

Dudley Schools Forum

Tuesday 3rd June, 2014 at 6.00 pm
at Saltwells Education Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

Present:-

Mrs Belcher, Mr Conway, Mr Derham, Mrs Hannaway, Mr B Jones, Mrs N Jones, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Patterson, Mrs Quigley, Mr Ridley, Ms Rogers, Mr Shaw, Mr Ward, Mr Warren, Mr Weaver, Mrs Withers, 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

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. Election of Chair

Resolved

That Mr Ridley be elected Chair of the Forum for the 2014/15 municipal year.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved

That Mrs Wylie be appointed Vice-Chair of the Forum for the 2014/15 municipal year.

3. Introductions by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs Garratt, Mr Kelleher and Mr Oakley.

5. Minutes

Resolved

That, the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 29th April, 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed.

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

7. 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 Children's Services Finance Manager informed Members that Mr Dallaway, the Special School Governor representative, had been advised that his membership had been terminated due to non-attendance at meetings for a period of six months. This post would remain vacant until the next opportunity for nominations.

Members were also reminded of the forthcoming Schools Forum Training that had been arranged and scheduled to take place on 24th June, 2014 at 6pm at Saltwells Education Development Centre. Members who wished to attend the training session were requested to notify the Children's Services Finance Manager. The Chair expressed his support in the training that was provided and encouraged all members to attend.

Resolved

- (i) That the report, and Appendix to the report submitted, in relation to Schools Forum Membership, be noted.
- (ii) That Members be requested to notify the Children's Services Finance Manager if they wish to attend the forthcoming training session on 24th June, 2014.

8. Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools – Approval for Consultation

A report of the interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in relation to the proposed amendments to Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools.

The Senior Principal Accountant presented the report and highlighted the changes as referred to in Appendix A to the report submitted, and requested the approval of the forum to circulate a consultation to schools and stakeholders on the proposed changes for a period of six weeks which would end on 18th July, 2014.

Resolved

- (i) That the report, and Appendix to the report submitted, in relation to the proposed amendments to Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools, be noted.
- (ii) That a consultation with all schools and stakeholders on the proposed changes for a period of six weeks to end on 18th July 2014, be agreed.
- (iii) That the responses to the consultation be presented to Schools Forum at its meeting in September 2014.

9. Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2013/14

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on financial data in respect of the Schools Budget for the 2013/14 financial year which ended 31st March, 2014.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report and in doing so made particular reference to paragraph six and table one of the report submitted. She stated that the DfE could review the accumulative amounts in the DSG Reserves and if they consider these amounts to be excessive, the balance would be removed. It was considered to be important to establish a spending plan to ensure that any accumulative amounts were spent effectively.

In response to a question raised by a Primary School Headteacher representative and for clarity to all Members the Children's Services Finance Manager confirmed that there was specific criteria against which DSG reserve monies could be allocated.

A Primary School Headteacher representative made a suggestion of providing additional financial support to the Outreach Support provided by the Pupil Referral Unit. The Children's Services Finance Manager agreed to take this suggestion back and explore the options within the DSG Regulations.

Arising from a question raised the Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) reiterated that there were restricted criteria against which DSG reserve monies could be used and these criterion were mainly related to the delivery of frontline services to children and not in relation to management or training requirements.

The Children's Services Finance Manager suggested the possibility of allocating any part of the £5.8m equally to Schools as part of the lump sum allocations which would protect levels of Schools Minimum Funding Guarantee and prevent destabilising individual school budgets.

The Interim Director of Children's Services stated that this issue had been discussed at the Secondary Headteachers meeting and possible suggestions made included providing parent support advisors at Primary Schools and providing additional support to teenage groups that were considered to be under achieving.

Members expressed their interest in the possibility of the additional lump sum allocation option and a discussion was had in relation to using the additional funding to help fund the equal pay loans that was currently being paid by most schools. It was considered that all options needed to be transparent and fair to all sectors.

The Interim Director of Children's Services requested Members to submit any idea's or suggestions on how they considered the funding to be best allocated to the Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) so that these options could be considered and discussed at Budget Working Group. A further report highlighting the different eligible options available would be submitted to Schools Forum in October 2014.

Arising from a question raised by the Chair, it was stated that those schools that had ended the year in deficit would have the amount top-sliced from their new year budgets and that Children's Services Accountancy would continue to work with the Schools to try and resolve any issues presented in 2014/15.

Resolved

- (i) That the report submitted in relation to the 2013/14 outturn in respect of the Schools Budget which was funded by the DSG and the planned use of the centrally retained roll forward as indicated in Table 1 of the report, be noted.

- (ii) That Members be requested to submit their suggestions on how the DSG Reserve funding should be allocated to the Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) for these options to be considered and discussed at Budget Working Group.
- (iii) That a further report highlighting the different options available in which the DSG money could be allocated be submitted to the Forum in October 2014.

10. Combined Services Budget Outturn 2013/14

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on financial data in respect of the Combined Services Budget for the 2013/14 financial year which ended on 31st March 2014.

Following the presentation of the report and in response to a question raised, the Children's Services Finance Manager stated that in line with the Schools Funding Reforms the amounts currently allocated to each activity could not be increased or inflated. However budgets from one activity could be diverted to another.

Primary School Headteacher representatives expressed their thanks and gratitude to the services that were provided by the Domestic Abuse and Referrals Team (DART) and the Schools Information Governance Officer (SIGO) and stated that the support received was commendable and that they would highly recommend both services.

Resolved

That the report submitted in respect of the Combined Services Budget outturn for 2013/14 and the on-going budget set aside to continue the projects in 2014/15, be noted.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

Resolved

That the date of the next meeting, 8th July, 2014, be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm.

CHAIR