

MINUTES OF DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 23rd September, 2014 at 6.00 pm
at Saltwells Education Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mr. Ridney - Chair

Mrs. Wylie - Vice Chair

Mr. K. Bate, Mr. J. Conway, Mr. C. Derham, Mrs. A. Garratt, Mrs. A. Hannaway, Mrs. N. Jones, Mr. M. Lynch, Mr. B. Oakley, Mr. B. Patterson, Mrs. J. Quigley, Ms. P. Rogers, Mrs. H. Ruffles, Mr. N. Shaw, Mr. D. Ward and Mrs. G. Withers

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

Councillor T. Crumpton (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning) and Ms. P. Sharratt (Interim Director of Children's Services)

Officers

Mr. H. Powell (Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services - Education Services) (Directorate of Children's Services); Mrs. K. Cocker (Children's Services Finance Manager, Mrs. S. Coates (Senior Principal Accountant) and Mrs. K. Taylor (Democratic Services Officer), Directorate of Corporate Resources

16. Introductions by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

17. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mrs. J. Belcher, Mr. J. Kelleher, Mr P.Nesbitt and Mr. B. Warren.

18. Substitute Member

It was noted that Mr M Lynch was serving as substitute member for Mr P Nesbitt for this meeting of the Forum only.

19. Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 8th July, 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed.

20. Matters Arising from the Minutes

An update was requested in relation to Minute No. 15 – Provision of a Précis Version of Matters Considered at Forum Meetings, in responding the Children's Services Finance Manager confirmed that a note had been uploaded to the website within twenty-four hours of the meeting.

21. Schools with Licensed Deficit Arrangements

Arising from the consideration given at the last meeting of the Forum to Dudley's Schools' Delegated Reserves 2013/14, a report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on the latest financial monitoring arrangements in place for the Coseley School.

Arising from consideration of this item, it was noted that the Coseley School was not in the position to balance their 2014/15 delegated budget and was therefore advised to submit a licensed deficit application for £283,480, which was approved by the local authority. It was reported that the application would be repaid over a five year period, and the School had recently undertaken a staffing restructure in order to address the budget issues.

It was further reported that the Schools' position in regard of balancing the 2014/15 budget was on target.

Resolved

That the information contained in the report submitted on the Coseley School's approved licensed deficit application for 2014/15, be noted, and that further updates be provided to the Forum.

22. Fairer Schools Funding and Schools Revenue Funding Arrangements in 2015/16

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on the latest information published recently by the Department of Education in respect of Fairer Schools Funding and Revenue Funding Arrangements.

The Senior Principal Accountant presented the report submitted and in doing so reported that the budget for Fairer Schools Funding had increased from £350m to £390m, which would be made available to the least fairly funded local areas in England. Detailed calculation of the Minimum Funding Level for Dudley was set out in Appendix A of the report submitted.

The Senior Principal Accountant made particular reference to the 2015/16 Revenue Funding Arrangements, and the significant change to funding for two year olds in Dudley, which would now be based on participation, rather than an allocation from the Department of Education.

It was reported that the funding of places in Alternative Provision would increase from £8,000 to £10,000 per place from September, 2015, however it was confirmed that the DfE anticipated that there would be a corresponding reduction in top-up funding allocated by the local authority.

Reference was made to the possibility of creating a Growth Fund contingency, in particular, to address the pressure on primary school places. It was noted that a further report would be considered at the October meeting of the Forum.

Resolved

That the latest information published by the Department of Education in respect of Fairer Schools Funding and Revenue Funding Arrangements for 2015/16, be noted, and an updated position to include an amendment to the Constitution be reported to a future meeting of Schools Forum.

23. Budget Fact Sheet

The Senior Principal Accountant presented a budget fact sheet and highlighted the proposals in relation to a number of consultations, in particular, that the Schools Forum would be giving consideration to recommendations made following the consultation on De-delegations for 2015/16.

Consideration was given to the report submitted, and comments and questions were made as follows:

- In relation to quantifying pupil premiums, the Senior Principal Accountant stated that census data would be collected by the School and submitted to the Department of Education in order to calculate the allocation of funding. A number of concerns were raised in relation to the collection of the Free School Meals data by the School via an online application form, to be completed by parents, as there was no incentive to complete the form. It was also noted that no additional information had been included in the head count forms.
- In responding to questions raised by Members regarding sensitivity analysis of longer term funding for schools, the Schools Finance Manager reported that the local authority provides Dudley schools with multi year budget forecasts based on a number of planning assumptions and continues to work closely with both schools and the Interim Director of Children's Services in respect of the resulting data which is RAG rated for internal purposes.

Resolved

That the information contained in the budget fact sheet submitted be noted.

24. The Pupil Premium

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on a recent Ofsted publication in respect of the pupil premium for schools. A copy of the graph highlighting the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals attaining five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C, was circulated at the meeting,

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report and in doing so made particular reference to paragraphs five and six and figure one of the report submitted. She stated that she had discussed the figures mentioned with the IT analysts in Children's Services, and that a further report in relation to Dudley School's pupil premium analysis data would be reported at the next meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the report submitted in relation to the recent Ofsted publication 'The pupil premium: an update', be noted, and a further report highlighting the Dudley School's pupil premium analysis data to be considered at the next meeting of the Forum

25. Pensnett Site Disposal Update

An oral update was given on this item with particular reference to the funding that had been secured from the Education Funding Agency, which would enable a refurbishment of the site and a support facility for persons with learning disabilities. It was also noted that, pending Cabinet approval, the building would be part demolished and further consideration would be given to the use of the site.

In responding to a query, Councillor Crumpton confirmed that the Holt Farm site would be demolished. He also acknowledged the good work undertaken at Pensnett Site within a short amount of time.

Resolved

That the comments made in relation to the Pensnett Site Disposal Update be noted.

26. Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools – Approval of Amendments following Consultation

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on the amendments to the Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools following a period of consultation during the Summer Term 2014. Appendix A of the report, submitted highlighting the summary of changes was circulated at the meeting.

Resolved

That the proposed amendments required in respect of Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools, as attached at Appendix A, and taking into account the consultation response, be approved.

27. Schools Forum Membership Update

An oral update was given on this item with particular reference to the membership vacancies, and in responding to a query, it was agreed that a list of the membership would be circulated to Secondary Head Teachers.

The Children's Services Finance Manager informed Members that Mr Weaver, had submitted his resignation as Primary Governor and therefore will no longer be a member of the Forum.

Resolved

That the comments made in relation to the Schools Forum Membership be noted.

28. Date of Future Meeting

The Chair requested that Members should arrange for substitutes to attend, should they be unable to attend a meeting.

Resolved

That the date of the next meeting, 21st October, 2014, be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.

CHAIR