

MINUTES OF DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 24th March, 2015 at 6.00 pm
at Saltwells Education Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mr L Ridney – Chair

Mrs R Wylie – Vice-Chair

Mr D Allchurch, Mr K Bate, Mrs J Belcher, Mr J Conway, Mr C Derham, Mrs A Hannaway, Mrs N Jones, Mr J Kelleher, Mrs J Kings, Mr M Moody, Mr B Patterson, Ms P Rogers, Mrs H Ruffles, Mr N Shaw, Mrs M Stowe and Mrs G Withers.

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

Mrs P Sharratt – Interim Director of Children’s Services

Officers

Mrs A Callear (Divisional Lead - Family Support), Mr H Powell (Acting Assistant Director - Education Services) (Directorate of People Services); Mrs K Cocker (Children’s Services Finance Manager), Mrs S Coates (Senior Principal Accountant), Mrs L Jones-Moore (Principal Accountant) and Miss H Shepherd (Democratic Services Officer), Directorate of Resources and Transformation.

Together with one member of the public.

Also in attendance was Mrs Sixsmith (Not currently a forum Member but nominated to represent Worcester Diocesan Board commencing 1st May 2015)

86 Introductions by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting

87 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mrs A Garratt, Mr P Nesbitt, Mr B Oakley and Mr D Ward.

88 Appointment of Substitute Member

It was noted that Mr D Allchurch had been appointed to serve in place of Mr P Nesbitt for this meeting of the Forum only.

89 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 24th February, 2015, be approved as a correct record and signed.

90 Matters Arising from the Minutes

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

91 Dedicated Schools Grant – Central Expenditure Budgets 2015/16

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Dedicated Schools Grant Central Expenditure Budgets for 2015/16 to provide further information in respect of items within the central expenditure that were deferred by representatives at the Forum meeting on 24th February, 2015.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report and referred to each deferred item individually.

A Primary Head Teacher representative commended the report and additional information provided on the Early Years Foundation Advice service and the effectiveness of the provision.

In response to a question in relation to the Early Years Pupil Premium and Free School Meals Entitlement Co-ordination, the Children's Services Finance Manager confirmed that the provision was available to all schools including Academies. An Academy Representative queried as to why Academies were required to pay £14 per pupil for Free School Meals administration if this provision was provided for all Schools. The Children's Services Finance Manager agreed to look into this matter.

In referring to the expenditure for Teachers supporting Children's Centres, additional information was circulated to representatives at the meeting, as requested by the Head Teachers Consultative Forum (HTCF) – Budget Working Group. The Divisional Lead - Family Support presented the additional information and outlined the remit and role of the teachers at Children Centres. She stated that she was unable to provide details in relation to the number of workshops that had been undertaken or provide evidence of the impact the service had on users and confirmed that inconsistencies in data recording had been identified within each Children's Centre. She further stated that staff had now attended Development and Delivery workshops and that she was confident that the required information would be recorded correctly and would be provided to Schools Forum in the future.

Representatives raised concerns with regards to why pupil progress had not been tracked and why this had not been identified during appraisals and why the Children's Centre teachers did not consider it to be within their remit to supervise assistants.

The Interim Director of Children's Services agreed that there were issues that needed to be addressed, together with collaborative working with Schools Forum to establish the required outcomes of the service. It was suggested that representatives should establish a list of questions to be submitted to the Divisional Lead – Family Support for answers to be provided at the Forum meeting in June 2015.

The Children's Services Finance Manager proposed that Members approve the funding for the Teachers Supporting Children's Centres for a six month period to September 2015, subject to a review and detailed report being submitted to Schools Forum in June 2015 addressing member's continual concerns.

In referring to the Carbon Reduction Commitment for Schools, Members considered that there were alternative and more effective options in the private sector than the current provision. The HTCF - Budget Working Group had discussed the provision at their last meeting and recommended that the provision be approved for the 2015/16 central expenditure budget but for funding to cease after that financial year.

In debating the provision and the service provided, Members proposed an alternative option in that funding for this service would cease from September 2015.

Representatives then voted on each item of expenditure, as indicated below:-

Table 1 – 2015/16 Central Expenditure Budgets for Schools Forum Approval with No Restrictions on Value

Central Expenditure Details	Value for 2015/16	Decision
Early years centrally retained spending children under 5's:		
• Early Years Foundation Advice	£471,800	Approved
• Early Years Pupil Premium and Free Schools Meals Entitlement Co-Ordination	£68,900	Approved
• Teacher supporting Children Centre	£120,000	Approved funding for the period to 30 th September 2015, subject to a review and detailed report being submitted to Schools Forum in June 2015.

Table 2 – 2015/16 Central Expenditure Budgets for Schools Forum Approval – Restricted to Cash Limit of 2014/15 Expenditure

Central Expenditure Details	Value for 2015/16	Decision
Contribution to combined budgets:		
• Carbon Reduction Commitment for Schools	£65,000	Approved funding to 31 st August, 2015. Funding after this date would cease.

Resolved

- (i) That the 2015/16 Central Expenditure Budgets – No restrictions on value, as detailed in Table 1 of the report submitted, be approved as listed above.
- (ii) That the 2015/16 Central Expenditure Budgets – Restricted to Cash Limit of 2014/2015 Expenditure, as detailed in Table 2 of the report submitted, be approved as listed above.

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on an update of the indicative Early Years Census Return and current childcare arrangements in Children's Centres for disadvantaged two year olds.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented part of the report and made particular reference to the Early Years Census and confirmed that funding in respect of the 2015/16 financial year would be provided using the data levels of take-up recorded as at 15th January, 2015. A further census would be undertaken in the Autumn and the DfE would adjust the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) accordingly to reflect any additional take-up.

The Children's Services Finance Manager also referred to the provision of converting two-year old DSG Revenue into Capital to assist with developing provision capacity across the borough, but that no firm decisions had been taken by the Council in respect of this action.

The Divisional Lead – Family Support presented part of the report in relation to Childcare Arrangements in Children's Centres and highlighted the work that was currently being undertaken by Children's Centre staff in promoting the up-take of the entitlement.

She referred to the lack of provision capacity within the borough and confirmed that discussions were being held with Head Teachers and Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers. It was also reported that a new provision had been identified within the Gornal area and would be opening shortly.

Current take-up of the initiative was reported at 46.8% and it was stated that a target of 75% had been set to be achieved by October 2015 but the Divisional Lead – Family Support hoped to exceed the target and achieve 85% by December 2015.

She also stated that guidance was continuing to be sought from the DfE as to whether stay and play provisions could contribute towards initiative take-up.

In referring to Appendix A of the report submitted, the Divisional Lead - Family Support confirmed that all but one provision listed that had previously been awarded 'inadequate' by Ofsted had now been re-inspected and awarded 'good'.

Following the presentation of the report and in response to a question raised by the Chair, the Divisional Lead - Family Support stated that a two year old provision was currently being considered and explored within the Coseley area but that the location would depend on where the need was greatest.

Resolved

That the information contained in the report, and appendix to the report, submitted in respect of the two year old census data 2015/16 and the childcare arrangements in Dudley's Children's Centres, be noted.

93 Report on Dudley Schools OfSTED Outcomes – January 2014 to December 2014

A report of the interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Dudley Schools' Ofsted outcomes for the period January to December 2014, as reported to Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on 12th March, 2015.

The Acting Assistant Director (Education Services) presented the report and referred to paragraphs of specific importance.

In response to a question raised in relation to Appendix A of the report submitted and the figures included in the '% of Schools – Overall Data as of August 2014' table were incorrect, the Acting Assistant Director (Education Services) confirmed that these figures were provided direct from Ofsted and agreed to check the calculations.

The Dudley 16-19 FE Provider representative raised concerns that the information provided, although was interesting to see, did not identify the causes or what could be done to rectify these issues.

Resolved

That the information contained in the report, presented to Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on 12th March, 2015, be noted.

94 Report on Standards Report – Performance Data

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on School standards data, as reported to Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on 12th March, 2015.

The Acting Assistant Director (Education Services) presented the report, making particular reference to Appendix A to the report submitted and the summary of outcomes table.

He referred to the decline in collective achievement between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4, which was considered to be a concern.

A colour coded document had been circulated to Secondary School Head Teachers prior to the meeting, outlining each schools position with regards to key measures, of copy of which would be circulated to all Members of the Forum for information.

In response to a question raised by the Dudley 16-19 FE Provider representative with regards to what action could be taken to address the borough wide issues, the Interim Director of Children's Services stated that collective and collaborative discussions would need to be held to develop an improvement model.

The Special School Head Teacher referred to an increase in mainstream schools requesting additional support for children that had not been issued with a statement but were having difficulties in progressing in the school environment and requested that additional provisions be made available.

A Secondary Head Teacher representative commented on the unprecedented levels of change that had been experienced in Schools during the last two years which had impacted upon the achievement levels and was not surprised at Dudley's current position nationally. He requested that the Local Authority develop a strategy to help Schools move forward and build additional support.

The Assistant Director (Education Services) suggested that collaborative working and sharing good practices would help to improve attainment or achievement levels. He also referred to the additional funding that had been made available to all schools during this financial year from the DSG Reserves and suggested that this money could be used to help progress priority services.

The Chair asked about the possibility of the Dudley 16-19 FE Providers and the Secondary Head Teachers working together to develop a strategy to bring to the Forum for future consideration.

Although it was considered that not all improvements required additional funding to be achieved, a Secondary School Head Teacher representative requested that the amount of reserves that could be deployed to support schools in the future be made available. The Children's Services Finance Manager agreed to bring this information to the meeting in the Summer term.

A Secondary Head Teacher representative also agreed to raise the issues and concerns with other colleagues at the Secondary Head Teachers conference and report back to the next meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted on School standards and performance data, be noted.
- (2) That a further report be submitted to the Forum meeting in June 2015 addressing concerns raised by Members and identifying reserves available to be deployed to support Schools improvements.

95 Dedicated Schools Grant Planning Process 2015/16 – Final Update

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on an update of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget planning process for 2015/16 and to carry out the annual consultation on financial issues, as required by the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report and made particular reference to paragraph 8 of the report submitted in respect of in-year adjustments to the DSG budget that were predicted during 2015/16.

In response to a question raised by the Academy Representative in relation to paragraph 25 of the report submitted and the township model, the Assistant Director (Education Services) stated that an agreement had been established between Secondary Schools with regards to the fair access process in that the number of places and top-up funding would be divided between the five secondary schools to support pupils with behavioural issues.

The Primary School Head Teachers representatives and the Special School Head Teacher representative raised concern about the lack of behavioural, emotional and social difficulty provisions available for Primary pupils and asked if the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 provision could be extended for Key Stage 2 pupils. Concerns were also raised in relation to Special Educational Needs reforms and the impact the transfer to Education, Health and Care Plans would have on schools on-site special education facilities and funding for these facilities.

The Interim Director of Children's Services suggested that a half day workshop be arranged as a scoping exercise for Primary School Head Teacher representatives and the Pupil Referral Unit representative to discuss provision opportunities with an anticipated implementation date for 2017.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted and the movement of the 2015/16 Dedicated Schools Grant between the three funding blocks as detailed in Table 1 and paragraph 9, be noted.
- (2) That the Interim Director of Children's Services note the comments made by Members in relation to the financial issues for:-
 - Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs and in particular:

The places to be commissioned by the Local Authority in different schools, and other institutions and the arrangements for paying top-up funding to schools and other institutions
 - Arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school in particular:

The places to be commissioned by the authority and by schools in pupil referral units and other providers of alternative provision, and
The arrangements for paying top-up funding to pupil referral units and other providers of alternative provision
 - Arrangement for early years provision
 - Administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants.
- (3) That the Assistant Director (Education Services) be requested to arrange a half day workshop, following the Easter period, to discuss future provision for emotional and social difficulties referrals for Primary pupils and that a further report on the issue be submitted to Schools Forum in June 2015.

96 Dates of Future Meetings

Resolved

That the dates of future meetings be noted.

97 Chair's Comments

The Chair reported that this would be the last Forum meeting attended by Pauline Sharratt, Interim Director of Children's Services, prior to her leaving the Authority. The Chair, on behalf of the Forum, expressed his thanks and gratitude for the excellent work that she had undertaken and wished her all the best for the future.

The meeting ended at 8.00pm

CHAIR