## **4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 18 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

## **5. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no Matters Arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **6. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) HISTORIC COMMITMENTS - EARLY INTERVENTION AND MASH**

*Dave Carr, Head of Service Policy, Information and Commissioning (Start Well) and Chris Coyle, Head of Service MASH & Complex Safeguarding attended the meeting to present the reports on the respective services.*

The Forum were aware that the Historic Commitments element of the DSG Central School Services Block (CSSB) has been reducing over a number of years and the DfE have indicated that they will continue to unwind this funding to zero in future years.

In setting the Lancashire Schools Budget for 2021/22, the Forum supported a continuation of the existing combined budgets that are funded from the Historic Commitments element of DSG as follows:

- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service - £200k
- Multi-Agency safeguarding Hub (MASH) - £150k

As these remaining combined budget services were well regarded, the Forum had asked that enquiries be made of DfE to ascertain if DSG funding could continue to be used to support this provision as it could no longer be met from Historic Commitments. DfE had confirmed that other DSG funding could be used to support the services, subject to the agreement of the Forum.

Service representatives for MASH and Emotional Health and Wellbeing had therefore been invited meeting and to present information about what any future DSG funding would provide.

Dave and Chris presented information about the service offers provided, the benefits to schools and young people of the DSG funding and the outcomes achieved. Members also asked questions of the officers and provided feedback on their own usage of the services.

In connection with Operation Encompass, which operates as part of MASH it was confirmed that meetings were taking place about extending the operation to early years.

It was noted that formal decisions about the DSG contributions can only be taken by Forum in January 2022, when we have received our 2022/23 DSG allocations from government, but members expressed support for the services provided and recommended continued DSG contributions for each service be built into the 2022/23 Schools Budget at existing levels.

**The Forum:**

- a) **Noted the reports.**
- b) **Thanked Dave and Chris for their presentations.**
- c) **Recommended continued DSG contributions for each service be built into the 2022/23 Schools Budget at existing levels.**

**7. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCHOOLS BLOCK WORKING GROUP**

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group held on 22 June 2021.

***i. Schools Budget Outturn 2020/21***

This report provided information on the Schools Budget Outturn for 2020/21 and the group gave particular consideration to the Schools Block and Central School Services Block (CSSB) expenditure.

It was noted that the the Overall Schools Budget outturn position for 2020/21 shows an underspend of circa £5m.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report and the 2020/21 Schools Budget final financial outturn position.*

**The Forum noted the 2020/21 Schools Budget outturn position.**

***ii. School Balances and Clawback 2020/21***

This report provided information on School Balances and Clawback for 2020/21 and included details of individual school balances at 31 March 2021. Views on future clawback arrangements were sought as part of the report.

The final outturn position against schools delegated budgets at 31 March 2021 was an underspend of £42.832m. This means that school balances have increased by £42.832m in 2020/21, to a total of £90.151m.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Noted the overall school balances position at 31 March 2021, including the individual school level information provided in the report.*

- c) *Noted the previous Forum decision to suspend the application of clawback at 31 March 2021.*
- d) *Noted the increase in committed balances at 31 March 2021.*
- e) *Recommended that clawback be again suspended in 2021/22, but that notice be given to schools that it will be reintroduced at the end of 2022/23 (if there are no significant covid related impacts in the intervening period) at the historic levels:*
  - o *A clawback rate of 50% is to be applied to any balance above guideline in the first year a school exceeds the guideline (after adjusting for exemptions)*
  - o *A clawback rate of 100% is to be applied to any balance in excess of guideline where the guideline has been breached for two or more consecutive years (after adjusting for exemptions)*
- f) *Noted the underspend on the supply scheme budget at 31 March 2021.*
- g) *Recommended that the scheme reserve be held at the current time to mitigate against the risk of high costs being incurred in 2021/22.*
- h) *Recommended that the supply scheme position be reassessed at March 2022, when judgements could be made about the appropriate level of reserves going forward, if 2021/22 has been a stable year for the scheme.*

*Subsequent to the working group information has been communicated around other NW LAs about school balances across the region and all LAs that shared information had seen significant increases. Lancashire has the highest monetary figure, as the LA with the most schools, but there are significant increases in % terms for all LAs, some greater than Lancashire's.*

## **The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

### **iii. De-Delegation Proposals 2022/23**

Subject to final confirmation of the 2022/23 school funding arrangements by the DfE, it is envisaged that a de-delegation consultation will be issued to maintained primary and secondary schools in early September 2021. This report provided the working group with an opportunity to shape proposals

In 2021/22, the Forum formally approved 4 service de-delegations, relating to:

- Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions
- Heritage Learning Service - Primary Schools Only
- Support for Schools in Financial Difficulty
- Inclusion Hubs - Primary Schools Only

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Supported the de-delegation proposals being included in the consultation with schools, to be issued in September 2021.*
- c) *Requested further modelling around the transition away from lump sums in the charging methodology.*

*Subsequent to the working group, officers undertook further modelling to assess the impact of a lump sum reduction of 33% and 50% which was provided for members to consider.*

**The Forum:**

- a) **Ratified the Working Group's recommendations.**

- b) Supported the 50% reduction in lump sum charges, with the associated increases in per pupil charges, being applied to the relevant de-delegation charging methodologies in 2022/23, for inclusion in the consultation with schools.

**iv. Scheme for Financing Schools in Lancashire**

This report provided information on responses and comments received to a consultation about proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools in Lancashire, some based on updated DfE statutory guidance, plus some locally proposed amendments.

School responses were:

Question	Responses						Total	
	Yes		No		Not sure			
Do you support the changes to the Lancashire scheme for financing schools that are being introduced as a result of the updated DfE scheme guidance?	59	83%	1	1%	11	15%	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
Do you support the changes to the Lancashire scheme for financing schools that are being proposed locally to prohibit the purchase of alcohol for human consumption from school funds except where it is to be used in religious services?	52	74%	11	16%	7	10%	<b>70</b>	<b>100%</b>
Do you support the changes to the Lancashire scheme for financing schools that are being proposed locally to include all school staff in the register of business interests?	57	80%	5	7%	9	13%	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

It was noted that approval of scheme amendments is a formal Schools Forum decision and approval will be sought to update the Lancashire scheme as part of the decision making process for the July 2021 Forum meeting.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Recommended that the proposed scheme amendments be approved by the Forum*

**The Forum**

- a) **Noted the consultation responses and the working group recommendations.**

- b) Maintained school members unanimously voted to approve the proposed scheme amendments.**

**v. Growth Fund Update – 2021 22**

Following Forum approval of amendments to the Growth Fund policy at the last meeting, this report provided an update on expenditure from the fund to date in 2021/22 and highlighted the possible reduced level of funding that would be received in future DSG settlements.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report.*

*Since the working group meeting, the new school proposals have been developed further and the proposals for an all through school by expanding the age range at Ribblesdale High school, have been published.*

**The Forum**

- a) **Noted the report and the update on the 'new' school proposals.**
- b) **Approved the 'new school' element of the Growth Fund policy being applied to support the start-up costs for the new primary phase school.**

**vi. Split Site Criteria Update**

This report sought views on rebasing the level of split site allocations for 2022/23.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Supported the uplift of the split site criteria allocations for 2022/23.*

**The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

**vii. Schools Forum Annual Report 2020/21**

A draft Forum annual report for 2021/22 was presented for comment.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report*
- b) *Recommended to the Schools Forum that the 2020/21 Annual Report be approved for publication.*

**The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

**8. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HIGH NEEDS BLOCK WORKING GROUP**

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group meeting held on 15 June 2021.

**i. Inclusion Service Update**

Dr Sally Richardson, Head of Inclusion Service, attended the Working Group for this item.

A presentation on the Review of SEND Sufficiency was provided with an opportunity for colleagues to comment.

The presentation contained background data on pupil numbers in each area of the county and forecasts around changes that may occur in the pupil population going forward and mapped this to the current SEND provision by phase, split into maintained and non-maintained delivery . The data is being used to identify where additional provision was required.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the information provided on the presentation.*
- b) *Expressed some initial comments on the information and asked if the presentation could be circulated to members with the opportunity to provide any further feedback.*
- c) *Thanked Sally for the work that had gone into producing the report.*

## **The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

### **ii. Schools Budget Outturn 2020/21**

This report provided information on the Schools Budget Outturn for 2020/21 and the group gave particular consideration to the High Needs Block expenditure.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report and the 2020/21 Schools Budget final financial outturn position.*

*Subsequent to the Working Group meeting the county council received information from the results of a survey conducted by the Society of County Treasurers (SCT) on DSG budget deficits. The survey was conducted in May 2021 and collates responses from all 40 county councils with SCT membership.*

*Headlines from the survey include:*

- I. *In 2020-21 SCT members received £20.37bn of Dedicated Schools Grant, up from £19.2bn in 2018-19 and forecasted to rise to £23.2bn in 2024-25.*
- II. *An increasing share has been and will be allocated to high needs – from 14.8% in 2018-19 to 17.7% in 2024-25.*
- III. *Funding is expected to rise for all blocks except for Central Services.*
- IV. *DSG Deficits are expected to reach £410m per year in 2024-25 – a cumulative deficit of £1.84bn.*
- V. *SCT members forecast a total transfer of £198m from schools and central blocks to High Needs over the surveyed period.*
- VI. *Despite this, High Needs deficits are forecasted to increase in size each year following a slight contraction in 2020-21.*
- VII. *In cumulative terms, High Needs deficits have increased or are forecasted to increase throughout the surveyed period; currently (March 2021) at almost £750m this is forecasted to almost triple to well over £2bn by March 2025. Almost all SCT members saw an in-year high needs deficit in 2019-20 and 2020-21.*

*As indicated in the outturn report to the working group, Lancashire reported an in year surplus of almost £1m in 2020/21 against HNB, but there are still considerable demand led pressures on the block and 2020/21 was an particularly unusual year.*

## **The Forum**

- a) **Noted the additional information provided in the SCT survey.**



## **b) Ratified the Working Group's recommendations.**

### **iii. School Balances and Clawback 2020/21**

This report provided information on School Balances and Clawback for 2020/21 and included details of individual school balances at 31 March 2021. Views on future clawback arrangements were sought as part of the report.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Noted the overall school balances position at 31 March 2021, including the individual school level information provided in the report.*
- c) *Noted the previous Forum decision to suspend the application of clawback at 31 March 2021.*
- d) *Noted the increase in committed balances at 31 March 2021.*
- e) *Recommended that clawback be again suspended in 2021/22, but that notice be given to schools that it will be reintroduced at the end of 2022/23 (if there are no significant covid related impacts in the intervening period) at the historic levels:*
  - *A clawback rate of 50% is to be applied to any balance above guideline in the first year a school exceeds the guideline (after adjusting for exemptions)*
  - *A clawback rate of 100% is to be applied to any balance in excess of guideline where the guideline has been breached for two or more consecutive years (after adjusting for exemptions)*
- f) *Noted the underspend on the supply scheme budget at 31 March 2021.*
- g) *Recommended that the scheme reserve be held at the current time to mitigate against the risk of high costs being incurred in 2021/22.*
- h) *Recommended that the supply scheme position be reassessed at March 2022, when judgements could be made about the appropriate level of reserves going forward, if 2021/22/23 has been a stable year for the scheme.*

## **The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

### **iv. HNB Commissioned Place Process**

This report provided information about possible amendments to the early notification procedure in the HNB commissioned place process for 2022/23.

#### *PRU Process 2022/23*

It was proposed that correspondence on indicative place numbers for 2022/23 to PRUs is not issued in July 2021 but is instead circulated in autumn term 2021. At that time, it is hoped that indicative data will include input from the service to refine the commissioned places to figures that will be more closely aligned to the final budget places and can take account of the latest recommendations from the AP strategy group.

No change to special school process were proposed.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Supported the proposed changes to the commissioned place process for 2022/23.*

## **The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

**v. Schools Forum Annual Report 2020/21**

A draft Forum annual report for 2021/22 was presented for comment.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report*
- b) *Recommended to the Schools Forum that the 2020/21 Annual Report be approved for publication.*

**The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EARLY YEARS BLOCK WORKING GROUP**

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group meeting held on 15 June 2021.

***i.Schools Forum Early Years Block Membership***

This report provided an update on early years PVI membership of the group.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Welcomed Phillipa Perks as one of the formal Schools Forum representatives from September 2021.*
- c) *Thanked Anne Peet for her contribution to the work of the Forum*
- d) *Thanked Peter Hindle for agreeing to extend his membership*

**The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

***ii.Funding Agreement for the Provision of Early Education Funding 2021/22, including sector consultation responses on PVI Headcount Dates and Interim Payments Terms***

This report provided information on changes to the Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector (PVI) Funding Agreement, and Schools Sector Memorandum of Understanding for Early Education Funding for the 2021/22 academic year.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report, including the feedback from the consultation with the sector*
- b) *Noted that recommendations from the Early Years Consultative Group about PVI Headcount Dates and Interim Payments Terms had been accepted by the county council and built into the updated funding agreement and memorandum of understanding*
- c) *Requested clarification around a small number of amended clauses in the documents*
- d) *Recommended that the county council consider the proposed amendment to the funding agreement arrangements relating to funding for settings that received an Inadequate judgement from OfSTED*

*Subsequent to the working group meeting some feedback has been provided clarifying the rationale for a small number of amendments. Sarah Callaghan confirmed that that the LA wanted to support our early years settings with regard to the request relating to settings that received an Inadequate judgement from OfSTED and was looking into the request.*

**The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

### **iii. Funding for local authorities in financial year 2021 to 2022**

An update was provided on DfE announcements around changes to the way the DfE will fund the early years block in 2021/22, which included moving to a termly count with aligned census points for maintained and pvi providers.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report*

**The Forum noted the report.**

### **iv. Maintained Nursery School (MNS) Review**

This report provided information on review of maintained nursery school provision that was currently taking place.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report.*

*Members noted that the LA was producing findings from the review but that there were not currently available in the public domain.*

**The Forum noted the report.**

### **v. Schools Budget Outturn 2020/21**

This report provided information on the Schools Budget Outturn for 2020/21 and the group gave particular consideration to the Early Years Block expenditure.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report and the 2020/21 Schools Budget final financial outturn position.*

**The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

### **vi. School Balances and Clawback 2020/21**

This report provided information on School Balances and Clawback for 2020/21 and included details of individual school balances at 31 March 2021. Views on future clawback arrangements were sought as part of the report.

*The Working Group:*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Noted the overall school balances position at 31 March 2021, including the individual school level information provided in the report.*
- c) *Noted the previous Forum decision to suspend the application of clawback at 31 March 2021.*
- d) *Noted the increase in committed balances at 31 March 2021.*
- e) *Recommended that clawback be again suspended in 2021/22, but that notice be given to schools that it will be reintroduced at the end of 2022/23 (if there are no significant covid related impacts in the intervening period) at the historic levels:*
  - o *A clawback rate of 50% is to be applied to any balance above guideline in the first year a school exceeds the guideline (after adjusting for exemptions)*

- o *A clawback rate of 100% is to be applied to any balance in excess of guideline where the guideline has been breached for two or more consecutive years (after adjusting for exemptions)*
- f) *Noted the underspend on the supply scheme budget at 31 March 2021.*
- g) *Recommended that the scheme reserve be held at the current time to mitigate against the risk of high costs being incurred in 2021/22.*
- h) *Recommended that the supply scheme position be reassessed at March 2022, when judgements could be made about the appropriate level of reserves going forward, if 2021/22/23 has been a stable year for the scheme.*

### **The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

#### **vii.Schools Forum Annual Report 2020/21**

A draft Forum annual report for 2021/22 was presented for comment.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report*
- b) *Recommended to the Schools Forum that the 2020/21 Annual Report be approved for publication.*

### **The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

#### **viii.SEN Inclusion Fund**

On 17 May 2021, the latest meeting of the group established to consider matters around the SEN Inclusion fund took place. This report provided an update on key issues.

*The Working Group*

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Welcomed the progress being made on this issue through the task and finish group.*

*Subsequent to the papers being published, a further meeting of the task and finish group had taken place on 5 July, and an Appendix was circulated containing revised funding proposals for the SEN Inclusion Fund, which it was hoped can be implemented from the start of the autumn term 2021. The proposals have been developed by the county council's specialist teachers team in conjunction with the Early Years Sub- Group and contain increased funding levels.*

*The Forum supported the proposals and the increased funding levels for the SEN Inclusion Fund and praised the positive work that had been undertaken by Helen Connolly and the service to develop the new proposals.*

#### **The Forum:**

- a) **Noted the report and the additional information provided about proposed changes to the SEN inclusion Fund.**
- b) **Ratified the Working Group's recommendations and supported the changes and increased funding levels for the SEN Inclusion Fund.**

**ix. Education recovery announcement for early years providers**

It was noted that funding had been made available nationally to assist educationally recovery, which included the provision of £153m for training for early years staff to support the very youngest children’s learning and development. Further details were still awaited.

*The Working Group*  
a) *Noted the report.*

**The Forum noted the report.**

**x. Early Career Teachers (ECTs)**

A query was raised at the about whether a private nursery could support an ECT through their two year pathway. Officers agreed to check and confirm the position.

*The Working Group*  
a) *Noted the question raised and that an answer would be circulated to members.*

**The Forum noted the report and that information circulated to working group members subsequent to the meeting.**

**10. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHAIRS' WORKING GROUP**

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Chairs' Block Working Group meeting held on 22 June 2021.

**i. Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) –Categorisations**

This report provided an update to the Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) categorisations based on March 2021 outturn data.

The categorisation data for All schools based on school outturn data from 31 March 2021 is shown below:

<b>Category</b>	<b>No. of schools</b>	<b>%</b>
1	4	0.7%
2	7	1.2%
3	43	7.6%
4	514	90.5%
	568	

The working group noted some concern that the analyses may be overly optimistic as it is based on outturn data at March 2021 which may be artificially high.

*The Group:*  
a) *Noted the report and analysis provided.*  
b) *Noted that the Schools Block working group were being presented with a report about the charging methodology associated with de-delegations including consideration of removing the lump sum element of the charge over time, which could disadvantage small schools.*

**The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

## **ii. Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) Support Criteria**

This report sought views on proposed changes to SIFD support criteria.

It was proposed to amend the SIFD support criteria to indicate that interest charges and provision of school finance support will be met centrally from SIFD funding for schools with an agreed recovery plan, **or an agreed sustainability plan.**

Members supported the proposals but questioned how the equity of any approvals would be sustained, and officers confirmed that the plan would need to achieve at least an in year balanced budget position for the plan to be approved.

*The Group:*

- a) *Noted the report and the clarification around sustainability plan approvals.*
- b) *Supported the proposed Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) Support Criteria amendments to provide support for schools with an approved sustainability plan.*

## **The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations**

### **11. APPRENTICESHIP LEVY**

This report provides information arising from the Forum seminar held on 11 May 2021 on the Apprenticeship Levy Pooled Payroll issues.

The Apprenticeship Levy team have been in discussions with the ESFA around this issue over a number of years but had been advised that it has not been possible to identify an alternative registration route for employers without their own PAYE reference number, that provides an acceptable level of assurance.

The county council has provided information to schools via the portal and issued a link where any school or academy that is affected by this issue can register their details, to enable the team to report how many schools this is effecting and keep them up to date. The form is available [here](#)

Subsequent to the May meeting, the Apprenticeship Levy Team are continuing to pursue possible solutions. The team also requested that Levy paying schools are asked to consider any requirements for upskilling existing staff for September and get in touch with the apprenticeship team

Members reported back on unhelpful responses to their own representations and shared frustration about the impact this technical issue appeared to be having on the ability of some schools to support young people accessing apprenticeships or upskilling existing staff.

It was also reiterated that pooled payroll issues also impacted on the ability of some schools to access other funding opportunities.

Sarah reported that Edwina Grant had raised this issue in regular contact with DfE officials and would do so again.

## **The Forum**

- a) **Noted the information and welcomed the continued representations to find a sensible resolution to the pooled payroll issues.**

## **12. URGENT BUSINESS**

Information was provided on the decisions taken using the urgent business procedure to approve the Forum's response to the DfE Consultation on changes to the payment process of schools' business rates. The proposal is for a central payments system operated nationally by DfE.

23 responses were received from members. Some sought clarifications about the proposed process or made more general observations about the implications of the change, but all supported the draft response without any amendments.

A Forum consultation response was therefore submitted on 4 May 2021 and a copy was provided for members,

### **The Forum**

- a) **Noted the report.**

## **13. ORACLE FUSION PRESENTATION**

*Jon Howard (Head of Payroll Services) , Allison Leach (Payroll Service Manager) and Matthew Cornish, (Socitm Advisory Senior Consultant) attended the meeting to provide information on the Oracle Fusion project*

Colleagues presented information on the Changes to Oracle. Information included

- Lancashire County Council is replacing Oracle R12 (also known as eBusiness Suite) with cloud based platform Oracle Fusion for HR, Payroll, Finance and Procurement business processes
- Oracle Fusion is a modern, user-friendly system which is faster and easier to navigate
- Go Live for the HR & Payroll modules is currently planned for Spring 2022

It was noted that updates were given on the Schools Portal and that schools would be kept informed and provided with relevant training as the project continued.

### **The Forum**

- a) **Noted the report.**

## **14. FORUM CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no Forum related correspondence to consider at this meeting.

## **15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **i. Schools Finance Review of Service Offer for 2022/23 questionnaire**

Kevin Smith reported that the Finance Team had issued a survey to schools seeking views on the finance service going forward. The survey closed at the end of June and 165 responses were received from schools.

An analysis of responses and the comments received are now being considered to help shape the service offer for 2022/23. Thanks were expressed to all the schools that took the time to respond.

**The Forum noted the information.**

**ii. New Education Strategy**

Sarah Callaghan reported that a consultation was to take place on a new Education Strategy and Forum would be invited to respond. The importance of aligning Forum funding recommendations with strategy objectives was emphasised.

**The Forum noted the information.**

**16. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that next scheduled Forum meeting would be held at 10.00 am on Tuesday 19 October 2021. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course.

A copy of the forum schedule of meetings for the 2021/22 academic year was also provided. The meetings included a physical venue but may be conducted virtually.