

DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday 18th March, 2014 at 6.00 pm
at Saltwells Education Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mr Ridney – Chair

Mr Patterson – Vice-Chair

Mrs Belcher, Mr Conway, Mr Derham, Mrs Hannaway, Mr Kelleher, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Platford, Mrs Quigley, Ms Rogers, Mrs Ruffles, Mr Ward, Mr Warren, Mr Weaver, Mrs Withers and Mrs Wylie.

Person(s) not a member of the Forum but having an entitlement to attend meetings and speak

The Interim Director of Children's Services

Also in attendance

Education Funding Agency Representative (Observer); Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) (Directorate of Children's Services); Children's Services Finance Manager, Senior Principal Accountant and the Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

1. INTRODUCTIONS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs Garrett and Councillor Crumpton.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That, the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 25th February, 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Children's Services Finance Manager informed the Forum that further advice had been submitted by the Department of Education (DfE) in relation to the Universal Infant Free Schools Meals (UIFSM) initiative. A briefing note in relation to the information provided by the DfE was circulated to Members at the meeting.

It was confirmed that schools would receive a flat rate of £2.30 for the 2014/15 academic year for each meal taken by newly eligible pupils and that the provisional allocations would be based on an estimated national take-up of 87%. The allocation would be revised later on in the academic year and based on actual take-up data derived from individual School Censuses submitted in October 2014 and January 2015.

Further information would be provided to Primary Headteachers at the Primary Heads meeting on 9th April, 2014.

Arising from a question raised by a Secondary School Governor it was clarified that the £2.30 flat rate was to incorporate all expenditure including the additional staffing costs that may be accrued.

A Primary Headteacher re-iterated her concerns that had been raised at previous meetings in relation to the allocation of Pupil Premium and what incentive there was for parents to complete the relevant paperwork for a free school meal and the possibility that this issue could be addressed through the Local Authority Admission application forms. The Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) stated that he was aware that some discussions had taken place in relation to this issue, but had not been informed of the outcome.

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) Representative indicated that the EFA were aware of Schools concerns and that these issues were currently being addressed, but schools were to encourage parents to register eligible children for a free meal when starting school.

Clarification was sought in relation to the data that would be used when the funding allocation was revised. The EFA Representative confirmed that the data would be extracted from one particular day within the Schools Census and that the EFA would rely on Schools to be accurate when completing their School Census application.

5. EDUCATION FUNDING AGENCY (EFA) REPRESENTATIVE

Mr Howkins introduced himself to the Forum and gave a brief outline of his role as an EFA Observer.

RESOLVED

That the verbal presentation made by the Education Funding Agency Representative, be noted.

6. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted to provide Schools Forum with a membership update.

The Chair, on behalf of the Forum, expressed his thanks and best wishes to Mr Platford who would be leaving the Forum and the Local Authority in the very near future.

RESOLVED

That the report, and Appendix to the report submitted, in relation to Schools Forum Membership, be noted.

7. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT PLANNING PROCESS 2014/15 – FINAL UPDATE

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant budget planning process for 2014/15 and on the carrying out of the annual consultation on financial issues, as required by the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report, making particular reference to paragraph 7 and stated that the adjustment information to the High Needs Block had now been received from the DfE and an updated Table 1 was circulated to members at the meeting.

It was stated that the information had remained relatively the same however some significant deductions had been identified and were highlighted in red within the updated Table 1. It was considered that some of these areas had been un-justifiably reduced and therefore further information in relation to the deductions were to be obtained from the Education Funding Agency.

A secondary school headteacher raised concern in relation to the value of funding allocated for a child with Special Educational Needs and how this allocation did not cover the cost it took to provide the required support.

A Nursery School Headteacher raised concerns in relation to early years children with Special Educational Needs, in particular those children who do less than 25 hours and the significant loss in funding in comparison to a full-time child with Special Educational Needs.

Arising from a question raised, the Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) stated that the Local Authority was currently in the process of converting to Education, Health and Care Plans instead of statements for children, but these would be for children with more complex cases.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information contained in the report and the movement of the 2014/15 Dedicated Schools Grant between the three funding blocks as detailed in the updated Table 1, circulated to Members at the meeting, and paragraph 9 of the report submitted, be noted.
- (ii) That the Interim Director of Children's Services note the comments made by Members in relation to the financial issues for:-
 - Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs;
 - Arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school;
 - Arrangements for early years provision;
 - Administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants.

8. CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2015/16

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in respect of the ongoing review of the funding arrangements for Dudley mainstream schools and proposed changes for 2015/16.

The Senior Principal Accountant presented the report and informed Members that since the report had been discussed at the Headteachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group meeting on 14th March, 2014, further updates and a consultation in relation to fairer schools funding had been received from the Department for Education (DfE). A briefing note in relation to the updated information and consultation was circulated to Members at the meeting. A response to the consultation was required by the DfE on 30th April, 2014.

The Forum was informed that the proposal of the consultation was to allocate an additional £350m in 2015/16 to fund schools in the least fairly funded authorities, however Dudley had not been identified as one of the 62 Authorities listed that would benefit from this additional funding, but data was continuing to be validated.

The Senior Principal Accountant recommended that a Headteachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group meet, prior to 30th April, 2014, to discuss the detail and response to the consultation and that if Members felt it necessary an additional Dudley School Forum meeting be arranged to ratify the information prior to submission on 30th April, 2014.

In response to a concern raised as to how the list of 62 Authorities that would benefit from the additional funding had been comprised, the Education Funding Agency Representative stated that a formula approach had been used to calculate Authorities overall funding amounts.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information contained in the report and as circulated at the meeting in relation to the ongoing review of funding arrangements for Dudley mainstream schools and proposed changes for 2015/16, be noted.
- (ii) That an additional Headteachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group meeting be arranged to discuss the implications for Dudley and prepare a response to the Fairer Schools Funding consultation on behalf of Dudley Schools Forum.
- (iii) That an additional Dudley Schools Forum meeting be arranged on 29th April, 2014 to ratify the response to the Fairer Schools Funding consultation prior to submission to the DfE on 30th April, 2014.

9. BUDGET FACT SHEET NUMBER 2 – FEBRUARY 2014

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in respect of the Budget Fact Sheet No 2 that had been issued to Schools and the allocation of funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant reserve.

The Senior Principal Accountant presented the report and stated that a copy of Budget Fact Sheet No. 2 had been circulated to all Headteachers and was also available on the Dudley Schools Forum website.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be noted.

10. SCHOOLS FORUM TRAINING

The Children's Services Finance Manager reported verbally that a training event for current and newly elected Members would be held on 24th June, 2014 at Saltwells Education Development Centre. Further information would be circulated to all Members in due course.

RESOLVED

That the information presented verbally at the meeting in relation to Member's training, be noted.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates of future meetings be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm.

CHAIR