

DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 24th February, 2009 at 6.00 p.m. at Saltwells Educational Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mrs. Griffiths (Chairman)

Mrs. Blunt, Mr. Conway, Mrs. Garratt, Mr. Hatton, Mrs. Hazlehurst, Mr. Hinton, Mr. Hudson, Mr. James, Mr. Patterson, Mr. Ridley, Ms. Smith, Mr. Sorrell, Mr. Timmins, Mr. Warner and Mr. Wassall

By Invitation by standing invitation

Councillor Mrs Walker – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Officers

The Interim Director of Children’s Services and the 14-19 Partnership Manager (Early Years, Youth and Education Services), Directorate of Children’s Services, Mrs. K. Cocker - Children’s Services, Finance Manager and Mrs. S. Coates - Senior Principal Accountant (both Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement) and Mr. Sanders (Assistant Principal Officer, Democratic Services) - all Dudley M.B.C.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Elwis, Mr. Harrington, Mr. Leyshon, Mr. Millman and Mr. Mounney.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received from any member in respect of any item on the Agenda for this meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on the 9th December, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- (a) Further to Minute No. 4 (Dudley Catering and Client Services - Changes to Trading Arrangements with Schools), a question was asked on the position of a school that wished to terminate a contract after one year, following the annual review of charges, in the light of the minimum contract term being of two years. There was some urgency in resolving the matter, in view of the closing date for expressions of interest of 28th February, 2009. The Children's Services Finance Manager agreed to follow up the issue and report back to the questioner.
- (b) In relation to Minute 6 (Dedicated Schools Grant Indicative Budget Planning, 2009/10), in response to a question, the Children's Services Finance Manager confirmed the Council would be liable for funding the financial implications of single status and equal pay with regard to the possible closure of Pensnett School.

5. 14-19 DIPLOMA FUNDING

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted setting out the latest developments relating to 14-19 Diplomas and which sought approval to the funding framework in connection therewith for the 2009/10 academic year. The Forum was reminded that, at its meeting held on the 18th March, 2008, on consideration of three alternatives, Option 2 (Partial Delegation) of the Diploma Funding Framework had been approved for the 2008/09 academic year only, subject to the model not setting a precedent for future years.

The report now submitted summarised 2009/10 funding levels for pupils who started their diplomas in 2008/09 and would do so in 2009/10, in accordance with renewed guidance from the DCSF issued on 28th January, 2009, and set out diploma take-up timescales for Local Authorities for 2009/10. In presenting the report, the 14-19 Partnership Manager (Early Years, Youth and Education Services) reported orally that the 14-19 Strategic Partnership, at its meeting held on the 11th February, 2009, had resolved to recommend the continuation of Option 2 as the funding methodology to be adopted for diploma funding for 2009/10.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the continuation of the current diploma funding model Option 2 framework for the 2009/10 academic year be supported, subject to the model not setting a precedent for future years.

- (2) That the funding framework be reviewed by the 14-19 Strategic Partnership for 2010/11 and that a further recommendation to the Forum be made when appropriate.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONSULTATION ON THE DECOMMISSIONING OF INDIVIDUAL NEEDS CENTRES (INC's)

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted containing a summary report of the responses received to consultation regarding the decommissioning of the INC's located in mainstream schools and the consequential redirection of funding to new specialist provision in mainstream schools. The report also sought consideration of the removal of INC funding from the Minimum Funding Guarantee calculation from 2009/10 onwards.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, in line with the recommendations contained in the summary report and Appendix A to the report now submitted, the proposal to implement changes to the Resource Allocation Formula as a result of decommissioning the INC's located in mainstream schools and redirect funding to new specialist provision in mainstream schools, be endorsed.
- (2) That, as an excluded item, the removal of the INC funding from the Minimum Funding Guarantee base-calculation.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RESOURCE ALLOCATION FORMULA FOR MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS, 2009/10

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted containing a summary report of responses received to the consultation undertaken regarding the proposed changes to the Resource Allocation Formula for Schools for 2009/10.

In presenting the report, the Senior Principal Accountant confirmed that the proposals in the report had been approved by the Budget Working Group, at its meeting held the previous day.

RESOLVED

That the Interim Director of Children's Services be recommended that the changes to the resource allocation formula for mainstream schools for 2009/10, set out in paragraphs 7(f) and (g), 8(f) and (g), 9(g) and (h), 10(f) and (g), 11(d) and (e), of the summary report attached to Appendix A to the report now submitted be approved.

8. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FINANCIAL MONITORING - SCHOOLS BUDGET, 2008/09 FINANCIAL YEAR

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted providing the latest budget monitoring data in respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant for the 2008/09 financial year. Proposals for expenditure of the anticipated under-spend were set out in paragraph 8 of the report.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report regarding the 2008/09 financial year forecast Dedicated Schools Grant outturn, together with the proposed allocation in 2009/10 of the anticipated under-spend.

9. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT INDICATIVE BUDGET PLANNING, 2009/10

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Forum of the Indicative Budget Planning process for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2009/10.

The report indicated that the data required to calculate the DSG was not yet available, since the School Level Annual School Census was currently being recorded and validated. The calculation of the DSG would determine the overall budget available to fund the Individual Schools Budget and Central Budget areas.

The report contained the proposed breakdown of the DSG estimate for 2009/10 in the total sum of £192.069 million (exclusive of Learning Skills Council Grant funding of £3.3 million for 6th form provision. The report also stated the intention of the DCSF that Local Authorities move to the single funding formula from April, 2010 to bring both the private nursery funding and maintained nursery funding together. To aid this transition, the nursery education funding budget had been separated from the Central Budget areas shown in the breakdown. It was also noted in the report that second indicative school budgets for 2009/10 would be issued during the week commencing the 2nd March, 2009 and that an impact assessment for individual schools would be highlighted to the Interim Director of Children's Services, the Head Teachers' Consultative Forum Budget Working Group before the budgets were released to schools.

The implications to the individual schools budget of the Central Expenditure Limit (CEL) calculation were explained in paragraph 12 of the report and consideration in that context was given to the position of Cradley High School, for which the premises budget of £240,000 currently remained in the ISB. The report proposed the removal of that budget from the ISB for 2009/10 until such time as the premises of the school was disposed of, after which the budget would be returned to the ISB for distribution. If approved, such action would cause a breach in the CEL but no penalties were imposed by the DCSF on Local Authorities which breached the CEL.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be noted.

10. SCHOOLS FORUM SEMINARS - 16TH AND 17TH JANUARY, 2009

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted, giving feedback on the seminar held on the 16th and 17th January, 2009. Arising from discussion, it was noted that some Governors had not received nomination papers for appointment for the restructured Forum.

RESOLVED

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That consideration be given in the Terms of Reference of the restructured Forum to the issue of the substitute members.

11. TARGETED CAPITAL FUNDING: KITCHENS AND DINING ROOMS

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Forum of Dudley's submission to the DCSF for targeted capital funding in respect of school kitchens and dining room improvements.

A revised tabulation, setting out information regarding improvement projects in schools funded from this source, was circulated.

RESOLVED

That the Interim Director of Children's Services be recommended that the tabulation for capital funding for kitchens and dining rooms, by school, as circulated, be approved and submitted to the DCSF.

12. CRADLEY HIGH SCHOOL CLOSURE

The Children's Services Finance Manager reported orally on the latest position of these premises.

The school had now been fully boarded and secured and the only security costs currently being incurred were those in opening and closing the access gate in mornings and evenings, at approximately £40.00 per day. Endeavours were being made to locate a caretaker who lived in the locality and whom could perform that function and discussions were on-going with the Police on whether there was a need for the gate to be locked.

RESOLVED

That the position be noted.

13. JOB EVALUATION IN SCHOOLS

The Children's Services Finance Manager reported orally that, with this matter remaining in abeyance, schools continue to be asked to set aside some £20,000 from their budgets in 2009/10 towards anticipated commitments to meet the costs of single status and equal pay. As foundation and voluntary aided schools were not within the remit of the Council, however, those schools would not be asked to comply.

The implications of setting monies aside in relation to the auditing of school accounts, was discussed, in respect of which the Children's Services Manager agreed to report to the next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the information above be noted.

14. ACADEMY'S PROGRAMME

An oral report was given by the Children's Services Finance Manager on the considerations expressed by Head Teachers at the Budget Working Group on the possible financial implications of the Academy's programme.

In the discussion that ensued, the procedure for the establishment of an Academy was discussed, together with the issue of staffing transfer.

15. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Senior Principal Accountant reported that the issue of statements for 15 year old children was to be considered by the Access and Inclusion Group at a meeting to be held before the end of term.

CHAIRMAN