

## DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 at 6.00 pm  
at Saltwells Education Development Centre,  
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

### PRESENT:-

Mr Ridley – Chair

Mr Patterson – Vice-Chair

Mr Bate, Mrs Belcher, Mr Conway, Mr Derham, Mr Kelleher, Mr Kirk, Mr Platford, Ms Rogers, Mrs Ruffles, Mr Shaw, Mr Ward, Mr Warren, Mr Weaver, Mrs Withers and 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

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning; Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services), General Manager (Catering and Client) (Both Directorate of Children's Services); Children's Services Finance Manager, Senior Principal Accountant and the Assistant Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

#### 1. INTRODUCTIONS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs Garrett, Mr Harris, Mr Nesbitt and Mrs Quigley.

#### 3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That, the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed.

#### 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

5. UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL MEALS FOR INFANTS

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in respect of the universal free school meals grant for infants.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report and referred to the two letters issued by the Department for Education (DfE) addressed to Directors and Headteachers, attached as Appendices A and B to the report submitted, confirming the implementation of the universal free school meals initiative from September 2014.

It was stated that a flat rate of £2.30 per meal would be allocated to schools based on actual take-up by newly eligible infant pupils and that free school meals for deprived infants would continue using the current formula.

A working group comprising Headteachers, Catering Services and relevant officers had been established to discuss and consider future implications of implementing the initiative in Dudley's schools and to identify the possible issues for each individual school.

In response to a question raised by a Primary School Governor in relation to paragraph 5 of the report submitted, the Children's Services Finance Manager stated that the reference to a 'small school' had not been defined by the DfE, but it was assumed that this would refer to a small rural school and not a small Dudley School.

The Children's Services Finance Manager stated that the DfE had acknowledged Schools concerns in relation to the impact this change would have on the pupil premium, but no details to date had been provided on how the appropriate data would be collated, but Schools were to be assured that pupil premium for children from disadvantaged backgrounds would continue to be allocated for 2014/15.

With reference to paragraphs 12 to 14 of the report submitted in relation to the capital funding allocated to Dudley to implement the initiative, it was stated that the newly established working group would also consider the priorities for allocating the capital funding to those schools that needed it the most.

The Vice-Chair informed members that Ian Austin MP for Dudley North and Margot James MP for Stourbridge had both written to Central Government expressing Schools concerns and criticising the DfE for the lack of information that had been provided in relation to the scheme. He also referred to the possibility of the initiative being implemented through to year 6 and expressed the need for a clear statement from the DfE so that schools were aware and could adapt and make future plans as necessary.

The General Manager (Catering and Client) was in attendance at the meeting and stated that there were a small number of schools that may experience difficulties in adapting their kitchen facilities in time for September, but work would continue with Building and Estate services to endeavour to meet the implementation deadline. It was understood that all schools would have to consider adopting different ways of operating, but a briefing session to discuss these issues would be held for all Headteachers in March 2014. It was projected that there would be a 75% uptake of the scheme from September 2014.

Primary School Headteachers reiterated that plans to provide two or three lunch time meal sittings would be developed to cater for the increase in infants having a meal, but concerns were raised in relation to the impact this would have on the increase in time and pay for catering staff to service this. It was however considered that the scheme would be of benefit to the children and that all eligible children should be encouraged to opt in to the scheme.

In response to a question raised by a Primary School Governor, the Senior Principal Accountant stated that it was still unclear as to how the DfE would be collating data in relation to the provision of the grant but it was indicated that the data would be extracted from Schools Census returns and therefore it was vital that these were completed correctly to ensure that the relevant amount of grant was allocated to each School.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the revenue funding for the universal free school meals for infants from September 2014, available over the next two years, announced at £2.30 per meal based on actual take-up by newly eligible infant pupils, be noted.
- (2) That the capital funding in respect of the universal infant free school meals for Dudley maintained schools, confirmed at £855,308 for 2014/15, be noted.

- (3) That the further detail in relation to how the pupil premium is allocated in the longer term be submitted to a future meeting for information, following receipt from the DfE.
- (4) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting in respect of the impact of the DfE initiative upon schools.

6. EARLY YEARS FUNDING FOR TWO, THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in relation to the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) and hourly rates of funding for 2014/15.

In presenting the report, the Senior Principal Accountant confirmed that this report had been discussed at the Budget Working Group on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 and representatives of that group had endorsed the proposals. However, in relation to the funding for two year olds, the decision was subject to a future report being submitted in relation to the impact of the work of family support workers.

A Secondary Headteacher representative raised concern in relation to the £250,000 required to provide all maintained nursery classes and the PVI Sector with a 7p increase to the hourly rate that was currently paid, was to be funded from the Higher Needs Block and asked if this would impact the funding received by Secondary Schools to support statemented children. The Senior Principal Accountant stated that there would be no direct impact to Secondary Schools as funding would remain the same for 2014/15 and that this would be funded from an under spend within that particular block.

The Children's Services Finance Manager stated that this would be reviewed annually and reminded members of the current financial pressures and stated that if one Dedicated Schools Grant block was to overspend, this would need to be recouped from another block, in consultation with the Forum.

Arising from a question raised, the Children's Services Finance Manager stated that there was a concern that PVI providers would withdraw their offer of Early Education funded places if they did not receive an increase in the hourly rate paid, which would be an issue for the Local Authority as they had a responsibility to provide this provision. It was considered that a 7p increase was all that was affordable at the current time and it was fortunate that there had been an under spend within the Higher Needs Block to enable this to be funded.

A Primary Headteacher referred to the 39p retained from the funding for free target early education for two year olds to provide additional support through family support workers and expressed her concern as to how this was at a considerably higher rate than the 7p increase proposed for the PVI providers who were struggling to continue on the rate currently paid and who provided an equally important service. The Children's Services Finance Manager stated that this would continue to be reviewed and considered through the Budget Working Group.

A Primary School Governor representative agreed with the comments made at the Budget Working Group meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February endorsing the proposals in principle but requested that a report be submitted to a future forum meeting, in relation to the impact of the work of family support workers.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That, subject to a future report in relation to the impact of the work of family support workers being submitted to Schools Forum in the Summer term, the Interim Director of Children's Services be recommended to approve the Early Years Single Funding Formula hourly rate for disadvantaged two year olds for 2014/15, as outlined in paragraph 6 of the report submitted.
- (2) That the Interim Director of Children's Services be recommended to approve the Early Years Single Funding Formula hourly rate for 2014/15 for three and four year olds, as outlined in paragraph 14 of the report submitted.

#### 7. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT PLANNING PROCESS 2014/15 – UPDATE

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget planning process and to agree the Central Expenditure Budgets for 2014/15.

A discussion was had in relation to the retraction of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) budget from the Local Authorities control and concerns were raised as to whether a direct bill from Central Government would be received in the future. The Children's Services Finance Manager stated that this would be unlikely, but if it was to happen the Government would be required to re-instate the CRC budget.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the central expenditure budgets for 2014/15, as detailed in table 2 of the report submitted, be approved.
- (2) That the central expenditure budgets for 2014/15, as detailed in table 3 of the report submitted, be approved.
- (3) That the final de-delegations budget for 2014/15, as detailed in table 4 of the report submitted, be noted.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates of future meetings be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.

CHAIR