

## DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2008 at 6.00 p.m. at Saltwells Educational Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

### PRESENT:-

Mrs Griffiths (Chairman)  
Mr Millman (Vice Chairman)  
Mr Conway, Mrs Edwards, Mrs Elwiss, Mr Francis, Mr Harrington, Mrs Hazlehurst, Mr Hinton, Mr Hunt, Mr James, Mr Leyshon, Mr Lloyd, Mr Patterson, Mr Ridley, Ms Smith, Mr Sorrell, Mr Timmins, and Mr Wassall

### In attendance by standing invitation

Councillor Mrs Walker – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.  
Councillor Nottingham – Chairman of Select Committee on Children’s Services  
Mr Warner – Teaching Unions’ Representative

### Officers

The Assistant Directors of Children’s Services (Without Portfolio) and (Performance and Partnership), Mrs K Cocker – Children’s Services Finance Manager, Mrs S Coates – Senior Principal Accountant (Both Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement) and Mr R Sanders (Assistant Principal Officer, Democratic Services) – All Dudley MBC

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mr Hatton, Mr. Hudson and Mrs Jessup and the Director of Children’s Services.

#### 2. MINUTES

##### RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed.

#### 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No issues were raised under this item.

4. DUDLEY CATERING AND CLIENT SERVICES – CHANGES TO TRADING ARRANGEMENTS WITH SCHOOLS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on progress to date in relation to the measures necessary to implement the new trading arrangements between Catering Services and Schools, which would be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009. The report also discussed the next steps necessary of the implementation of the arrangements.

In relation to schools who wished to buy back the service from Dudley Catering Services, a letter sent by the Assistant General Manager for Catering for Dudley M.B.C. setting out the options available, these being for schools to enter into a fixed cost contract or an individual agreement, was appended to the report now submitted. Agreement periods for both options would be for a minimum of 2 years, with an option available for a 3 year contract. Charges would be reviewed annually and communicated to schools prior to the start of financial year.

In relation to the provision of free school meals, consideration was given in the report to the implications of a shortfall of 25p per meal between the cost to produce a meal of £1.65 and current free school meal funding of £1.40 per meal. The impact of the shortfall on catering budgets of schools with a high uptake of free school meals had been recognised previously and, accordingly, the Schools Forum, in 2007, had agreed that free school meal funding should be increased to £1.65 per meal. The Forum was now asked to reaffirm its commitment to the additional funding with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the options available to schools for the provision of Catering Services traded from Dudley Catering Services, as set out in the letter to schools from the Assistant General Manager of Dudley M.B.C. Catering Services, and as summarised in paragraph 4 of the report now submitted, be noted.
- (2) That the commitment of the Forum to aligning the school meal to the funding made available to schools through the Local Management of Schools Resources Allocation Formula, currently in the sum of £1.65 per meal, be reaffirmed.

5. INTEGRATED SERVICES, INFORMATION SHARING AND ASSESSMENT

Further to the decision of the Forum, at its meeting held in February, 2008, a report of the Director of Children's Services on progress on the implementation of Integrated Services for Information Sharing and Assessment was submitted.

The report indicated that Integrated Services, using the Common Assessment Framework as a basis for assessment of information sharing among partners, were being developed as part of the Children and Young People's Plan for the period from 2008 to 2011. The report confirmed that the number of Common Assessment Processes under way or completed were increasing, that the level of increase was accelerating and that multi-agency briefings had been held. Positive feedback from the Training and Development Agency had been received. Good progress of partners was being made.

In discussing areas of development, the report indicated feedback from some agencies that involvement with a Common Assessment Framework was proving difficult in some cases, given that the time necessary for such involvement had to be found within a normal working day. Notwithstanding this, however, there was evidence to indicate that, with sufficient commitment by managers, and a flexible approach, all agencies were becoming involved in effective integrated working to support the individual needs of children and young people. As part of the Workforce Development Programme, some agencies and teams had requested their own tailored training and it was intended that this would be progressed.

Work of the Integrated Service Management Teams was becoming embedded in the work of local township teams and local managers had taken up posts in the five townships of the Borough. The role of local managers, which would be to support the development of Integrated Services, including the common assessment framework and Contact Point, working in collaboration with all other partner agencies, was discussed by the District Director of Children's Services (Performance and Partnership), in presenting the report.

#### RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

#### 6. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT INDICATIVE BUDGET PLANNING 2009/10

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising of the Forum of the Indicative Budget Planning Process for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2009/10.

Using the latest data available, the indications were that pupil numbers for Dudley schools would decrease by an estimated 750 or 1.5% in comparison to the final January 2008 data, on which the DSG allocation for 2008/09 had been based. The report indicated, however, that the introduction of a single method of counting pupils in both the maintained and PVI Sectors from January, 2009 might change the pupil forecast assumption and the advice of the DCSF on this was being sought. Overall, should figures on which the calculations were based remain constant, the DSG for 2009/10 would be in the sum of £192.044 million, this representing a cash increase of 2% on the 2008/09 figure. The report noted that the first indicative budget for 2009/10, presented to the Forum in April, 2008, would now be overstated by some £200,000 or 0.1% in total.

Reference was made in the report to a budget fact sheet which would be issued to schools to advise them of the latest budget forecast and which would also draw attention to the probability of a number of formula changes it was proposed would be introduced in April, 2009 and would be needed to be taken into account in budget planning assumptions. In relation to central budgets for 2009/10, the report confirmed that planning for this had commenced and that it was expected that, with careful management of the relevant service areas, central budgets could be maintained within the 2% cash DSG inflation available, notwithstanding pay inflation of 2.5%.

The report also discussed the funding implications for the DSG of the proposals for two academies in Dudley, the estimated cost to the DSG in a full year being £70,000. The financial implications to the Council of the change of school status from maintained to academy were indicated in paragraph 13 of the report and particular attention was drawn to a forecast deficit budget for 2009/10 in relation to the Pensnett School that would have to be funded. This owed to falling pupil numbers, and, while the Council was working with the school to minimise the deficit, any deficit would fall to be met from the DSG as a closing school liability. In view of this, it might be necessary for funds to be set aside to accommodate the cost.

The report also confirmed that the DSG had been calculated over a 3 year period and schools had received indicative budgets for 2010/11. Actual budgets would be based on the January 2010 census data and it was anticipated that there would be changes from that of the indicative position stated earlier, which had been calculated originally from census data applicable in April, 2008. Other contributory factors would include the changes to formula funding currently being consulted on, and changes to funding in the Early Years Sector.

In the discussion that ensued, a suggestion was made that consideration of the indicative budget should have been referred to the Budget Working Group for detailed consideration, prior to its submission to the Forum. The Assistant Director of Children's Services (without portfolio) indicated that the issue was currently outside the remit of the Working Group but that consideration could be given to including it within their terms of reference.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report and the budget planning exercise for 2009/10, as described in the report now submitted, be noted.
- (2) That a further report, updating the position, be submitted to the meeting of the Forum in February 2009.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY FACILITIES TIME FOR UNIONS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on a request from the Secretaries of the Teaching Unions for additional time to undertake Health and Safety duties as required of them under legislative requirements.

RESOLVED

That consideration of this issue be deferred for a report to be submitted to a later meeting of the Forum by the Health and Safety representative.

8. TARGETED CAPITAL FUNDING: KITCHENS AND DINING ROOMS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Forum of the Targeted Capital Funding available from the DCSF to Local Authorities for school kitchen and dining room improvements.

The DCSF had asked Local Authorities to submit their Expressions of Interest by Christmas, 2008, with formal bids to be followed in February, 2009. It was indicated in the report that bids from schools were being collated currently. Outcomes would be referred to the meeting of the Forum on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2009, before being submitted to the DCSF.

The four goals applicable for the award of Capital Funding were set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the DCSF Targeted Capital Grant Funding to Local Authorities in respect of kitchen and dining room improvements be noted.
- (2) That the Director of Children's Services be advised that the Expression of Interest being submitted to the DCSF in December 2008 on behalf of Dudley Schools by the Director of Children's Services, be endorsed.
- (3) That a further report be submitted to the Forum in February, 2009 in respect of the formal bidding process.

9. TRANSFORMING SECONDARY EDUCATION – BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE AND ACADEMIES

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted updating the Forum on the position of the Council regarding the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Academies Proposals.

The report set out the decision of the Council's Cabinet, at its meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2008 to note progress on BSF to date; to defer the Expression of Interest in BSF to wave 8 or a later stage; and to proceed with the Academies programme. Mrs Cocker reported orally that, following its being called in for scrutiny, the Select Committee on Children's Services had resolved to confirm the decision.

In the discussion on the issue, the reasons for the deferral of the Expression of Interest in BSF were discussed, in which particular reference was made to the impact of the current economic situation on the market value of the Cradley High School site and the implications of falling school rolls on the funding that might be available for implementation. In response to a question, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services indicated that an offer of some £3 million for the Cradley High school site had been made at one stage but was no longer on the table.

The decision to defer the Expression of Interest in BSF to a later wave was regretted by the Head Teacher of the Holly Hall School, who considered an opportunity for the strategic consideration of the Secondary School accommodation in the Borough to have been missed. In conveying his opinion, the Head Teacher expressed the view that, although it was the current intention of Government to proceed with subsequent waves of BSF, in the current economic climate, it could not be relied on that these would be proceeded with for certain.

In response to a question on whether the Council remained committed to Academies, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services indicated that further information from the DCSF was awaited. Regarding funding, she confirmed that final funding decisions would depend upon the information awaited from the DCSF.

**RESOLVED**

That the position of the Council regarding BSF and Academies, as set out in the report now submitted, and expanded on orally at the meeting, be noted.

10. CLOSURE OF CRADLEY HIGH SCHOOL

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted providing an update on the current budget position in respect of Cradley High School since its closure on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2008.

The latest protected outturn for 2008/09, including the costs necessary to maintain security at the premises at the current level, was £860,000 against total resources available of £983,000. The report also referred to devolved formula capital of £150,000 which remained available from the former Cradley High School and which, it was intended, would be reinvested in other schools via the approved Capital Programme.

Concern was expressed by some members at the costs involved in securing the premises, in response to which the Assistant Director of Children's Services (without portfolio) referred to the Council's duty of care in relation to health and safety matters concerning the former school premises.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services indicated that staffing matters had been resolved, with some staff having been dispersed to other schools and some declared redundant by the Cabinet in September.

RESOLVED

That the current position be noted.

#### 11. CONSTITUTION

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted, seeking consideration of proposals for a review of the constitution and terms of reference of the Forum, which included some changes in relation to certain membership issues.

In considering the report, particular attention was given in respect issues of school member nominations and Special Schools' Representation.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, subject to the inclusion of reference to the cost of Forum Meetings being added to paragraph 34, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services be recommended that the revised Constitution and Terms of Reference of the Forum, as set out in Appendix A to the report now submitted, be approved.
- (2) That the position regarding the membership of the Teachers' Union representative, as indicated in the report, be noted.

#### 12. SCHOOLS FORUM TRAINING PROGRAMME

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on a proposed Training Programme for Forum Members.

Under the proposals, the programme would comprise two areas of training, these being for ad hoc” and routine issues, respectively. Definitions of the respective training areas were given in paragraphs 6 to 8 (inclusive) of the report.

A proforma regarding training seminars arranged for 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 was circulated.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted and the Director of Children’s Services advised of the support of the Forum for the training programme proposed.
- (2) That members submit the proforma circulated to them to Children’s Services Accountancy by 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2008.

13. CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – DE-COMMISSIONING OF INDIVIDUAL NEEDS CENTRES

A report of the Director of Children’s Services was submitted on a consultation document issued on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 relating to the proposed de-commissioning of Individual Needs Centres (INCs) located in mainstream schools and the consequential redirection of funding to new specialist provision in mainstream schools.

In response to a question, Mrs Cocker confirmed that the sum of £667,000 required for specialist mainstream provision, as set out in Table 2 of Appendix A to the report now submitted could be met by way of the resources currently provided for pupils in INCs. She also confirmed that it was anticipated that pupils coming in to mainstream provision from INCs would roughly equate to those moving into the new specialist provision from mainstream provision, thus maintaining equilibrium as far as resource allocation was concerned.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the consultation document in respect of the changes proposed to the resource allocation formula in respect of the de-commissioning of Individual Need Centres located in mainstream schools, be received and noted.
- (2) That members of the Forum be invited to respond direct to the consultation document via the process outlined in the document.

14. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS TASK AND FINISH GROUP



An oral report on work being undertaken by this group on issues relating to the funding of Special Educational Needs provision was given orally by Mrs. Coates.

The Group had looked at potential funding drivers in respect of statemented children in respect of which consideration was being given to the allocations of schools being redistributed on the basis of formula factors relating to deprivation, historical, statistical data and under attainment of named pupils with special educational needs. A report on the issue would be submitted to the Forum in due course.

Attention was drawn to the concerns of the Group regarding the need for alternative facilities to be provided for pupils who had received provision of 15 hours or less hitherto through Individual Needs Centres but for whom no provision in mainstream would be made in consequence of the discontinuation of 15 hour statements. Mrs Cocker confirmed that this was not an issue as it was the intention that the same amount of funding would be made available to schools for pupils with statements of 15 hours or less but it would be for the school to decide how these resources were deployed; thus the direct correlation between pupil and statemented funding for pupils with 15 hours or less statements would be un-linked. A suggestion was made that this was an issue for the Access and Inclusion Group to consider and it was also indicated that the issue would be raised at the meeting of Primary Heads on 20<sup>th</sup> January.

Other issues under consideration by the Group were reported, these including schools suffering financial turbulence, engagement with parents and the need to set aside funding for potential parental legal challenges.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the oral report be noted.
- (2) That the proposals of the Task and Finish Group in relation to provision for Special Educational Needs funding arrangements be referred to the Access and Inclusion Group for consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

CHAIRMAN