SCHOOLS FORUM

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2012 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, BROWFORT, DEVIZES.

Present:

Mr Peter Biggs, Mrs Julia Bird, Mrs A Ferries, Mrs C Grant, Mr J Hawkins, Mr M Keeling, Rev. A Kemp, Ms I Lancaster-Gaye, Mr J Proctor, Mr M Watson (Vice-Chair, in the Chair) and Mrs C Williamson

Also Present:

Mr Andy Bridewell, Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE and Cllr Laura Mayes

---

1. **Apologies and changes to membership**

Apologies were received from:

Mr Neil Baker, PHF, Christ Church CE Primary School (therefore Mr Martin Watson took the chair)
Dr Tina Paggett, 13-19 Partnership
Mrs Jane Franchi, Salisbury Diocese
Mrs Rosheen Ryan, WGA, Secondary School Governor Representative

And also from:

Carolyn Godfrey

Changes to membership:

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Laura Mayes, recently appointed Portfolio holder for Children's Services.

2. **Minutes of the previous Meeting**

Matters arising:

The Chairman offered the following updates from the minutes of the last meeting:

- Minute no 189 refers: a majority of Local Authorities, both in the South West and nationally, were continuing the Controls on Surplus Balances scheme;

- The chairman noted that a copy of the Section 251 Benchmarking Paper from the previous meeting was available should benchmarking information need to be considered in the budget setting discussions although the paper had not been redistributed with the agenda papers for this meeting.

Resolved:

To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2011.

3. **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no chairman's announcement.

5. **Wiltshire Music Education Hub**

The Head of the Music Service, Valerie Hayward, outlined the report included in the agenda and explained in details the funding process, and clarified that the only support expected from the School Forum was approval not funding.
In responding to questions she pointed out that the Curriculum Review was separate from this initiative and that schools would continue to have primary responsibility for delivering music as part of the National Curriculum.

The Head of the Music Service was invited to attend a meeting of the Primary Headteachers Forum to establish specific details for Primary Schools as well as requirements for SEN.

Resolved:

a) **To approve the proposal that Wiltshire Music Service work with key partners to lead the development of a Music Education Hub for Wiltshire;**
b) **To approve the submission of an application for funding to deliver the National Plan for Music Education with schools in Wiltshire.**

6. **Children and Young People's Trust Board Update**

Julia Cramp, Service Director Commissioning and Performance, DCE gave a verbal update on recent work undertaken by the Children and Young People's Trust Board.

- Children and Young People Plan 2012-15

The plan would be considered for approval in the very near future. This was a high level plan with three main purposes: raising aspirations and narrowing gaps, prevention and early intervention, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

- Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy

Deliberate Self Harm guidelines had been approved and were now being circulated electronically to schools. The services were working with Young People and GPs. Twelve training sessions would be organised every year and would be free and offered to everyone working in schools and children's services.

- SEN and Disability Pathfinder

Only 20 Authorities had been successful in their bid and Wiltshire Council was one of them. The corporate review was continuing.
Liz Williams, Head of Finance, DCE informed the forum that there were changes to the funding for statemented pupils in the new Education Act. As this was still in the very early stages she would provide more information when available.

7. **Budget Monitoring**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, DCE gave a very brief outline of the report and pointed out that there was a projected £1.5M underspend.
It was expected that the projected expenditure on the PRC budget would increase and therefore reduce the underspend for the year, this would be updated at the March meeting.

Resolved:

To note the budget monitoring at the end of November 2011.

8. **Reports from Working Groups**

There had been no meetings of the Working Groups.

9. **Carbon Reduction Commitment - Consultation Response**

Phil Cooch, Principal Accountant Schools, introduced the report and in doing so reminded the Forum of the decision it had reached at its last meeting.

He expressed his concern that some schools may not be fully aware of the potential cost this could have and felt that it may be worth writing to all schools once more detailed information was provided by the Climate Change team.

It was agreed that it was difficult to respond to or comment on the proposal when there was still such uncertainty of what would be involved. The issue of multiple users on school sites was raised and Phil Cooch responded that he would raise this with the Climate Change Team.

Resolved:

a. **To adopt the proposed amendments to the Scheme for Funding Schools;**
b. **That the associated school's costs are recovered by deduction from the monthly budget share advances in one lump sum annually;**
c. **To invoice Academies.**

10. **South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) Broadband Connectivity and Services for Wiltshire Schools**

Simon Burke, Head of Business and Commercial Services, reminded the forum that there was a disparity between the actual cost of provision and the charges made and that Wiltshire Council's contract with SWGfL was due to end in June 2013. He pointed out that there were also issues such as an overriding duty to maximise value for money. The present system produced an overcharge for larger schools and an undercharge for smaller schools as it was linked to the number of pupils.

The proposal was to simplify the method whilst removing the disparity, the effect would be neutral to schools.

It was understood that all the options available would have to be considered when the contract would end. The School Funding Working Group may have to consider this.

Resolved:

That the method for delegating funds to, and charging schools for, the cost of broadband connectivity from 2012/13 replicate the charges made by SWGfL as closely as possible and that the charges should be treated as a cashless item on the school funding certificate.

11. **Young People Support Service (YPSS) budget**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, DCE, updated the forum on the progress to date in finalising the budget to be devolved to schools in 2012/13 following the closure of the YPSS in August 2012.
She explained that the £2.657 million figure had been used in all models considered and that it did include the transport budget.
Models used by other authorities such as Slough, Andover and BANES were being studied and details of the models available would be brought to the March meeting.
It was also explained that separate reporting on transport expenditure was currently required on the Section 251 returns therefore monitoring may need to built in to the service agreement.

The fact that it was estimated that YPSS could underspend up to £250,000 which was not included in the budget monitoring underspend, and how this money could and should be used was thoroughly debated.

Resolved:

a. **To note and agree the revised budget available for allocation in 2012/13;**
b. **To agree that the budget to be devolved to schools should be amended to remove all costs associated with provision to pupils with Medical Needs, thus reducing the sum to be devolved by £0.079 million**
c. **To agree that Model 6 in Appendix 1 is to be the model used for allocation of funds;**

d. **To include the current transport budget in the budget to be devolved;**
e. **To confirm that any underspend against the 2011/12 YPSS budget be earmarked to contribute towards the cost of any redundancies from the closure of the service;**
f. **To postpone a decision on the idea of a set up fund until the School Funding Working Group had had an opportunity to meet and consider this further.**

12. **Schools Funding Settlement and Schools Budget Proposals 2012/13**

Liz Williams, Head of Finance, DCE, introduced the report and highlighted the main changes including:

- The places showing as unoccupied in SEN were due to the fact that pupils over 16 years old were not counted in the DSG census. This left 26 places and it was assumed that they would be filled;
- The number of schools had been reduced as it had been assumed the schools would convert to Academies;
- An answer had been received from DFE and SEN Support Services funding was not currently included in the LACSEG recoupment.

The Forum discussed the risks involved in using the underspend from 2011/12 to balance the budget rather than take the recommended 0.5% reduction across all DSG budgets.

It was felt that the assumptions in the DSG calculation regarding special school pupil numbers were too high and that the six special schools in Wiltshire should be consulted to establish the real level of empty places, and post 16 pupils.

Resolved:

a. **To set an overall schools budget of £293,930 million for 2012/13 gross of any academy adjustments. The budget would be subject to adjustments for academy conversions prior to and during the year;**
b. **To utilise £1 million from the 2011/12 underspend to reduce the proposed 0.5% and mitigate any cuts in school budgets;**
c. **To ask the Schools Funding Working Group to discuss the options for the remaining £0.5 million underspend from 2011/12, including the potential set up fund for YPS, and bring back findings to the Schools Forum;**
d. **To contact the six special schools and establish the number of empty places and places for post 16 pupils;**
e. **To recalculate the proposed budget taking into account the impact of resolutions b,c and d above. To present this revised figure to Cabinet in the budget report.**

13. **Confirmation of dates for future meetings**

When considering the dates for future meetings it was pointed out that Trowbridge was a preferred location for the meetings, with Devizes as an option. It was therefore asked of officers to look into changing the venue for the 1 March 2012 meeting.

The following was confirmed following the meeting:

Thursday 1 March 2012	Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge, BA14 0RD
Thursday 21 June 2012	Council Chamber, Bradley Road, Trowbridge, BA14 0RD
Thursday 4 October 2012	Venue to be confirmed
Wednesday 21 November 2012	Venue to be confirmed

14. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 4.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Marie Gondlach, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713 597, e-mail marie.gondlach@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115