

DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 8th December, 2009 at 6.00 p.m. at Saltwells Education
Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mrs Griffiths (Chairman)
Mr Bravo, Mr Dallaway, Mrs Edwards, Mrs Elwiss, Ms Garratt, Ms Hazlehurst,
Mr Hinton, Mr Hudson, Ms Hughes, Mr James, Mr Kelley, Mr Ridley, Mr
Warren and Mr Wassall.

Officers

The Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Directors of Children's Services (Education, Play and Learning) and (Performance and Partnership), The Children's Services Finance Manager (Mrs Cocker), Principal Accountant (Mrs Coates), the Head of Children's Trust Support (Mr Wood), EMS Manager (Mr Woodhouse) and Divisional Manager, Children's Specialist Services (Mr Tilby) – all Directorate of Children's Services and Mrs Jury (Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources) - all Dudley M.B.C.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mr Hatton, Mr P Jones, Chief Superintendent Monroe, Ms Smith, Mr Timmins, Mr Warner, and Mrs Withers and from the Cabinet Member of Integrated Children's Services and the Chairman of the Select Committee on Children's Services of Dudley MBC, Councillors Mrs Walker and Vickers, respectively.

It was also reported that Mr Kelley was serving as a substitute member for this meeting in place of Mr Warner.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on the 6th October, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No issues were raised under this item.

4. COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted updating the Forum on the progress of the Common Assessment Framework and which also sought to consult on the arrangements proposed for 2010/11. The report set out the conditions under which monies from the Dedicated Schools Grant could be retained centrally by the Local Authority, in respect of which a test of educational benefit had to be met and approved by the Schools Forum. The background to the current funding arrangements in this regard were set out in the report, together with details of the numbers of pupils supported through the use of Common Assessment, and the current level of funding involved. The key issues and risks in the application of the Framework were set out in the report.

The report recognised that the continuation of the Common Assessment Framework programme was reliant on partnership funding and indicated that, for 2010/11, the programme requirements had been reviewed and the costs rationalised. The impact of this for the Dedicated Schools Grant was that the annual contribution now requested had been reduced from £246,000 in 2009/10 to £157,000 for 2010/11. It was indicated further that the residue of £89,000 would be distributed to schools by the Individual Schools Budget.

RESOLVED

That the reduced annual contribution of £157,000 required to support the Dudley Common Assessment Framework programme from the Dedicated Schools budget for 2010/11 onwards, be approved.

5. SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL'S STATUTORY DATA RETURNS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted seeking approval for the provision of financial support under the combined budget provision for 2010/11 for the purpose of additional statutory data collection required by the Department for Children's Schools and Families on behalf of schools.

The statutory role of the Information Team in the Directorate of Children's Services was explained in the report.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the statutory role of the Information Team in the Directorate of Children's Services in respect of data collection on behalf of schools, be noted.
- (2) That financial support from the Dedicated Schools Grant towards the appointment of two additional information team officers, one post being a permanent appointment and the other an appointment for a fixed term of one year, at an estimated cost of £70,000 per annum be approved, in accordance with the powers of the Forum under the combined budgets provision of the School Funding Regulations.

6. STAYING SAFE ON SCHOOL TRIPS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted seeking an increase in the financial contribution made towards the Off Site Educational Visits and Journeys Service for Dudley schools from 2010/11. The report indicated that financial support for this purpose had been provided since December 2007 in the sum of £22,000 per annum but an increase was now necessary in order to enable compliance with developments in relation to health and safety issues, in particular.

RESOLVED

That additional financial support from the Dedicated Schools Grant to support Dudley's Off Site Educational Visits and Journeys Service in the estimated sum of £10,000 per annum from 2010/11 be approved, in accordance with the powers of the Forum under the combined budgets provision of the School Funding Regulations

7. SCHOOLS SAFEGUARDING TRAINER

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted seeking approval to a request of the Dudley Safeguarding Children Board for financial support towards the cost of employment of a dedicated Safeguarding Trainer for schools and governors from 2010/11.

The report set out the nature of the training and development in schools in relation to safeguarding and indicated the role of schools and the Safeguarding Board in this regard, together with the new Ofsted and DCSF requirements. The Business Case of the Board for the post was appended to the report now submitted.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the role of the Dudley Safeguarding Children's Board in relation to training schools and governors be noted.

- (2) That financial support from the Dedicated Schools Grant for the appointment of one additional full time Schools Safeguarding Trainer on a two-year fixed term contract from 2010/11, at an estimated cost of £45,000 per annum, be approved, in accordance with the powers of the Schools Forum under the combined budgets provision of the School Funding Regulations, and that the Trainer also train School Safeguarding Co-ordinators.

8. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT RESERVE STATEMENT FOR 2008/09

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted to the Forum on spending plans in respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant reserve for the 2008/09 financial year.

The report indicated the allocation of the roll forward sum of £1.58m attributable to the centrally retained budgets for 2008/09.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be noted.

9. LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY BENCHMARKING TABLES 2009/10

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Forum of the benchmarking tables issued by the Department of Children, Schools and Families in respect of planned expenditure by Local Education Authorities for the 2009/10 financial year.

On consideration of the figures, concern was expressed by certain members at Dudley's funding allocation in relation to special educational needs.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that further information be presented to the Forum at a subsequent meeting in relation to the special educational needs data.

10. FUNDING IMPLICATIONS FOR 2010/11 ONWARDS

In reporting orally on this issue, the Children's Services Finance manager indicated that no further information was available at this time.

11. SINGLE STATUS/EQUAL PAY UPDATE

The Children's Services Finance Manager indicated that there was nothing substantive to report further at this stage, except that relevant meetings of management and unions were proposed after Christmas and in the new year. The need for governors to be kept fully informed of any criteria for settlement determined was emphasised by certain members.

13. BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

The Director of Children's Services reported orally on the current position on this issue. The Council's Readiness to Deliver document was in the course of preparation and was on target to be submitted to the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) by the due date of 18th December 2009. In reporting on the current situation, the Director explained the role of the Asset Management Plan in maintaining a clear focus on major building proposals through the determination of a strategy and the monitoring arrangements in this regard. Arising from discussion, the Director summarised the standpoint of the DCSF in relation to pupil projections and surplus places.

RESOLVED

That the oral report be noted.

14. NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 23rd February 2010 at 6 pm at Saltwells Education Development Centre.

The meeting ended at 7 pm.

CHAIRMAN