

## **DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM**

**Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 at 6.00 pm**  
**at Hillcrest School and Community Centre**

### **PRESENT:-**

Mr L Ridney - Chair

Mr J Conway, Mrs Hannaway, Mr M Lynch, Mrs Quigley, Mrs A Richards, Mrs P Rogers, Mrs H Ruffles, Mr N Shaw, Mr R Timmins, Mr D Ward, Mr M Weaver and Mrs G Withers.

**Persons not a member of the Forum but having an entitlement to attend meetings and speak**

Director of Children's Services

### **Officers**

Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) (Directorate of Children's Services); Children's Services Finance Manager, Senior Principal Accountant and Miss H Shepherd (Directorate of Corporate Resources)

#### **1. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED

That Mr R Timmins be appointed Vice-Chair of the Forum for the remainder of the 2012/13 municipal year.

#### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mr C Derham, Mrs A Garratt, Mrs Hazlehurst, Mr S Hudson, Mr P Jones, Ms T Pearce and Councillor Crumpton.

#### **3. MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Chair welcomed new Members to the meeting and confirmed that training for new and existing School Forum Members would take place on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2013 at 6.00 pm and would be held at Saltwells Education Development Centre.

5. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT OUTTURN 2011/12

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted providing Schools Forum members with financial data in respect of the Schools Budget for the 2011/12 financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

Arising from a question raised from a Member, the Director of Children's Services confirmed that Pensnett School was still included in the schools funding as decommission work was on going.

In response to a question relating to the loans pool facility for Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools, it was confirmed that no schools had taken up on this option therefore the monies remained earmarked within the DSG reserve. In view of the length of time that the loans pool facility had been set aside, it was agreed that the item would be brought back to a future meeting of the Schools Forum for discussion.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) then referred to the proposal at Appendix B to the report submitted relating to the development of collaborative working in primary schools and apologised that the requested amendments made at the Budget Working Group had not been made in time for when the report was printed and that reference to co-operative trusts should be removed.

Following a query raised by a Secondary School Governor representative as to why this support was solely for Primary Schools, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) stated that there were more good and outstanding Secondary Schools within the borough and therefore it was felt that targeting Primary Schools performing below national average should take priority.

A secondary school head teacher representative raised concerns and referred to difficulties secondary schools experienced especially without any additional funding and asked how the Primary Schools in receipt of the support would be identified.

It was stated that if there was any under-spend in the budget the Director of Children's Services would be prepared to explore a similar support scheme for secondary schools, but Primary Schools would currently take priority. It was also stated that there were targeted Primary Schools in mind, but none had yet been confirmed and that a report would be brought back to a future meeting of the Forum updating Members on the progress of the support scheme.

The Children's Services Finance Manager then referred to the remaining DSG reserve and stated that consideration was being given to using this money in helping Schools experiencing financial difficulty as a result of equal pay liabilities. The Director of Children's Services elaborated on this stating that the money set aside could be used to support equal pay liabilities for Schools that would have difficulty meeting their commitments but would have to meet a set criteria. Schools would have to demonstrate that they had followed advice and guidance of the Local Authority and not put themselves in that place deliberately. It would be distributed in a lump sum amount, just to help stabilise the situation.

#### RESOLVED

- (i) That the information contained in the report and appendices to the report submitted relating to the 2011/12 financial outturn in respect of the Schools Budget and the planned use of the roll forward reserves, be noted.
- (ii) That, the allocation of the £300,000 of the DSG reserve to the School Support Work project, be approved, in line with Forums combined budget powers, subject to a change in wording in Appendix B.
- (iii) That the information contained in the report and appendices to the report submitted in respect of the likely implications for Dudley in relation to the DfE assurances in respect of Local Authorities DSG reserve balances, be noted.
- (iv) That the Director of Children's Services report back to a future meeting of the Forum updating Members on the development of collaborative working in Primary Schools and the use of the remaining DSG reserve.

6. COMBINED SERVICES BUDGET OUTTURN 2011/12

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted providing School Forum Members with financial data in respect of the Combined Services Budget for the 2011/12 financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2012.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on the Combined Services Budget for the 2011/12 financial year, be noted.

7. CONSULTATION ON EARLY YEARS SINGLE FUNDING FORMULA FOR TWO YEAR OLDS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted to inform Members on the consultation process in respect of the implementation of the Government's proposed funding of the free entitlement to early education for two year olds.

Following the presentation of the report, the Assistant Director of Children's (Education Services) stated that setting the rate at £4.00 per hour for providers was a proposal until final confirmation of Dudley's allocation of DSG Funding had been received. It was also stated that the Government was promoting the scheme as education for two year olds, however Dudley was considering it more as family education and support which would obtain a more sustainable outcome.

Concerns were raised by Members with regards to the rate of pay and the impact this would have on the quality of service and considered that this was insufficient for qualified staff.

In response to a question raised by a Non School Member representative the Director of Children's Services stated that the funding for the early education for two years olds was transferring from the Local Authority's Early Intervention Grant (EIG) funding to the DSG from 2013/14 but after accounting for this transfer of £0.7million there still remained a reduction in Dudley's EIG for 2013/14 of £2.8million which was a budget pressure for the Directorate.

## RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report and appendix to the report submitted in relation to the consultation process in respect of the implementation of the Government's proposed funding of the free entitlement to early education for two year olds, be noted.

### 8. SCHOOL FUNDING REFORMS – UPDATE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted to update members of Dudley's progress in respect of the DfE's national school funding reforms for implementation in April 2013. A copy of the final Education Funding Agency funding reform proforma, was circulated at the meeting.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report and in doing so referred to the 2013 School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations and the responsibilities for financial issues relating to the Forum. She also referred to paragraphs (a) to (p) of the report submitted and members were given the opportunity to comment.

The Forum discussed paragraph (j) of the report submitted. The Director of Children's Services stated that each individual's case was evaluated. The Authority worked in partnership with Connexions in identifying and understanding individual's preferences. It was also stated that if a young person was not progressing well then an alternative would be looked at, however there was no facility to fund attendance in a provision at a distance outside of the borough. She also confirmed that there was a rise in the number of young people with special needs in the borough particularly in the 16-25 range.

## RESOLVED

That the report submitted on Dudley's progress in respect of the DfE's national school funding reforms for implementation in April 2013 and the completed final Education Funding Agency funding reform proforma, circulated at the meeting, be noted.

### 9. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP – UPDATE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on an update on the current position relating to the new appointments, current vacancies, the DfE Best Practice Guide and future training to be carried out for Schools Forum Members in early 2013.

RESOLVED

That the report and appendices to the report submitted in relation to Schools Forum Membership, the DfE Best Practice Guide and the future training for Schools Forum members, be noted.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FORUM

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of the remaining future meetings of the Forum in 2012/13 be noted.

11. COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES (EDUCATION SERVICES)

It was requested by the Chair and the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services), on behalf of the Forum that thanks be expressed and recorded to Hillcrest School for their co-operation in accommodating the Forum meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.

CHAIR