

SCHOOLS FORUM

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2010 AT COMMITTEE ROOM III - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Mr N Baker, Mrs Julia Bird, Mrs A Davey, Mr J Foster, Mr J Hawkins, Ms I Lancaster-Gaye, Dr Tina Pagett, Mr J Proctor, Mr M Watson and Mr C Zimmerman

Also Present:

87. Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Mr David Cowley
Mrs Catriona Williamson
Mrs Judith Finney
Mrs Carol Grant
Mrs Ann Ferries
Mr Chris Dark
Mrs Rosheen Ryan
Rev. Alice Kemp

88. Chairman's Announcements

a) Retirement of Colin Zimmerman

On behalf of the Schools Forum, the Chair thanked Colin, Maintained Schools with Nursery rep, for his valued input and advice given to the Schools forum over a number of years, which included some time chairing the committee. His engagement and involvement was highly appreciated.

b) New Meeting Date – 17 January 2011

An additional meeting was arranged to take place in mid-January, on the 17th. This meeting would be primarily to deal with budget-setting and other associated items, in light of the finalisation of various recent legislative changes and the final figures for Wiltshire's Revenue Support Grant / Dedicated Schools Grant.

89. **Minutes of the previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 07 October were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record, and sign the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 07 October 2010, with the addition of Mrs Julia Bird as an attendee.

90. **Budget Monitoring**

Liz Williams updated the Forum on the projected budget monitoring position for 2010/2011.

The projections showed an estimated underspend of £2.022 million against the Dedicated School Grant (DSG). Any variance would be carried forward to the following year.

Key pressures and potential underspends are:

Schools Delegated Budgets

It was explained that schools revenue balances are expected to be £6.928 million at the end of the current year. This is a decrease of £3.986 million on the position at the end of 2009/10.

Premature Retirement Costs

This budget is projected to underspend, following measures to address the current severance policy for non-teaching staff, and the reimbursement of schools which had paid redundancy payments to staff on the termination of fixed term contracts, (which falls on the corporate budget).

Maternity Costs

An overspend is projected on the basis of 2009/10 data, but problems with the implementation of the SAP system mean accurate information remains unavailable. This is being addressed.

Special Educational Needs Services

Underspends are projected against the Independent Special Schools (ISS) budget and the Special Recoupment budget: from 2011/12 these underspends will be released in to the delegated budget to increase the amount delegated to mainstream primary schools for SEN.

A review has been carried out of the split of funding in residential school placements between DSG and the social care budget. Part of the underspend against the ISS budget is to be used to increase the contribution from DSG

towards these placements in the current year. This will be for one year only. The Named Pupil Allowance budget remains on target.

Early Years Budgets

Early Years budgets are projected to underspend by £1.6 million. Of this £1.3 million is against the Early Years Single Funding Formula. The increase in the free entitlement from 12.5 to 15 hours has been funded through the Standards funds this year. It was noted that next year's provision is very uncertain, so action by officers seeks to make the maximum use of those funds already available and to be flexible with them.

Young Person's Support Services (YPSS)

A recovery plan has been put in place regarding the financial position of YPSS. This plan included holding open certain vacancies to achieve savings. It is now anticipated that staffing levels are will be insufficient to cope with increased demand in the coming year. Additional sums are required in the coming year to address the pressures within the YPSS (outlined in Appendix 2 to the report). A review of the YPSS has taken place and will come to the January meeting of Schools Forum for consideration.

Resolved:

- a) **To note the revenue budget monitoring position for 2010/11 and the proposed underspend against Early Years budget.**
- b) **To approve the proposal for additional funding of £91,750 to be made available in the current year for the Young Person's Support Service as outlined in paragraph 13 above and in Appendix 2, from the projected underspend.**

91. Schools Facilities Maintenance Contract

Liz Williams, Head of Finance (DCE) summarised the options available to schools when the Sodexo Facilities Management Services concludes to schools with effect from 8th April 2011, and the relevant considerations for the Schools Forum.

Two clarifications emerged from the discussion of the proposals:

- Both **funding *and* responsibility** for providing free school meals is to be delegated the individual schools.
- Secondly, officers were ask to ensure that communication regarding this matter emphasise the rapidity of action needed to be taken by schools, including moves to negotiate temporary extensions (and the terms of these) if necessary.

Resolved:

That a letter to Schools be sent out, detailing the recommended course of action, as per the proposal in the report, signposting to the possibility of a framework contract, either with the Council or Southwest One but recommending that individual schools start to formulate a plan and explore market provision for services in their area, to become operational from 9th April 2011.

92. Review of the Early Years Single Funding Formula

Phil Cooch, Manager, Schools Accounting & Budgets and Jackie Bedford, Early Years/Sure Start Team, circulated a report outlining the key outcomes from a review of the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) conducted with the Early Years Reference Group (EYRG).

As part of this process a survey was sent to all free entitlement childcare providers regarding the formula and its composition, and the response was considered by the EYRG.

It was widely noted that the EYSFF had been implemented for only a year and its effects were only now becoming clear and understood. The forum considered the analysis of the questions and responses, and the recommendations from the reference group and made the following revisions to the EYSFF:

Resolved:

That Schools Forum:

- a) Note the contents of the report**
- b) Make the following amendments to the Early Years Single Funding Formula:**
 - (i) Enable providers to apply for sustainability/rurality supplement at each Funding period, in effect from April 2011.**
 - (ii) Enable providers to receive adjustments to estimated funding as either lump sums or phased over the rest of year, as selected annually.**

93. Controls on Surplus Balances 2009/10 - Appeals Outcome

Phil Cooch, Manager, Schools Accounting and Budgets outlined his report and drew the forum's attention to the outcomes of the clawback process, as listed in the appendix.

It was explained that a decision by the appeal panel on the proposed clawback from Downland's school is pending, awaiting a report by officers clarifying the financial situation at the school. This will be received by Schools Forum at the next (January) meeting and following the meeting, the appeals panel will come to a decision on the case

He also highlighted paragraph 6 of his paper, concerning the appropriateness of the clawback thresholds on small (primary) schools. Whilst officers would continue to investigate options in this area, developments arising from the forthcoming education White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' could affect this whole issue, and in fact removes the requirement for the local authority to have a clawback scheme.

It was clarified that the sum of £15,479 to be returned following the clawback process would return to the central SEN budget, whilst larger sums would remain in the sector from which the funds were recovered.

Resolved:

That the Schools Forum

- a) **Note the contents of the report**
- b) **Support the decision to clawback funds from the schools detailed in Appendix 1**

94. **Section 251 Benchmarking 2010/11**

With members' approval, it was agreed to defer this item to the next Schools Funding Working Group, to allow the data to be analysed in detail and to address any concerns above funding levels.

95. **Report of the School Funding Working Group**

Members of Schools forum were updated on the discussion and recommendations from the School Funding Working Group held on 16 December 2010

Discussions ensued around each of the topics considered by the working group, as follows:

- Broadband Connectivity
- Schools Facilities Maintenance Contract
- Schools Finance Regulations 2011 Consultation
- SIMS Licence – 3 Year Fixed Term Arrangement
- Results of Consultation to change the School Funding Scheme
- Schools Budget Planning Software

Resolved:

- a) That Option 2, outlined in Appendix 2 to this report, be the agreed method for charging schools for the cost of broadband connectivity from 2011/12, and that the charges should be treated as a cashless item on the school funding certificate.
- b) *See N.B below*
- c) That the recommendations of the Schools Funding Working Group on the response to the consultation to the draft Schools Finance Regulations be approved.
- d) That, subject to procurement rules, Wiltshire should enter in to the 3 year agreement for the SIMS Licence to maximise value for money.
- e) That the Schools Funding Scheme be amended to reflect the changes to debt write off levels and leasing arrangements, as outlined in paragraph 8 of the report.
- f) That from April 2011 a 3 year contract should be agreed for the FPSAdvance.net software at an annual cost of £61,150, for the basic version of the software, i.e. without the inclusion of the School Development Plan functionality.

Note

Recommendation b) was considered elsewhere in the agenda, under Item No.5 – Schools Facilities Management Contract

96. **Implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, DCE summarised the main implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review relevant to the work of those involved in the Schools Forum.

It was explained that usually a draft DSG and budget breakdown would be brought to the Schools Forum around this time of year; however the details of the funding settlement with central government were not expected until 09 December and as such consideration of next year's budget would be delayed until a special meeting arranged for Monday 17 January 2011.

A 0.1% real terms increase was expected in the schools budget, but as pupil number increases and the impact of the deprivation-focused pupil premium are taken into account, then pressures may nevertheless grow on the schools budget.

It was reiterated following discussion, that free school meals were not the best metric of measuring deprivation, in the opinion of the schools forum, and this had been fed back to the DfE in the response to the consultation on a Pupil Premium.

A key point to note was the widespread mainstreaming of grants, of which only partial information could be provided at that time. A notable omission from those grants highlighted by the Secretary of State was that for Music. As a result of mainstreaming and other changes, it was now reasonably difficult to ascertain whether funding in one area was up, or down. Funds were aimed at the base of the system, with both central government and local government not necessarily specifying how it will be spent.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum:

a) Note the Report

b) Recommend that grants be allocated as follows:

| Grant | Spent Centrally or Devolved | New Allocation |
|--|--|---|
| 1:1 Tuition/Making Good Progress | Most devolved to schools although does fund 1 post centrally | Allocate on an AWPU basis |
| Every Child Programmes | Allocated to schools | Allocate on an AWPU basis |
| Extended Schools Sustainability and Subsidy grants | Devolved to clusters of schools | Allocate on an AWPU basis |
| School Lunch Grant | Devolved | Allocate on an AWPU basis |
| School Standards Grant (SSG/SSG(P)) | Devolved | Replicate under current methodology with a representative quantum |
| School Development Grant | Devolved | Replicate under current methodology with a representative quantum |
| Specialist School funding | Devolved (only 1 Wiltshire school not receiving grant currently) | Replicate under current methodology with a representative quantum (Keep sector specific – Secondary + Special schools) |
| National Strategies funding | Mixture of centrally retained and devolved | Replicate under current methodology with a representative quantum (Keep sector specific – Secondary + Special schools) |
| Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant | Centrally retained | To continue on a centrally retained basis |

97. **Report of the SEN and Social Deprivation Working Group**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, DCE summarised her report and highlighted the information on 'Managed Moves Primary Phase' assembled by Julie le Mesurier.

A discussion ensued focused on the process for managed moves for children of a primary age. It was noted that the child at risk of exclusion should be ensured a chance at a new start where possible, with the process conducted in a measured and controlled manner. The benefits of the 'brokering' role provided by YPSS when used were also noted.

Resolved:

To note the report and recommendations from the Schools Forum SEN Working group, and refer the 'Managed Moves Primary Phase' information to the Primary Heads Forum (PHF) and also the Primary Heads Behaviour Support Working Group.

98. **Increase to Special Educational Delegation to Secondary Schools**

Julie le Mesurier outlined her report. It was explained that sensory and physical needs were the sole remaining type of SEN for which the funding for the secondary phase is not delegated.

A range of options were presented and the forum discussed the mechanisms required to ensure the funds were distributed with clarity and consistency.

Following discussion it was:

Resolved:

That from April 2011 funding up to the first 15 hours of NPA should be delegated to secondary schools using the same methodology currently used to delegate funding for all other types of needs. In addition to this option, protection would be provided in a way consistent with the arrangement for SEN delegation to primary schools: 50% of any change in funding above 1% of total school budget. This will be calculated using data available January 01 2011, however on the current figures this would apply to no schools.

Note:

This is option B, as shown on the report

99. **Funding Allocation for Resource Bases**

Julie le Mesurier detailed proposals for funding of Resource Bases (formerly known as Specialist Learning Centres) in mainstream schools. An amended appendix 2 -'Resource Base Funding proposals summary' was circulated

The changes aim to establish a new fit-for-purpose funding mechanism, which means that hosting this specialist provision, through a Resource Base, will be cost neutral for schools. Implementation was to be from 01 September 2011.

It was agreed that service-level agreements and details of the banding mechanism/outcomes be made publicly available online.

Resolved:

That:

- a) **The funding model outlined in appendix 1 be implemented with effect from 01 September 2011**
- b) **That the additional cost of £58,588 in 2011/12 be funded from savings within central SEN budgets.**

100. **Financial Implications arising from Banding Moderation**

Liz Williams outlined her report which gave information concerning the financial implications arising from the Banding moderation exercise for special schools and for Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) in special and secondary schools.

The outcome of the moderation exercise on place funding is a reduction in overall cost for special schools of £12,885 compared with 2010/11.

Once transition and residential costs are taken in to account the overall cost of special schools for 2011/12 is £46,497 lower than in the current year.

Overall numbers of pupils requiring ELP are unchanged although the mix between bands 1 and 2 has changed as a result of the moderation. The effect of the banding moderation is cost neutral (additional cost of £2,000) but there are increases and reductions across individual schools.

A discussion of the figures arose and focused on the stability and proportionality of funding as the number of students requiring ELP / a certain band of provision fluctuates year-to-year.

It was agreed that officers should bring a report to a future Schools Forum / Schools Funding Working group to clarify the situation.

Resolved:

To note the report

101. **Report from School Services Group**

As the Schools Services group did not meet on the 02 December 2010 this item was deferred to the next appropriate meeting.

102. **Confirmations of dates for future meetings**

The Chairman confirmed the dates of forthcoming meetings, highlighting including an additional meeting on 17 January 2011 to consider the Budget strategy in light of new legislation.

103. **Urgent Business**

None

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 4.20 pm)

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