

SCHOOLS FORUM

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE 2010 AT COMMITTEE ROOM III - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Mr N Baker (Chairman), Mrs A Ferries, Mrs J Finney, Kay, Mrs I Lancaster-Gaye, Mr G MacMahon, Mr D Morgan, Mr J Proctor, Mr C Shepperd, Mr C Smith and Mrs C Williamson

Cabinet Members:

Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE (Children's Services), Cllr Alan Macrae (Portfolio Holder: Schools)

49. Apologies and Substitution of Meeting

Mrs E Williams Head of Finance explained the usual procedure for the June meeting was to nominate and elect a Chairman for the forthcoming year, however since the Forum were considering a Constitutional paper discussing the membership for the Forum it had been decided to elect a Chair for this meeting only.

Election of Chairman

On being proposed and seconded, it was

Resolved:

That Mr N Baker be elected Chairman of the Schools Forum for 24 June 2010

Mr N Baker in the Chair

Apologies were received from Mr N Owen, Mr T Hatala, Mr J Foster, Mr C Zimmerman, Mr M Watson, Mr Jim Smith.

50. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2010.

51. **Matters Arising**

1.1. **Special Schools Budget - Downlands School**

Following discussions at the Children's Select Committee the issue of recovery plan at Downlands School was raised. The Forum discussed the progress of the financial recovery plan and it was agreed that it should be reviewed at the end of year two to determine whether the plan was working effectively and if transitional support was still required.

Resolved:

To review the financial recovery plan.

52. **Chairman's Announcement**

The Chairman, after consultation with the Forum, announced that agenda items 12 -14 would be taken after item 6, the minutes reflect this change.

53. **Final Outturn 2009/10 and Initial Budget Monitoring for 2010/11**

Mrs E Williams led the Forum through the headline issues of the report.

The figures showed an improvement in the predicted overspend of £54000 at the end of January 2010 to an underspend of £96000 as at the 31 March 2010. Notable main pressure areas were;

- **Premature Retirement Costs** – related to 70 cases in 2009/10. Proposals on work currently being undertaken to find a potential new funding model would be discussed at the next Schools Funding Working Group and their proposals will be brought to the Forum at a later date.
- **Maternity Costs** – Continue to remain a key cost pressure.
- **Schools Contingency** – This budget underspend was not projected during the year and related to rate adjustments in respect of Schools that had changed status.

After consideration of the main pressure areas on the budget it was

Resolved:

To note the report.

54. **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Update 2010/11**

1.2. **Final DSG Settlement**

Mrs E Williams, delivered a paper on the Estimate of the Final Schools Grants in the absence of the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement 2010/11 which was expected imminently from the Department of Education.

The estimate was calculated using the data available from pupil numbers gathered in the October census, however the January census is expected to be 217 lower than the initial October data. This error in the assumptions, thought to have been within the calculation of 3 and 4 year olds in full time and part time education in the Early Years Census results in a decrease in the estimated DSG of £879000.

Mrs E Williams expressed that this shortfall should be addressed in year, however this would leave no contingency for dealing with changes such as schools converting to academy status in year, but would enable the continuation of work on this year's priorities as planned.

The forum discussed measures in which to recover the projected shortfall, and agreed that recovery should be taken in year, which would utilise; unallocated head room, provision for rates that is no longer required, underspend from 2009/10 and a reduction in Schools contingency funding.

Resolved:

- a. **To address the projected shortfall in the DSG for 2010/11 through a number of measures to reduce impact.**
- b. **Should the final DSG settlement differ significantly from the estimate, the Schools Funding Working Group should meet as a matter of urgency in July to consider further implication on the schools budget.**

1.3. Financial Implications of National Policies

Mrs E Williams gave a verbal update on the financial issues surrounding National Policies.

There are currently two bills being considered by the House of Lords which will have financial implications upon the Schools Budget.

- Academies Bill
- Children, Schools and Families Bill

After a lengthy discussion around the implications of these two bills it was

Resolved:

To note that it was the role of schools forum to manage the transitional elements the movement of Schools to Academies and allocate funding appropriately.

55. **Report from the SEN/Social Deprivation Working Group**

The Forum considered a report from the Schools Forum SEN Working Group.

The following recommendations were noted and resolved:

- a. That the service manager agrees the with YPSS Board measures that will enable the budget to be balanced in the current year.
- b. That any unallocated headroom within the Schools Budget in the 2010/11 the YPSS should be a priority for further investment. Any further investment to be targeted towards alternative provision.
- c. That the Specials School revised banding modernisation process should be agreed.
- d. That the needs led staffing model should be adopted for funding purposes in Wiltshire Special Needs Schools.
- e. That the affordability of fully funding the model should be considered with other priorities during the budget setting process.
- f. The SLA and banding model should be agreed.

56. **Report from Schools Funding Working Group**

The Forum considered a report from the Schools Forum School Funding Working Group and noted the report subject to the following amendments.

Debt Write Off

- a. Debt write off for Secondary and Special Schools £5000

The following recommendations were noted and resolved:

- a. That differential levels of debt write off for Primary and Secondary Schools be agreed as follows:
Primary schools £2,000
Secondary and Special schools £5,000
And that the funding scheme should be amended to reflect these updated values.
- b. Funding models for the expansion of primary schools – that the Forum recognise the advantages of a staged model for funding expanding primary schools to accommodate pupils moving in to new housing;
That such a model is not currently affordable and any proposal for funding in the future would need detailed consideration of the costs and implications;
- c. That the needs led staffing model be adopted for funding purposes in Wiltshire Special schools, whilst recognising that schools will develop their own staffing mix according to the needs within each school.

That the affordability of fully funding the model should be considered with other priorities during the budget setting process.

- d. Controls on Surplus Balances 2008/09 – that School X be given retrospective permission to use the 2008/09 reserve for a different purpose.**

That school Y be asked to account for the failure to comply with the scheme and to explain how the excessive balance for 2008/09 was utilised during 2009/10.

- e. That formal consultation with schools is undertaken to change the funding scheme to require schools to obtain Central Finance endorsement for any lease arrangement (unless it is with Unilink Finance)**

That a signed declaration from the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors is required on an annual basis to confirm they have read and understood the controls on surplus balances scheme.

57. Report from Schools Services Group

The Forum received a verbal update from Mr Baker from the meeting that had taken place that morning.

58. Schools Forum Regulations 2010/Constitution

Mrs E Williams introduced a report outlining the new requirements of the Schools Forum Regulations 2010.

Following discussion on the naming of the Wiltshire equivalent to the 14 – 19 partnership it was,

Resolved:

a. To note the proposals and recommend the amended Terms of Reference to the Cabinet for approval.

b. To include at least one Academies member on Schools Forum and review when necessary.

c. To include a voting member from the 14 – 19 partnership, or equivalent.

59. Control on Surplus Balances

Mr P Cooch, Manager Schools Accounting and Budgets, introduced a paper updating the Forum on the use of reserves carried forward from 2008/09. Following a lengthy discussion where members discussed schools failing to comply with the rules of the scheme, it was agreed that School Y would be asked to account for its failure and required to explain in full, its excess of reserves was utilised in the following year.

Resolved:

To grant retrospective permission to School X.

To request a full account from School Y detailing failure to comply and report on use of reserves.

60. **Special Schools Banding Moderation Process**

Karina Kulawik, Team Manager Central SEN Services, updated the Forum on the proposed Banding Modernisation process for Special Schools. The Forum, after discussion, agreed the revisions to the banding moderation and that it should be implemented for the October 2010 banding moderation exercise.

It was generally felt that relative values around the bands were right and a bench marking exercise had been undertaken with statistical neighbours. It was agreed that the new values should be implemented. However a decision on the full funding needs led model would be delayed until further budget setting activity had taken place to inform the decision.

Resolved:

To approve and implement revisions for October 2010 banding moderation exercise.

To implement the new relative band values.

61. **Service Level Agreements and Moderation for Resource Bases**

Mrs E Williams highlighted the work being undertaken by a group of Head Teachers and the Head of SEN to develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for Resource Bases. The working group have developed a framework to recognise levels of need which will be subject to a moderation process. The group recognised that the development of SLAs were the way forward in which Resource Bases are commissioned with a clear understanding of the needs that are to be met and funded according to the levels of need required within the centres.

Funding models are currently being developed and will be brought to the October meeting for discussion and consideration.

Following discussion it was,

Resolved:

That SLA and banding modernisation was the way forward for the commissioning of this provision.

62. **Young People's Support Service**

Keiran McCarthy, Head Teacher, Young Persons' Support Services and Paul Senior, Service Director, Targeted Services updated the Forum Members on the financial position of the Young Person's Support Service (YPSS).

The Members were informed that Wiltshire is underfunded in comparison to its' statistical neighbours.

The outturn position for FY 2009/10 was an overspend of £188000, actions have already been taken to prevent this happening again. Members were asked to consider a number of options to address the projected overspend for 2010/11. No available funding is available to offset the overspend. The Forum agreed that the Commissioning Savings through reduced usage and improved commissioning strategies of £20000 would need to be achieved in order to manage their budget in year. The Forum discussed the increased upward trend of exclusion and the 'knock on' effect this had in being able to deliver preventative programmes in Centres and a loss of income this caused.

The Forum focussed on the proposed YPSS Internal Review and the need for funding models to be contained within that. The Forum were clear that future investment would need to be informed by the outcomes of the Review of the Service and would be considered against all the other budget priorities later in the year. The Review would need to be circulated in November prior to Decembers Schools Forum meeting.

Resolved:

To note the report.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 4.00 pm)

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