

DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 7th February, 2006 at 6.00pm
Saltwells Education Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton

PRESENT

Mrs Griffiths (Chairman)

Mrs Blunt, Mrs Brennan, Ms Cartwright, Mr Conway, Mr Harrington, Mrs Hazelhurst (Substitute for Mr Slack), Mr Heavisides, Mr James (Substitute for Ms Pearce), Mr Leyshon, Mr Millman, Mr Patterson, Councillor Mrs Ridley, Mr Ridley, Mr Rhind-Tutt, Mr Sorrell, Mr Warner and Mr Wassell.

OFFICERS

The Director of Children's Services, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Resources & Planning), Assistant Director of Children's Services (Access & Inclusion), Mr Powell (Directorate of Children's Services), Education Finance Manager and Mrs Coates (Directorate of Finance, ICT & Procurement) and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law & Property) - All Dudley M.B.C.

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That, subject to the following amendments, the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 6th December, 2005, be approved and a correct record and signed:-

The deletion of Mrs Brennan from those present at the meeting.

The inclusion of Mr Leyshon as present at the meeting.

The deletion of the letters DMS in the last line of the third paragraph of the preamble of minute 5 and the inclusion of the letters FMS in their place.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mr Bell, Mr Hatton, Mr Janjua and Mr Williams.

Following a request by the Chairman, the Secretary was asked to check the Constitution regarding the non-attendance of representatives at meetings of the Forum and take the appropriate action.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

In connection with Minute No 7 - Primary Schools Review – Update comments were made regarding the content of the third paragraph of the preamble to the minute, in respect of the further single grant of £40,000 to be made to each of the twelve schools directly affected by the closure proposals. It was also requested that the final sentence of that paragraph be reworded to the effect that

"Finally, in situations where members of staff affected by the proposed closures obtain jobs in Dudley Schools on a lower pay scale than they currently enjoyed provision would be made to "top up" their salary".

RESOLVED

That the foregoing amendments be made to the minutes.

4. SCHOOL FINANCE REGULATIONS (ENGLAND) 2006

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Department for Education and Skills School Finance Regulations (England)2006.

The Education Finance Manager commented on the content of the report referring in particular to paragraph 5 outlining the main changes to Dudley's Local Management of Schools Scheme regarding:-

- (a) Regulation 14 - The Single Pupil Count.
- (b) Regulation 23 - Permanently Excluded Pupils.
- (c) Regulation 10 - Allocated Individual Schools Budget.

Particular discussion ensued on the implications of the change in respect of Regulation 14 - The Single Pupil Count as outlined in paragraph 15 of the Report in that funding would need to be based on assumed Published Admission Number pupil increase rather than actual intake.

Paragraph 16 of the report set out, for information, a table indicating 2006/07 Published Admission Number increases and in the light of this information consideration was also given to the effects of the review of secondary school provision that was taking place.

Given the drawback to the proposal in Regulation 14 , as set out in paragraph 15 of the report it was proposed that a review of actual admissions compared to planned admissions was undertaken in September with this data being reported to the Forum for a decision on future methods of funding the Published Admission Number increases.

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the content of the School Finance Regulations (England) 2006 and their impact in respect of Dudley's Local Management of Schools Scheme, be noted.
2. That approval be given to the proposal that the existing provision within the Local Management of Schools Scheme in respect of the 5% trigger be removed from April, 2006.
3. That approval be given to the proposal that the existing provision within the Local Management of Schools Scheme in respect of the increase in Published Admission Numbers be retained from April, 2006 and that the proposal that a review of actual admissions compared to planned admissions be undertaken in September with the data being reported to the Forum for decision on future methods of funding the Published Admission Number Increases be endorsed without commitment to implementation.
4. That it be noted that should the Local Authority adopt the Hard to Place Pupil Protocol (Managed Moves), as set out in Annex 3 of the report submitted, then Regulation 23(6) would become effective.
5. That the following principles of the school specific contingency from April, 2006, be approved:-
 - (a) That the school specific contingency of £1,283,723 be reallocated from the Individual Schools Budget to the new line detailed on the Section 52 Budget Statement "School Specific Contingency";
 - (b) That the Union Duties budget of £138,554 be reallocated from the school specific contingency and reported via the Staff Costs - supplied cover (not sickness) element within the Section 52 budget statement, if the Central Expenditure Limit calculation permits;

- (c) That the premises costs of £255,621 budget be delegated to cover the Published Admission Number adjustments and the 5% trigger;
- (d) That the resulting school specific contingency would be £889,548 before inflation and adjustments.

and that the Director of Children's Services be advised of the forgoing decisions.

- 6. That, in the light of the decision made at (3) above the Director of Children's Services be recommended to ensure that the Secondary School Review was completed with the minimum of delay.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING EARMARKED FOR PERSONALISED LEARNING

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on Department for Education and Skills criteria in respect of Personalised Learning and on a proposed funding methodology in respect of the 2006/07 Local Management of Schools formula.

Mrs Coates, in her presentation of the report, referred in particular to Tables 2 and 3 and the proposed allocation methodology in respect of the children from deprived families to access schools after schools and year round activities element. It was noted that the Budget Working Group at its meeting held on 18th January, 2006, had recommended acceptance of model C (Super Output Areas 30%) which was in line with the Department for Education and Skills criteria used for conducting phase 2 of Children's Centres review and the use of the same data would provide consistency.

During consideration of this matter it was suggested that data in respect of the Foundation Stage Profile should be used and it was agreed that, for next year, the use of this data would be pursued with the Information Team.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the financial modelling in respect of the allocation of Personalised Learning for 2006/07 and 2007/08 be noted and that the Director of Children's Services be advised that the preferred option from Tables 2 and 3 be model C in respect of the 30% Index of Multiple Deprivation Factor, as recommended by the Budget Working Group.

6. SCHOOL FUNDING: SOCIAL DEPRIVATION AND PERSONALISED LEARNING

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted in respect of correspondence from the Department for Education and Skills regarding a requirement for each Local Authority to supply the Secretary of State by 5th May, 2006, with a statement setting out the Authority's policy and practice based on its school funding formula for 2006/07. A copy of the Department for Education and Skills Publication Statement was attached as Appendix A whilst a copy of the letter, dated 22nd December, 2005, setting out the requirements, was attached as Appendix B to the report submitted.

During consideration of this matter reference was made to recent activity by the Internal Audit Service in respect of eligibility for free school meals which required clarification and, should the proposals contained in the report be agreed the Education Finance Manager would clarify the issues raised with Internal Audit Services.

RESOLVED

1. That the information contained in the report, and Appendices A to D to the report, submitted on the request for information from the Department for Education and Skills in respect of a statement setting out the Authority's policy and practice based on its school funding formula for 2006/07 regarding social deprivation and personalised learning, and completion of a social deprivation statement by 5th May, 2006, be noted.
2. That the proposal that a note be circulated to schools reminding Head Teachers of the free school meal eligibility criteria as recorded on Pupil Level Annual Schools Census and the current formula funding arrangements, be endorsed and that the note have regard to the comments made at this meeting in relation to recent audit activity in respect of free school meals.
3. That the Director of Children's Services be advised that the proposal that a review of the current arrangements for funding schools for the costs of deprivation should be undertaken by the Budget Working Group, particularly in respect of the distribution of funds using free schools meals data, with the review also ensuring that deprivation funding to Dudley Schools was distributed equitably, be endorsed.

7. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING EARMARKED FOR PRACTICAL LEARNING OPTIONS.

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on Department for Education and Skills Criteria in respect of Practical Learning and on a proposed funding methodology in respect of the 2006/07 and 2007/08 Local Management of Schools formula.

During consideration of this matter it was suggested, and agreed that funding for 14 to 16 year old pupils should also be based on the number of such pupils.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on Department for Education and Skills Criteria in respect of Practical Learning and on a proposed funding methodology in respect of the 2006/07 and 2007/08 Local Management of Skills Formula, be noted and that the Director of Children's Services be advised that the Forum recommend that the methodology adopted for distribution of funds for Practical Learning Options within the Local Management of schools formula be based on the number of unweighted pupils at KS4 as recorded in school on Pupil Level Annual Schools Census annually. This will target the Practical Learning funds to those pupils aged 14 to 16.

8. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING FOR WORKFORCE REFORM;
PRIMARY SCHOOLS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Department for Education and Skills targeted allocation in respect of Workforce Reform for primary schools and on a proposed funding methodology in respect of the 2006/07 Local Management of Schools Formula.

During consideration of this matter it was stressed that the allocation of £450,000 was for 2006/07 only. In subsequent years the funding would form part of the base budget.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on the Department for Education and Skills targeted allocation in respect of Workplace Reform for primary schools and on a proposed funding methodology in respect of the 2006/07 Local Management of Schools formula, be noted and that the Director of Children's Services be advised that the Forum endorse the recommendation of the Budget Working Group that the proposed distribution of targeted funding for Workplace Reform in primary schools for 2006/07 be via the Age Weighted Pupil Unit.

9. STANDARDS FUND ALLOCATION 2006/07 AND 2007/08

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Standards Fund allocations for 2006/07 and 2007/08 and on a process for managing specific grants within the fund. Appendices A, B and C to the report submitted set out the Standards Fund allocations in respect of the Schools Budget activities for 2006/07 and 2007/08, the Standards Fund allocations in respect of the non Schools Budget activities for 2006/07 and 2007/08 and Sections 1 and 2 of the Department for Education and Skills Standard Fund Circular for 2006-08 respectively.

During consideration of this matter it was noted that the information contained in paragraph 6 of the report submitted in respect of grant area 31a, ICT Infrastructure and Hands On Support in respect of the split between revenue and capital funded activities for 2006/07 would be specifically drawn to the attention of schools.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted in respect of the Standards Fund allocations for 2006/07 and 2007/08 and on the process for managing specific grants within the fund, be noted.

10. SCHOOL RESERVES –DELEGATED BUDGETS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the updated situation regarding school reserves accrued from delegated budgets.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the updated situation regarding school reserves accrued from delegated budgets, be noted together with the intention of the Director of Children's Services to remove any reserves, earmarked or declared, to be spent by 31st March, 2006, which had not been spent or committed by that date, in accordance with the Local Management of Schools Scheme.

11. SCHOOLS BUDGET 2006/07 AND 2007/08

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Department for Education and Skills, December 2005 budget announcement in respect of the 2006/07 and 2007/08 Schools Budget. A copy of Budget Fact Sheet number 1, issued to schools on 19th December, 2005, was attached as Appendix A to the report submitted. Appendix B to the report submitted included four modelled estimates of the Dedicated Schools Grant to the Schools Budget for 2006/07 based on a range of pupil number scenarios. A copy of the Revenue Budget Strategy 2006/07 report submitted to the meeting of the Select Committee on Lifelong Learning held on 18th January, 2006 was attached as Appendix C to the report submitted.

As part of her presentation on the report submitted the Education Finance Manager circulated at the meeting replacement updated details in respect of Appendix B to the report submitted setting out four options based on 2006/07 Dedicated Schools Grant Modelling. In commenting on the replacement information circulated the Education Finance Manager reported that option 4 was now the most likely option, involving a reduction in pupil numbers of 600, in that current details gave a reduction in pupil numbers of 578. Details from other forms in respect of pupil numbers were though still awaited.

Consideration was given to the implications of the financial position as circulated. It was noted that the proposal in paragraph 7 of the report submitted was that an amount of the unallocated growth be earmarked for special schools and that, although the amount would depend upon the final Dedicated Schools Grant a sum of £300,000 was recommended. The total unallocated growth amount as shown at option 4 in the circulated document indicated an available amount of £341,000 from which the £300,000 allocation to special schools would be earmarked.

Comments were also made about the need to revise the details given regarding the cost of three Early Years Development Advisors and two and a half Special Educational Need Advisors and that there would need to be a further meeting of the Forum before 31st March, 2006 so that the estimates for the 2007/08 schools budget could be discussed once the January 2006 pupil number count was known.

Regarding the allocation of the unallocated growth element a comment was made that the Forum had previously proposed that funding be made available for workforce remodelling and targeted to the secondary sector and that there were no proposals in respect of this matter contained in the documentation submitted.

On the monies available it was also noted that as a result of the reduction, by approximately 600, in pupil numbers this equated to a loss in Dedicated Schools Grant of approximately £2 million which could not have been foreseen at the time other proposals were made for the use of the unallocated growth element such proposals being made on the best available facts at that time.

It was also stated that, given the financial position as now outlined, it was clear that the primary and secondary schools reviews needed to be completed as soon as possible so as to help address the situation.

During consideration of this matter comments were also made by representatives on the need for the Forum to review its method of operation so that representatives could better address the issues submitted to them.

RESOLVED

1. (a) That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted regarding the budget information available, as previously circulated and circulated at the meeting, in respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Local Authority central areas for the 2006/07 and 2007/08 Schools Budget, be noted.
- (b) That the Director of Children's Services be advised that the Forum endorse the proposed allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant in accordance with option 4, as circulated at the meeting and the allocation of £300,000 from the unallocated growth element for use in special schools.
- (c) That, in order to discuss the Dedicated Schools Grant modelling in respect of 2007/08, a further meeting of the Forum be held on Thursday, 16th March, 2006 at 6.00pm at Saltwells Education Centre, Netherton.

2. That in view of the comments made, Mrs Griffiths, Mr Rhind-Tutt, Mr Patterson, Mr Warner, Mr Conway and a nomination from secondary head teachers be appointed to serve as members of a working group to consider all aspects of the future operation of Dudley Schools Forum and make recommendations to the Forum at a future meeting.

12. 2006/07 SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR DUDLEY SCHOOL'S REORGANISATION AND PRIMARY REVIEW UPDATE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the proposed funding arrangements in respect of Dudley schools affected by schools re-organisation during 2006/07 which was considered in conjunction with agenda item 14 – Primary Review Update.

Regarding the funding arrangements it was proposed that the sum of the collective 7/12 ths reductions be retained from April 2006 within the Schools Specific Contingency until redistributed during 2006/07, as outlined in paragraph 6 of the report submitted, together with any closing school reserves, and used to fund the measures referred to in paragraph 13a to e in the report submitted.

In respect of the Primary Review Update the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Resources and Planning) reported that the School Organisation Committee at its meeting held on 26th January, 2006 had agreed to the closure of Highfields and Sycamore Green Primary Schools. At its meeting on 2nd February, 2006 the Committee had been unable to agree on proposals in respect of Beauty Bank and so the matter had been referred to the Schools Adjudicator for determination. Proposals in respect of Holt Farm and Maidensbridge had also been withdrawn. It was also reported that further consultation in respect of Holt Farm would continue until 17th March, 2006 with new notices being submitted. If required a meeting of the School Organisation Committee in respect of this school would probably be held in May, 2006. In respect of Maidensbridge the new proposal was that it be merged with the Church of the Ascension School but that the merged school be on the Maidensbridge School site. It was hoped that these proposals would be finalised by 1st September, 2006.

In view of the financial position, as referred to in the preceding item, it was considered vital that the primary schools review be concluded as soon as possible.

Consideration was then given to the implications of the reorganisation in financial and staffing terms and the comment made that there had been a wish to manage school closures with the minimum of disruption but that various factors had meant that the plans had been shifted so that this might not be possible.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed funding arrangements in respect of Dudley Schools affected by schools reorganisation for 2006/07 and 2007/08, as detailed in the report submitted, with particular reference to the planned use of the schools specific contingency, be noted.
2. That the Director of Children's Services be advised that the Forum approve the use of the schools specific contingency, as set out in paragraphs 6 and 13 of the report submitted, in respect of the current school reorganisation.
3. That the update on the primary schools review, as reported at the meeting, be noted.

13. CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO THE "SEN MATRIX FUNDING FOR MAINSTREAM PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS"

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the subsequent consultation held on the content of a report submitted to Schools Forum in July, 2005, in respect of the Special Education Needs (SEN) Funding Matrix for mainstream pupils. Appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the report submitted summarised the responses to the consultation.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Access and Inclusion), presented the report, and appendices to the report, submitted and responded to concerns expressed about the actual operation of the proposals and the changing roles and responsibilities of the staff involved. In this regard it was considered that there would be a radical change in the role of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators and that additional pressure would be placed on Education Psychologists. In view of this there was considered to be a need to look at the professional development of the service and to ensure that there was sufficient allocation of time to deal with pupil needs. It was considered therefore that a number of issues needed to be clarified, including those in respect of children with medical conditions who were not considered as part of these proposals. Furthermore there were funding issues in respect of pupils without statements from April. Given the concerns expressed there was considered to be the need for more work to be done to ensure that the proposals were successful.

As part of his response the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Access and Inclusion) referred to the proposals in paragraph 7 of the report submitted in particular the period allowed, to January, 2007, which was considered to be a reasonable lead in period. Training would also be provided and returns sampled.

It was though considered that the proposals had been consulted on as a funding mechanism rather than as way of funding special needs and therefore the issue of practicalities would arise. Although training had been written in there was an assumption that Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators wished to take on the role envisaged. In response to this latter comment it was considered that in the long run the proposals would be beneficial to them in looking after children and that needs would drive provision. The matrix was also considered to be better at seeing to this but it was recognised that the proposals were quite a change from the current situation. It was also considered appropriate that Educational Psychologists should be part of the monitoring process and it was recognised that other areas of expertise in the directorate and in schools should be looked at together with a mechanism for supporting that.

In respect of the support required it was considered that such support needed to be on a differential basis as there were differing numbers of children involved in schools and therefore the required support needed to be thought through. It was furthermore considered that it was unlikely that one person would be able to provide the service on their own.

As regards the numbers involved it was stated that the proposals related initially to the approximately 750 pupils with statements.

In response to a question raised regarding the employment position of staff once a child left it was stated that the process should be more flexible in this regard as it was not tied to the pupil and so Head Teachers would have the freedom to deploy staff as required.

Although it was noted that this was the first stage in the process there was still considered to be a need for clarity in how the process was developed.

RESOLVED

That, arising from consideration of the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the consultation response to the "SEN Matrix Funding for Mainstream Pupils with Special Educational Needs" the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning and the Director of Children's Services be advised that the Forum endorses the following proposals:-

- (a) That in order to provide financial stability in schools for 2006/07 all existing mainstream pupils with statements of special educational need be transferred across to the matrix in accordance with their current stated assessment requiring immediate full implementation of the matrix with protection (option b of the proposals – paragraph 42b of consultation document)
- (b) That new statements written from 1st April, 2006 no longer attach a specific number of hours support to each pupil but instead place them appropriately on the special educational needs matrix (paragraph 15 of the consultation document).
- (c) That Headteachers/Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators be acquired to maintain and update the special educational needs matrix during 2006/07 for submission to the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement in January, 2007 for funding in 2007/08 and that this be an ongoing requirement. (paragraph 44 of the consultation document)
- (d) That the centrally retained budgets of £1.4 million for statements of 25 hours or more be delegated in 2006/07 (paragraph 32 of the consultation document); and
- (e) That in the case of non-stated pupils with special educational needs further training be undertaken with Headteachers and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators during 2006/07 with a view to extending the matrix to allocate funding to pupils at School Action and School Action Plus from 2007/08 replacing the current formula funding methodology which will be retained for 2006/07 (paragraph 47 of the consultation document).

14. DATES AND VENUE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that future meetings of the Forum would be held on the following dates at Saltwells Education Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton:-

Thursday 16th March, 2006
 Tuesday 9th May, 2006

The meeting ended at 9.25pm

CHAIRMAN