

DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 7th July, 2009 at 6.00 p.m. at Saltwells Educational
Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mrs Griffiths (Chairman)
Mr Millman (Vice-Chairman)
Mr Dalloway, Mrs Edwards, Mrs Elwiss, Ms Garratt, Mr Hinton, Mr Howells,
Mr Hudson, Mr Jones, Mr Millward, Mr Munroe, Mr Ridney, Mr Timmins, Mr
Warner, Mrs Withers and Mr Yates

Persons not Members of the Forum but with an Entitlement to Attend Meetings and Speak

Councillor Mrs Walker – Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services,
Dudley MBC

Officers

The Assistant Director of Children’s Services (Ms Porter), Children’s Services
Finance Manager (Mrs Cocker) and Principal Accountant (Mrs Coates) – Both
Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement and Assistant Principal Officer
(Democratic Services) Directorate of Law and Property (Mr Sanders) – All
Dudley MBC.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mr
Francis, Mr Harrington, Mr Hatton, Mrs Hazelhurst, Ms Hughes, Mr James,
Ms Smith and Mr Sorrell, and from the Director of Children’s Services.

It was also reported that Mr Howells was serving as a substitute Member for
Mr Sorrell for this meeting of the Forum.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on the 2nd June,
2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Further to Minute 7(Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2008/09), the Children's Services Finance Manager reported that work was in progress to implement the utilisation of the residue of £1.587m anticipated and that, in addition to the proposals indicated at the last meeting, additional finance was being earmarked from the residue for support to the admissions process.

Further to Minute 10 (Update on the Early Years Provider Reference Group), the Principal Accountant confirmed that there had been no change to the situation as then reported, and that a report would be made for the October meeting of the Forum.

4. JOB EVALUATION AND EQUAL PAY IN SCHOOLS

A presentation on this issue was given by the Council's Lead Negotiator on Single Status and Equal Pay, Mr Mike Williams.

In the presentation, Mr Williams gave a brief summary of the historical background to the agreement to harmonise pay grades and salaries between all Local Government workers, the issues that were being considered in this regard and the manner in which the issue was being facilitated in Dudley. He then referred to ancillary issues which had arisen together with harmonisation, these relating to Equal Pay Back Pay claims and Equal Value claims, and summarised the current position and the options under consideration for resolving them. In relation to schools, Mr Williams gave respective estimates of the cost of settlement for a sample primary and secondary school in the event of a settlement being reached on all issues.

Mr Williams indicated that the next steps would be to complete the job evaluation process as soon as possible with the results being able to stand scrutiny as being fair, robust and consistent for all staff; to collect detailed information in relation to the cases currently at the Employment Tribunal in relation to Equal Pay Back Pay and Equal Value; to communicate with all concerned, including schools; and to prepare an outline timetable. In relation to the latter issue, Mr Williams indicated that it was hoped that the Council would be in the position to start negotiations on the pay and grading structure by March, 2010. In this regard, he would be seeking to schedule discussions with Head Teachers Consultative Sub-Groups in the September/October period.

Mr Williams concluded by referring to the position of foundation and voluntary aided schools, in respect of which he reported the advice from the Council's Solicitors that, while such schools were separate units, for the sake of consistency, it would be helpful if they engaged with the Council's Legal Services. In the discussion that followed, reference was made to the possible cost implications to schools and the point was made that some schools might be forced into a redundancy situation. Discussions also ensued on the possible ramifications, should particular Equal Value claims succeed at Tribunal.

RESOLVED

That the presentation be noted.

5. CAPITAL FUNDING – KITCHENS AND DINING ROOMS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted seeking approval to proposals for a revised allocation of grant funds from the Department for Children, Schools and Families for targeted Capital Funding for kitchens and dining rooms, in the light of a grant to Dudley being allocated in the sum of £437,477 in comparison with the Council's submission in the sum of £866,640.

RESOLVED

That the allocation of the grant, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report now submitted, be approved.

6. DUDLEY'S SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS – CONSULTATION

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted seeking the approval of the Forum to Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools, further to the recent consultation on the issue. Reference was made by one Member to the response from his school to the consultation, which related to a request for greater tolerance to be afforded in relation to the amendment proposed to paragraph 4.2.2 (iii) of the Scheme.

RESOLVED

That consideration of the Scheme for Financing Schools be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum, to enable further consideration to be given to the issue raised and any other issues arising from consultation.

7. CONSULTATION ON THE SCHOOLS FORUMS (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS, 2009

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on these draft Regulations, consultations in respect of which was being conducted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The draft Regulations, together with an accompanying note by the DCSF setting out main changes and seeking observations thereon, were appended to the report submitted.

RESOLVED

That the content of the draft Regulations be noted and that the following responses be made to the specific questions indicated and referred to the DCSF:

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>
Do the re-written regulations achieve their stated purpose?	Yes.
Would adding an obligation to the functions of Schools Forums that include a requirement to have regard to the provision needed to support the Local Authority's duties of securing sufficiency of places and improving outcomes for Early Years improve the strength of Early Years representations on the Schools Forum?	Agreed in principle.
Do you have other suggestions that would meet the aim of ensuring that Early Years' providers are appropriately funded?	A sub-group of the Forum to give preliminary consideration to Early Years' providers funding issues and make recommendations thereon would be advantageous to assist decision making.
If you had the option to elect schools representatives of Locality Teams as Schools Members in the future, do you think you might do so?	Yes – Dudley Schools Forum at School Member level is already representative of the five townships within the Borough.

It is likely that Academies would be excluded from Locality Team Forum arrangements. Do you see any difficulties in this arrangement?

Dudley has no Academy but there would be an expectation that this sector would be included within the township or Locality Team model. Any place allocated, however, should be additional and not remove any existing secondary places. The view of the Forum is, therefore, that the issue of exclusion of Academy schools from Locality Team Forum arrangements would lead to difficulties.

If Local Authorities were to have the option of allowing the election of representatives of Locality Teams, how do you think this would impact on the representation of pupils from different phases? How would this affect the operation of the Schools Forum?

Dudley retains representation from different phases within the existing township structure and would continue with this model.

Would you like to see the option of having representatives of Locality Teams added to the Regulations for 2011?

Yes, as long as these were optional.

The meeting ended at 7.45 p.m..

CHAIRMAN