

DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 16th March, 2010 at 6.00 p.m. at Saltwells Education
Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mrs. Griffiths (Chairman)
Mr. Millman (Vice-Chairman)
Mr. Dallaway, Mrs. Edwards, Ms. Garratt, Mr. Hinton, Mr. Howells (substitute
for Mr. Sorrell), Ms. Hughes, Mr. James, Mr. J. Jones, Mr. Ridney, Ms. Smith,
Mr. Timmins, Mr. Vincent, Mr. Wassall and Mrs. Withers.

Person(s) not members of the Forum but with an entitlement to attend meetings and speak

Mr. Wyatt (Director of Children's Services – Dudley MBC)

Officers

The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Mr. Perrett); the Children's
Services Finance Manager (Mrs. Cocker) and Senior Principal Accountant
(Mrs. Coates) Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement; the Review
Manager (Mr. Sanford) Chief Executive's Directorate (for Minute No. 5 below);
and the Democratic Services Manager (Mr. Griffiths), Directorate of Law,
Property and Human Resources.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs.
Elwiss, Mr. Hatton, Mr. Hudson, Mr. P. Jones, Mr. Millward, Mr. Sorrell, Mr.
Warner, Mr. Warren, Councillor Vickers, Councillor Mrs. Walker and Ms.
Porter.

RESOLVED

That the apologies for absence be received and accepted.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

- (1) That Minute No. 6 (Introduction of a Single Funding Formula
for Early Years Provision) be amended by the deletion of the
word 'inclusion' and its replacement with the word 'exclusion'
in the first line of resolution (3) to that Minute.

- (2) That, subject to the amendment referred to in (1) above, the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February, 2010, be approved as a correct record and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Arising from Minute No. 10 (Single Status and Job Evaluation Update), comments were made concerning advice on the capitalisation of costs and the approach taken to staff funded in respect of statemented children, in particular as to whether back pay to such staff should be met from the local authority's budget rather than school budgets. These issues were discussed further under Minute No. 5 below

4. CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

In view of the attendance of Mr. Sanford in connection with Single Status and Job Evaluation, the Chair agreed, with the consent of the meeting, to the Dedicated Schools Grant Indicative Budget Planning 2010/11 being considered as the next item of business.

5. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT INDICATIVE BUDGET PLANNING 2010/2011

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the 2010/11 budget planning process. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) would make final determinations in respect of Dudley's data by June, 2010 and the Forum was invited to consider and comment on the report concerning the budget strategy planning for the determination and utilisation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

An update to the report contained in the agenda papers was circulated at the meeting, containing updated information where available and associated revisions to the recommendations in the report. Mrs Cocker verbally outlined the detailed contents of the report and updated information where necessary.

The Forum was recommended to approve a Dedicated Schools Grant Budget of £199.667m for 2010/11 based on the updated pupil number forecast set out in the revised Table 2 circulated at the meeting. The original report had identified a DSG of £199.614m, however, the updated figure of £199.667m provided additional funding of £53,000 to be allocated as £48,000 to the Individual Schools Budget and £5,000 to central budgets in line with the required percentage allocation.

Paragraph 12 of the report referred specifically to Ministerial priorities for schools funding. This included a proposal from the Director of Children's Services concerning an allocation to schools under the formula factor for personalisation at a rate of £52.11 per pupil on the basis of the number of 5 to 15 year old pupils on roll at School Census date.

Paragraph 15 of the original report submitted to the meeting indicated that a breach of the Central Expenditure Limit (CEL) was not anticipated. However, there was a requirement to retain a contingency for the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) at an amount of approximately £250,000. This funding would be held in an EYSFF contingency, which had to be located outside the ISB, and would therefore cause a technical breach in the CEL. The Forum was accordingly recommended to approve this technical breach.

The Forum undertook a lengthy discussion on ongoing issues concerning Single Status and Equal Pay. Reference was made to the key areas of Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools. Mr. Sanford indicated that the situation was still extremely fluid and information currently being circulated regarding the settlement of Equal Pay claims should be treated with the highest level of confidentiality.

For Community and Voluntary Aided Schools, provisional information in respect of Single Status had been circulated to Head Teachers in January/February, 2010. This would be used for budget setting in the 2010/11 financial year. Detailed work in respect of Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools was ongoing. The precise amount payable by each school could not be determined at this stage and would be advised as soon as possible. It was recognised, however, that it was important for schools to ensure proper provision was made to meet the costs involved. Ongoing consideration was being given to the options available and a further report would be submitted to the Budget Working Group and the Schools Forum in due course. The Forum expressed the importance of maintaining effective and ongoing communication channels with Head Teachers of all the schools involved.

Reference was made to financial liabilities for staff employed by schools in relation to supporting statemented pupils. A view had been taken that, in line with DCSF Regulations, the responsibility rested with individual schools since they employed the staff. The Forum accepted that this was a difficult and complex issue in the context of overall financial pressures. The Forum acknowledged that the Budget Working Group had already discussed this issue and requested that the Working Group further scrutinise the area of Special Educational Needs (SEN) funding in the future. Reference was also made to the approach being taken by other local authorities in relation to the funding of Single Status/Equal Pay and concerns regarding the consultation with the Schools Forum. The Director of Children's Services undertook to provide a further report to the Budget Working Group and report further to the Forum in due course.

Some concerns were expressed regarding the confidential information made available to Head Teachers regarding Equal Pay and how this could be shared with School Governors, possibly in an anonymised format, in view of the difficult decisions faced by individual schools. The Forum was assured that the data being circulated to schools was based on the best information available at present on which to base decisions concerning capitalisation of costs and other funding issues. However, given the legal issues involved, it was essential that confidentiality about the details of individual employees' was maintained at this stage.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chair put the recommendations as set out in the amended documents circulated at the meeting and it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, together with the revised supplementary information made available at the meeting, be noted.
- (2) That a Dedicated Schools Grant Budget of £199.667m be approved for 2010/11 based on the pupil number forecast set out in Table 2 in the updated documents circulated at the meeting.
- (3) That the proposal of the Director of Children's Services to fund Personalisation in line with paragraph 12 of the report submitted to the meeting be confirmed.
- (4) That the technical breach in the CEL be approved for the reasons outlined above.
- (5) That the Director of Children's Services submit a further report on the issues and concerns raised in relation to funding issues associated with Single Status and Equal Pay as referred to above.

6. 14-19 DIPLOMA FUNDING 2010/11

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted updating the Forum on the latest developments relating to 14-19 Diplomas. Approval was sought to the funding framework for the 2010/11 academic year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Forum support the recommendation of the 14-19 Partnership in relation to deployment of the KS4 Diploma Delivery funding for the 2010/11 academic year and note that the model sets no precedent for future years.

- (2) That the funding framework be reviewed by the 14-19 Partnership for 2011/12 and a further recommendation be made to the Schools Forum when appropriate.

7. STANDARDS FUND 1.2 SCHOOL LUNCH GRANT 2010/11

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the distribution of the School Lunch Grant for 2010/11 using a fair and equitable allocation model.

RESOLVED

That the Forum support the continuing use of Method 1, as set out in the report submitted to the meeting, as the basis of distributing the School Lunch Grant in 2010/11.

8. SCHOOL CLOSURE PROGRAMME 2009/10 FINANCIAL YEAR AND ONGOING IMPACT

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the recent consultations concerning the proposed closure of Pensnett High School and requesting financial support from the Schools Specific Contingency.

The Forum noted that the Council's Cabinet would formally consider the closure of Pensnett High School on 17th March, 2010.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Forum support the proposal to provide financial support of £130,000 to Pensnett High School for the 2009/10 financial year, in order that the School can balance its current delegated budget.
- (2) That subject to the School closure programme being confirmed by the Council's Cabinet on 17th March, 2010, then it be noted that this financial support will be required during 2010/11 and until such time that the School finally closes.
- (3) That the Schools Specific Contingency budget be used to fund the support to Pensnett High School.

9. BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

The Director of Children's Services reported verbally on the Council's unsuccessful bid for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding. Whilst this was a disappointing decision, the Project Board had already met to consider the feasibility of options that could be delivered without BSF resources. Work was also ongoing in partnership with schools to take forward aspects of the wider strategic view contained in the Vision 2025 document.

Further reports on the ongoing work would be submitted to future meetings of the Schools Forum.

The Vice-Chairman expressed his appreciation for the considerable efforts made by numerous individuals in submitting the BSF document. Whilst the news was disappointing, the Forum expressed its sincere thanks to everyone involved in the bid and the ongoing work.

RESOLVED

That the position be noted and further reports be submitted to future meetings on the ongoing work as necessary.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 8th June, 2010 at 6.00 p.m. at Saltwells Education Development Centre.

The meeting ended at 7.23 p.m.

CHAIRMAN