

DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 19th March, 2013 at 6.00 pm
at Saltwells Education Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mr L Ridney - Chair

Mrs J Belcher, Mr J Conway, Mr I Dalloway, Mr C Derham, Mrs P Hazlehurst, Mr S Hudson, Mr J Kelleher, Mr M Lynch, Mr Patterson, Mrs J Quigley, Mrs A Richards, Mrs H Ruffles, Mr B Warren and Mr M Weaver.

Persons not a member of the Forum but having an entitlement to attend meetings and speak

Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services (Councillor Crumpton) and the Director of Children's Services

Officers

Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) (Directorate of Children's Services); Children's Services Finance Manager, Senior Principal Accountant and Mrs K Griffiths (Directorate of Corporate Resources)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs A Garratt, Mrs A Hannaway, Mr P Harris, Mr P Jones, Mr D Kirk, Ms T Pearce, Mrs P Rogers, Mr N Shaw, Mr R Timmins, Mr D Ward and Mrs G Withers.

2. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Mr Patterson and Mr Ridney had been appointed as substitute members for Mr Timmins and Mr Harris respectively, for this meeting of the Forum only.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 12th February, 2013, be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No issues were raised under this item.

5. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT PLANNING PROCESS 2013/14 - UPDATE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Dedicated Schools Grant budget planning process for 2013/14 and to the annual consultation on financial issues, as required by the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report in detail referring Members of the Forum to paragraphs of specific importance.

Concerns were raised by Forum Members in relation to Table 1 – Dudley Dedicated Schools Grant position for 2013/14 at 6th March, 2013, outlined in paragraph 8 of the report submitted, and the final budget adjustments that had been necessary as part of the budget covering the Schools Block, Early Years Block and the High Needs Block for 2013/14, as detailed in paragraph 9 of the report. The Children's Services Finance Manager confirmed that there was still outstanding adjustments in respect of the DSG, for example Post 16 FE and indicated that further in year updates would be given on any relevant changes.

The report outlined the annual consultation process required in respect of those financial areas prescribed within the Schools Forum Regulations 2012, further information was provided at the meeting giving Members an opportunity to discuss these areas in more detail. A Member raised concerns in relation to funding Specialist Units such as the Hearing Impaired Unit. He stated that in relation to the current funding for 2012/13 this would be protected for 2013/14 and queried how Dudley was planning to fund the provision in the future financial years. In responding, the Children's Services Finance Manager acknowledged the concerns raised and indicated that the Local Authority was committed in finding a solution to ensure that access to provision for specialist units such as Hearing Impaired Units will be available for schools in the Dudley Borough. She stated that an update on the position would be given to a future meeting of the Schools Forum.

The Assistant Director (Education Services) indicated that the principle behind the reform of the school revenue funding system, in particular the new approach to high needs funding would help give a more consistent and transparent approach in how funding would be distributed to schools in that funding should follow the pupil.

In response to questions raised by a Member in relation to assessments for funding of High Needs pupils and the costs involved, the Children's Services Finance Manager confirmed that processes were already in place and there would be no difference to how children in special schools were currently being assessed.

In referring to paragraph 17 of the report, a Member of the Forum indicated that she had given her staff the opportunity to train in special areas such as Pupil Referral Units, however, stated that the training had now ceased due to the restructuring of the Pupil Referral Unit. She indicated that schools in the Dudley Borough had similar problems with staff shortages and suggested that staff who specialised in teaching in the Pupil Referral Unit could be accessed when required. In responding, the Children's Services Finance Manager assured Members of the Forum that the Local Authority was committed to working with schools to find a solution.

The Children's Services Finance Manager, in referring to the Annual Consultation Process, then briefly outlined arrangements for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) as summarised in paragraphs 13-16 of the report submitted. The Assistant Director (Education Services) referred to paragraph 16 and indicated that an SEN Board would be set up to discuss future changes.

The Children's Services Finance Manager referred to paragraph 24 of the report in relation to additional financial support to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and confirmed that proposals were currently being drafted and would be presented to the Schools Forum at a future meeting.

Reference was made to the planned number of places at the PRU provision at The Mere. Officers referred to ongoing work and indicated that all planned place provision now had to be communicated and agreed with the DfE. This would not necessarily result in additional funding being made available to Dudley. Discussions were ongoing.

Reference was also made to ongoing discussions with headteachers concerning the arrangements for Early Years Provision.

The Forum noted that in respect of certain government grants, the expenditure would be monitored by Ofsted.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information contained in the report and appendix to the report submitted be noted.

- (ii) That, approval be given to the movement of the 2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant between the three funding blocks as detailed in Table 1 (Dudley Dedicated Schools Grant 2013/14 at 6th March, 2013) and paragraph 9 of the report submitted.
- (iii) That a further update be provided at the Summer term meetings in respect of the Pupil Referral Unit review and the additional financial support required.
- (iv) That the comments of the Forum in relation to the financial issues outlined above, be noted.

6. REVIEW OF 2013-14 SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted providing an update on the DfE's consultation document "Review of 2013-14 School Funding Arrangements" published on 12th February, 2013 and to agree a response on behalf of Schools Forum.

The Senior Principal Accountant gave a detailed overview of the information presented in the report and appendices submitted to the meeting.

Officers noted comments made in relation to question 17 (In cases where a population bulge is imminent, what is preventing good and necessary schools from staying open?) of the Review of 2013/14 School Funding Agreement Response Form, as outlined in Appendix C of the report submitted.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the Review of 2013-14 School Funding Arrangements document as outlined in Appendix A of the report submitted be noted.
- (ii) That the Director of Children's Services note the comments of the Forum in relation to the proposed consultation response.

7. DUDLEY'S SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS – APPROVAL BY SCHOOLS FORUM

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the proposed amendments required to Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools from April 2013.

The Children's Services Finance Manager gave a detailed overview of the information presented in the report and appendix submitted to the meeting.

In relation to the appendices, a Member asked for titles of the KS3, KS4 and Cherry Tree Learning Centre to be amended before publication to read:

- Secondary Short Stay School KS3;
- Secondary Short Stay School KS4;
- Cherry Tree Learning Centre.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the proposed amendments required to the Dudley's Scheme for Financing Schools effective from April 2013, as outlined in Appendix A with amendments to the PRU titles as discussed, to the report submitted.

8. THE PUPIL PREMIUM - REPORTING

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted to update members in respect of the recent publications issued by Ofsted, which provide information, advice and guidance in respect of the Pupil Premium.

The Senior Principal Accountant gave a detailed overview of the information presented in the report and appendices submitted to the meeting.

A Member of the Forum undertook to send additional information to the Children's Services Finance Manager for inclusion in the Budget fact Sheet to be issued to schools in March 2013.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the latest guidance and publications issued by Ofsted in respect of the Pupil Premium be noted.
- (ii) That the Director of Children's Services note the there are no additional comments of the Forum in relation to The Pupil Premium (Appendix A) and the Analysis and challenge tools for schools January 2013 (Appendix B).

9. BUDGETS DELEGATED 2013/14

The Director of Children's Services gave a verbal update on the Budgets Delegated for 2013/14 and referred to the decision of the Schools Forum regarding de-delegations, the correct processes and the associated Equality Impact Assessments to be carried out. Discussions were ongoing to ensure that the management and co-ordination of services continued to be provided to schools.

The Community Languages programme was accessed by 500 children within the Borough. Should the service need to cease or change, due to insufficient buy back from schools or income from other stakeholders, then this action would be deferred until the 2012/13 academic year was completed. The staff may need to be put at risk if the service could not establish sufficient funds to pay for the teaching provision, at which time, the Equality Impact Assessment procedures would be followed.

For the Ethnic Minority and Behavioural Support Service consultant staff, the service was subject to buy back arrangements with schools for 2013/14. However, if there were insufficient funds to pay for the services then the staff would need to be put at risk, at which time, Equality Impact Assessment procedures would be followed.

A further update would be provided to Schools Forum during the Summer term meetings.

RESOLVED

That the verbal update by the Director of Children's Services be noted.

10. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP – UPDATE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on forthcoming appointments to the Forum's membership with effect from 1st May, 2013.

RESOLVED

That the report submitted in relation to the appointment of two new Schools Forum Members with effect from 1st May, 2013, subject to the Council's democratic process of approval, as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, be noted.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FORUM

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of the remaining meetings of the Forum in 2012/13 be noted.

12. COMMENTS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair, on behalf of the Forum, expressed thanks to the Assistant Director (Education Services) for his support and attendance at the Forum meetings and wished him every success in his future career.

The meeting ended at 7.40pm.

CHAIR