

## **DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM**

**Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2010 at 6.00 p.m. at Saltwells Education  
Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley**

### **PRESENT:-**

Mrs. Griffiths (Chairman)  
Mr. Millman (Vice-Chairman)  
Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Elwiss, Mr. Hatton, Mrs. Hazlehurst, Mr. Hinton,  
Mr. Hudson, Ms. Hughes, Mr. James, Mr. J. Jones, Mr. P. Jones, Ms. Mickle,  
Mr. Millward, Mr. Ridley, Ms. Smith, Mr. Timmins, Mr. Warner, Mr. Warren,  
Mr. Wassall and Mrs. Withers.

### **Persons not members of the Forum but with an entitlement to attend meetings and speak**

Councillor Mrs Walker – Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services  
and the Director of Children's Services – both Dudley M.B.C.

### **Officers**

The Assistant Directors of Children's Services, (Perrett and Ms. Porter) and  
the Partnership Manager (Mr. Curnow) – All Directorate of Children's  
Services; the Children's Services, Finance Manager (Mrs. Cocker) and  
Principal Accountant (Mrs. Coates) – both Directorate of Finance, ICT and  
Procurement) and the Assistant Principal Officer (Democratic Services),  
Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources (Mr. Sanders) – All  
Dudley M.B.C.

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

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs.  
Garratt, Mr. Sorrell, Councillor Vickers and Mr. Vincent. The Assistant  
Principal Officer (Democratic Services) reported that Mr. Sorrell had not  
attended a meeting of the Forum for a period in excess of 6 months, although  
he had arranged to be substituted on occasions.

### **RESOLVED**

That the apologies for absence received be accepted.

### **2. MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the inclusion of the name of Mr. Millward in the list of members present.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No issues were raised under this item.

4. 14-19 DIPLOMA FUNDING

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted updating the Forum on the latest developments relating to 14-19 Diplomas and which also sought approval to the funding framework proposed for the 2010/11 academic year.

In the discussion the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Ms. Porter) explained the nature of the transformation agenda, under which responsibility for 14-19 education would return to Local Authority control from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2010, alongside responsibility for young persons with Special Educational Needs to the age of 25. In providing a brief outline the manner in which the legislative requirements would be met within the Directorate of Children's Services, the Assistant Director referred to the staffing arrangements, in connection with which 8 members of staff from the Learning and Skills Council would transfer, and to the linkages of the team with the Connexions Service.

Regarding 14-19 Diploma Funding, in previous years, the Forum had supported one of three options for funding and consideration was now given to the option to be followed in 2010/11. The three options considered previously by the Forum were explained by the Partnership Manager, Mr. Curnow.

In the discussion, reference was made for the need for the options to be considered in greater detail by Secondary Heads before a decision was arrived at. It was agreed that determination could be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2010.

RESOLVED

That a determination of the funding option for 14-19 Diplomas for the 2010/11 academic year be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2010, to enable consideration to the issue to be given by Secondary Heads, and that, since the next meeting of the Secondary Heads Group is not scheduled until 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2010, preliminary consideration to the options be given by the Budget Working Group, on which Secondary Heads are represented, which will meet prior to the next Forum Meeting.

5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FINANCIAL MONITORING – SCHOOLS BUDGET 2009/2010 FINANCIAL YEAR

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted containing budget monitoring data in respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the 2009/10 Financial Year. Confirmed that, for schools, any year end underspend or overspend arising from the delegated budget would roll forward in to the next Financial Year as an earmarked DSG reserve. An underspend of some £842,000 by 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2010 was currently estimated. It was currently proposed that the sum carried forward in to 2010/11 would be used to fund known pressures such as equal pay and back pay for closed schools and a possible closure of Pensnett School.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report regarding the forecast DSG out-turn for 2009/10, and the proposed allocation of the underspend in 2010/11, be noted.

6. INTRODUCTION OF A SINGLE FUNDING FORMULA FOR EARLY YEARS PROVISION

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted updating the Forum on a recent change in DCSF Policy regarding funding in respect of early years provision and which contained proposals for the implementation of a single funding formula from 2010/11 in the light of responses to the consultation on the issue which had ended on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2010.

The responses to the consultation were set out in Table 2 of the report. In relation to question 5, the Principal Accountant, Mrs. Coates, confirmed that the sum of £417,000 referred to was anticipated to be sufficient to meet the funding gaps for early years provision. The recommendations of the Director of Children's Services in relation to each issue raised in the consultation were set out in the report and it was confirmed that the recommendations had been supported by the Early Years Providers Reference Group.

A Ministerial decision to delay the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula until 2011/12, to allow authorities more time to properly prepare, was reported. The decision, however, invited authorities who considered themselves ready to implement the formula from 2010/11 to apply for second wave Pathfinder status in order to enable them to do so. The report confirmed that Dudley had made significant progress on the formula in line with the original DSCF timescales and thus was in a strong position to continue with implementation from April, 2010. Further to the making of a submission to this effect having been supported by the Early Years Providers Reference Group, at its meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2010, a bid for Pathfinder status had been made by the Director of Children's Services. The approval of the Forum in respect of the making of the application was now requested.

In relation to reference in the report to the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), the legislative requirements permitted Schools Forums to approve exclusion of funding from this source if 50% or less of pupils were affected. This was the case currently and approval was requested to exclude Early Years Funding from the MFG.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the intention of the Director of Children's Services to implement a single funding formula for Early Years Provision from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2010 be endorsed.
- (2) That the Director of Children's Services submission to become a Pathfinder Authority endorsed.
- (3) That the inclusion of Early Years Funding from the MFG, under regulation 25 of the School Finance (England) Regulations, 2008, be approved.

#### 7. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RESOURCE ALLOCATION FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS FOR 2010/11

A report of the Director of Children's Services summarising the responses received to consultation on changes proposed to the Resource Allocation Formula for Schools for 2010/11 was submitted. Changes to the Formula, in response to the consultation responses, had been agreed by the Director of Children's Services and these were indicated in the report now submitted. The Principal Accountant, (Mrs Coates) confirmed that the changes had been supported by the Budget Working Group, at its last meeting.

#### RESOLVED

That the proposals of the Director of Children's Services to implement changes to the Resource Allocation Formula for Schools from 2011 as set out in Table 2 of the report now submitted, be endorsed.

8. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT INDICATIVE BUDGET PLANNING, 2010/11

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted setting out the estimated budget position on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2010/11.

In relation to the Central Expenditure Limit set by the DCSF, the Children's Services Finance Manager, Mrs. Cocker, reported orally that, currently, that no breach was anticipated although the position could alter, owing to technicalities. She indicated that she would report further to the next meeting of the Forum.

In referring to the budget projections, the Vice Chairman commented that the overall position for smaller schools remained bleak.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9. BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

The Director of Children's Services reported orally that a decision was expected from the DCSF on the proposals regarding secondary schools at the end of the current week or the beginning of the following week. Submissions had been made by nineteen authorities and approval for funding would be granted to six.

RESOLVED

That the position be noted.

10. SINGLE STATUS AND JOB EVALUATION UPDATE

An oral report of this issue was given by the Children's Services Finance Manager, Mrs. Cocker.

Since the meeting of the Forum in December, agreement on equal pay claims had been reached in relation to Risk Group 1 category staff at Community Schools and Voluntary Controlled Schools, these being cleaning, catering staff etc. The staff concerned had been notified accordingly and there was currently a high take up. With regard to Group 2 category staff, i.e. Teaching Assistants and Administrative Staff, negotiations were continuing and settlement was not imminent.

In relation to single status and job evaluation, schools had attended workshops and broad brush indications would be given to head teachers on the anticipated impact in due course, when the position was more clear. The Council's Lead Negotiator would be attending a meeting of the Dudley Association of Governing Bodies in March to report on the current position.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Mr. Perrett) indicated that he would be consulting further with Primary and Secondary Heads on additional concerns they might have and he would be working with Personnel in relation to those issues.

Several Heads and Governors reported on an apprehension among staff that all additional costs would be funded by government, with no burden falling on schools. It was considered that staff in schools should be made fully conversant with the financial ramifications. On the issue of the Council's entitlement to capitalise revenue, the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services made the point that the very substantial sum concerned would be met by way of borrowing and would have to be paid back over a number of years.

A request made by a Secondary Head for the Forum to be advised the anticipated costs of the equal pay settlement, in response to which the Children's Services Finance Manager indicated that a report would be submitted to the next meeting in March. In response to a question, the Children's Services Finance Manager indicated that the schools reserve earmarked for Single Status and Equal Pay Back Pay would be outside the scope of the review when clawback was considered at the end of the year.

Further to an enquiry made by the representative of the Forum for Voluntary Aided Schools, the Children's Service Finance Manager confirmed that a group to consider the implications for Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools would be set up for the purpose.

In response to a request for Heads to be advised on the amounts staff were to be offered in settlement, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Mr. Perrett) acknowledged that there was a need for information sharing with schools in order to enable them to start determining the impact on their budgets.

**RESOLVED**

That the information above be noted.

11. SCHOOL CLOSURE UPDATE

The latest position with regard to the Pensnett School was reported. Statutory Notices had been issued and the period for the receipt of objections and representations had still two weeks to run. A report on the proposal to close the school, in the light of objections and representations received, would be submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2010.

A scoping exercise was needed in relation to children at the Pensnett School affected by closure.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2010 at 6.00 p.m. at Saltwells Education Development Centre.

The meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.

CHAIRMAN