

**Bury Schools Forum
Thursday 10 July 2025
Microsoft Teams**

Attendance

Early Years

None in Attendance

Maintained Primary

Alyson Malach,
Simon Waddington,
Rachel O'Neil

Governor (Plus Governors Forum) (S)
Headteacher – Hollins Grundy Primary
Headteacher - Hoyle Nursery School

Maintained Secondary

None in Attendance

Maintained Special

None in attendance

Academy Primary

Martin Van Hecke
Kelly Macadam
James Gabrielides

The Sycamore CE Trust – St Thomas's C E Primary
(MAT CEO)
Head Teacher – Unsworth Primary

Academy Secondary

None in Attendance

Special

None in Attendance

Pupil Referral Unit

None in Attendance

Non-Schools Sector

Helena Thom
Catherine Ainsley

NEU
NASUWT

16 – 19 Education Representative

None in attendance

Children's Services Department

Stephen Holden
Philip Herd
Alison Vidler

Director of Education and Skills
Finance
Senior Schools Finance Officer (Schools & Systems
Finance)

Observer(s)

None in attendance

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Joanne Hurst
Carinna Vitti

Headteacher – Millwood School
Principal – Holy Cross College

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

3 DEDICATED SCHOOLS' GRANT (DSG) POSITION 2024 - 2025

Alison Vidler presented a report setting out the DSG position 2024 - 2025.

It was explained that the Council had a deficit position of £18.459m at the beginning of the 2024-25 financial year. During the financial year, the service has worked on making savings where possible, whilst facing increased demand.

Due to the ongoing significant demand for high needs funding, the Council has agreed a revised DSG deficit recovery plan with the Department for Education (DfE), which extends the period for deficit recovery until 2028-29.

The Council's financial accounts have now been prepared with the DSG deficit position at the end of the 2024-25 financial year (pre audit) standing at £19.041m, an increased deficit position of £0.582m.

The work on the PSV workstreams, and reducing expenditure in future years, is paramount in ensuring a balanced position in the High Needs Block and a continued reduction in the carried forward DSG deficit position.

Alison Vidler presented an update on Schools Balances for information.

It was explained that Schools Balances brought forward from 2023-24 totalled £2.555m. At the end of the 2024-25 financial year, Schools Balances totalled £2.484m, a total reduction of £0.071m. These numbers do not include academies that the Local Authority does not report on. The outturn position is split as follows:

2024-25 Closing School Balances

Nursery 81,825
Primary 25,160
Secondary 1,370,489
Special 1,006,945
Total 2,484,419

The update included at Appendix 1 is the School Balances detail per Bury School and explained that it should be noted that the number of schools which are in a deficit position has reduced from 17 at the end of 2023-24, to 12 at the end of the 2024-25 financial year.

Of the 17 schools that ended 2023-24 with a deficit: 5 recovered the deficit in 2024-25; 2 converted to academy status; 4 have an approved deficit recovery plan; 3 have yet to agree a

deficit recovery plan; 3 planned to balance in 2024-25, but still ended the year with a deficit. Of the 12 schools ending 2024-25 with a deficit, there are 10 schools that cannot currently set a balanced budget for 2025-26: 4 already have an approved deficit recovery plan; 4 plans are currently being reviewed by Finance staff before submission for approval; 2 have not yet submitted a deficit recovery plan for approval. Discussions are ongoing with the schools that have not yet submitted a deficit recovery plan.

It was agreed:

That the contents of the report be noted

4 BURY SCHOOLS' FORUM REPRESENTATION JANUARY 2025 CENSUS

Alison Vidler presented a report explaining the schools forum member representation in relation to the proportion of maintained schools and academies in the borough.

It was explained that the January 2025 census showed that Bury has 68% of its Primary and Secondary pupils in Academies and 32% in Maintained Schools.

Forum representation also reflects the proportion of Secondary and Primary age children within each category, which confirms Academies with 45% Secondary and 55% Primary, and Maintained Schools with 37% Secondary and 63% Primary.

The report set out the membership from both Maintained and Academy schools in both primary and high schools, PRU, Early Years, 16 – 19 and teachers professional associations.

Due to recent and forthcoming academy conversions, the current representation of Forum needs to be adjusted so that it continues to be representative. The current representation is summarised below. Academies have 11 representatives; 5 Secondary (of which 3 are currently vacant), 5 Primary (of which 1 is currently vacant) and 1 Special. Maintained Schools have 5 representatives; 1 Secondary (which is currently vacant), 3 Primary (of which 1 is currently vacant) and 1 Special.

Stephen Holden explained that representation would be requested through various different groups, meetings and newsletters to request nominations to the vacant seats on the Forum.

It was agreed:

That the contents of the report be noted.

5 PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Alison Vidler presented a report setting out the proposed revisions to the scheme for financing schools.

Additions and amendments were summarised within the report. The Draft Scheme for Financing Schools was appended to the report.

It was agreed:

That the revisions set out within the report be approved.

6 FACILITIES TIME FOR UNION DUTIES

Stephen Holden presented a briefing note setting out the different funding models for the funding of facilities time for union representation in schools.

Facilities time is a statutory entitlement that allows trade union representatives to take reasonable time off from their normal duties to carry out union-related activities. In the context of English schools, this provision plays a vital role in supporting effective industrial relations, promoting staff wellbeing, and ensuring that employee voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, and further reinforced by the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017, schools and academy trusts are required to provide and report on facilities time for union representatives.

This includes time for duties such as representing members in disciplinary or grievance procedures, attending training, and engaging in consultations with school leadership.

The Department for Education (DfE) encourages schools to manage facilities time in a way that balances operational needs with the legal rights of union representatives. While the DfE guidance outlines expectations for transparency and accountability, the implementation of facilities time varies significantly across local authorities and multi-academy trusts.

Bury's approach to the management of this has been through a pooled budget funded from de-delegation from maintained schools and buy-back from academies. The pooled budget funds backfill, up to a maximum of UPS3, for schools and academies that release staff for agreed union duties.

The Schools' Forum is invited to consider the following options for funding union facilities time across Bury schools:

1. Continue De-Delegation for Maintained Schools & Buy-back for Academies

Maintain the current arrangement where maintained schools de-delegate a portion of their budget to the local authority to fund a central pool for facilities time and academies pay via buy-back.

1.A Support backfill costs up to UPS3 (Current Arrangement)

1.B Support backfill costs at the full salary of the union representative

2. End De-Delegation and Academy Buy-back and Delegate Responsibility to Individual Schools

Cease central funding and allow each maintained school or academy to manage and fund facilities time independently from their delegated budgets.

3. Develop a Pooled Funding Arrangement for maintained schools and academies

End de-delegation and establish a voluntary pooled fund that includes contributions from both maintained schools and academies to support a shared facilities time service.

3.A Support backfill costs up to UPS3

3.B Support backfill costs at the full salary of the union representative

It was agreed:

1. To continue de-delegation for maintained schools & buy back by Maintaining the current arrangement where maintained schools de-delegate a portion of their budget to the local authority to fund a central pool for facilities time and academies pay via buy-back.

2. To defer any further decisions to the next meeting of the Schools' Forum when more representatives are in attendance.

7 THANKS TO STEPHEN HOLDEN

It was reported that this would be the last meeting of Schools' Forum that Stephen would attend in his interim role as Director of Education and Skills.

It was agreed:

That Stephen be thanked for his support to Schools' Forum.

Note: The meeting started at 4pm and ended at 5.10pm