

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 16TH JANUARY 2008 AT HERTFORDSHIRE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

ATTENDANCE

Chair:

Alan Gray

School Members:

Mike Connell
Steve Drake
John Grubb
Richard Haynes
Paul Johnson
Alison Saunders
Michael Scandrett
Michael Taylor
Barbara Snijder
David Victor
Peter Brooks
Martin Post
Paul Rosen

Non School Members:

Annie Brown
Richard Thake

Observers:

Ivor Miskelly

Officers:

John Harris
Claire Cook
Simon Pickard
Helen Ashdown
Jonathan Burberry
Cheryl Faint
Alan Dinning
David Ring

- 1. Apologies**
David Bent
- 2. Minutes of the last meeting**

It was noted that it was agreed by Forum that the items raised in item 13 "Essex Schools Forum Networking Seminar" would be further explored at the April meeting of the Schools Forum. This has been added to the Forward Work Programme under the heading of "Schools Forum membership - Terms of Reference and Procedures".

3. Matters Arising

3.a CRB checks

Further to a request made at the October Forum, an information paper was presented to the Forum which clarified the pricing structure for CRB checks for external agencies.

3b. Kitchen Surveys

In response to Forum's request for further detail on the responsibilities for surveying the condition of kitchens in schools, it was confirmed that the Authority would survey the kitchens in all schools and all schools surveyed would receive a copy of their report.

4. Rollout of extended schools/children's centres

This paper was presented by Helen Ashdown and put forward proposals for the funding of children's centres and extended schools for 2008/11 and the phasing in of children's centre revenue over the three year period.

There was a discussion about the Parent Support Advisers role (PSAs). Forum raised concerns about whether these were genuine new roles or a reorganisation of existing personnel. Members of the Forum also stressed the importance of the relationship of this role to those existing services already in schools. The Authority recognised the critical importance of this. It was explained that the proposal was for management structures to be based on the Hub schools. Members of the Forum welcomed the additional support and were keen to see the structures work well together. It was explained that PSAs would also function in Secondary schools.

Forum approved the proposed funding formula and the phasing in of Children's centre revenue.

5. Outcome of Formula Consultation with Schools

This paper was presented by Cheryl Faint and detailed the outcomes of the November consultation (the Consultation) with schools on the Funding arrangements for 2008-9. The first five proposals contained in the Consultation related to Pay Progression Funding and were supported. Some concerns had been raised about the proposed reduction in value in real terms of the threshold allowance. It was emphasised that the Authority believes that the transfer of the inflationary increase through to AWPU and AEN would reduce the turbulence involved in moving to a formulaic distribution of this budget which was a requirement of the DCSF. Forum approved the first 5 proposals.

There was some concern raised amongst Nursery respondents to the Authority's proposals for funding deprivation and AEN for nursery pupils based on IDACI. Concerns were raised about the large loss in one school.

It was confirmed that the Authority anticipated that the Minimum Funding Guarantee would provide protection for this nursery school. Members of the Forum approved the proposal for the use of IDACI in funding deprivation and AEN for Nursery pupils.

Forum approved proposals 7 to 10 concerning SEN funding arrangements for Predictable needs.

The third section of the consultation made a series of proposals on area funding in schools. To clarify some of the issues raised by schools in the consultation, it was emphasised that there would be no in year adjustment to funding. Any in year developments will be funded in the Individual School Budget share supported by that data, provided that the detail is included in IAMS at School Census date. It has however been agreed that the only exception to this would be where a prescribed alteration has taken place. Forum approved proposals 11 to 14.

The Consultation asked school to give their preferred charging mechanism for CRB checks in schools. There was a split response with the buy back option being marginally preferred. There was a discussion about the two options. Forum selected the Buy back option for the charging mechanism in 2008/9. Outstanding checks on existing staff would be charged at the PAYU rate. Forum members questioned the £16 administration charge. It was explained that this was the average costs based on current cost structures and is in line with other organisations. The Authority is currently reviewing the business processes in this area with a view to automation and more effective use of resources.

Some responses to the consultation raised concerns about the cost of CRB checks in relation to staff working in Children Centres and Hub schools. The Authority believes that that costs for CRB checks made on staff working specifically for the Children Centre or Extended schools should be met from the funding streams received by Hub school for this purpose. There was some discussion on whether these funding streams would be sufficient to cover CRB checks. Under buyback, increasing numbers of CRB checks would give rise to the possibility of overspending the budget. Forum agreed to select option B“ the buyback option”, but agreed to review this decision after one year. It was also agreed that the costs of CRB checks in Children’s Centres be met by the funding targeted at Children’s Centres.

The Forum was asked to endorse proposals 16 -18 of the Consultation which related to the New Special School Funding Model. Forum endorsed the proposal to implement the new special school funding model and the transitional protection arrangements.

The proposal for the changes to the Special school place numbers was not supported in the responses to the Consultation. Southfield Special School raised concerns via the Forum that the reductions were not based on a proper review of SEN provision. It was clarified that there had had been a change in pupil numbers at this school and that the number of children at Southfield as at School census date would be funded.

Members of the Forum felt that they were not in the position to disagree or agree with changes to Special school Place numbers and agreed that it should go forward to Cabinet for their decision.

6. Section 52 Benchmarking Tables

This paper was presented by Jonathan Burberry and provided benchmarking information to the Forum as part of its scrutiny role.

The Forum noted the contents of this report.

7. Budget 2008/9

7.a Children Schools and families proposed Schools Budget for 2008/11

This paper was presented by Claire Cook and asked Forum to make recommendations/ proposals to be considered by the Cabinet and Panels in the formulation of the budget for 2008/11 and the allocation of Headroom. The Education Panel takes place on 13th February 2008 and it was agreed that feedback from the Forum would be taken to that meeting.

The summary Schools Budget detailed in section 6 of the paper outlined the proposed headroom pressures which were examined in further detail in papers 7b-7h. CRB checks had already been examined in detail in the paper presented to the November meeting. Following discussions by Forum on papers 7B to 7H the proposals detailed in paragraph 6.6 of the proposed Schools Budget for 2008/11 were agreed.

There was further discussion about the capacity within the Authority's budget to reinstate the capital programmes withdrawn in 2007/8 and priorities for the Authority which can be met from the Schools Budget.

Forum agreed to the breaching of the Central Expenditure Limit in 2009/10 and 2010/11 due to the proposed retention of unallocated headroom and personalisation pending future decisions on its allocation.

7.b Development of Children and young people support workers in schools.

This paper was presented by John Harris and examined in detail the introduction of a systematic framework of services that focus on prevention and early intervention with vulnerable children, young people and families with effect from April 2008. It was explained that the proposals played a key part in the Post Inspection Plan following the Joint Area Review (JAR).

The presentation looked at the background to these proposals including the findings of the recent JAR. It also explained the Hertfordshire vision of establishing multi agency support teams working with an integrated approach. It was explained that these services would be of major benefit to schools in enabling them to meet the needs of children and young people who require additional support to overcome their barriers to learning. The Authority requested the support of Schools Forum in delivering this objective by making a contribution from the Schools Budget to the multi agency training program and to establish a post of Children and Young People's support work in each of the 38 extended school consortia.

It was emphasised that the contribution from the Schools Budget would be critical to achieving this proposal. It was confirmed that Headroom is expected to be used where it can maximise the benefits of young people aligned to other funding streams. It would therefore be legitimate to use Headroom in this way if the Forum believes that is the best investment for children.

It was explained that this was part of "an invest now to save later" proposal and that there would be a reinvestment dividend as early intervention delivers improved outcomes and reduced costs in more expensive specialist intervention.

There was a discussion of the plan. Forum welcomed the plan and recognised that the Authority was responding to an external deadline and the need to accelerate improvement. However Forum was concerned about the demands on Headroom and

placed great importance on seeing those demands reduce.

Members of the Forum also raised questions about the level of the Support worker post given previous experience. Forum was keen to see that this strategy be monitored to ensure that the necessary outcomes are achieved.

Alan Dinning explained the role of the Support worker in more detail. The key principle is that one person will take a lead role and that schools would no doubt welcome the benefits of this. It was explained that the feedback from schools would be crucially important and that by making an investment schools will have a vested interest in outcomes. It was also emphasised that this should not be a one off design and that the model would be reviewed.

Members of the forum raised questions about the link between this strategy and the potential reinstatement of the Schools Capital project which was deferred last year. The Authority confirmed that this investment is expected to reduce long term pressures and where that investment has been made from the schools budget, this could release funds elsewhere. The financing of borrowing would have to be met from the Council tax. It was also recognised that these integrated services need to be delivered in adequate facilities.

Members of the Forum agreed to the funding to be made available from the Headroom for the proposals detailed in 3.1 of this paper.

7.c Learning Support Units (LSUs)

This paper was presented by David Ring and updated Schools Forum on a review of LSUs carried out in Autumn 2006 and asked Forum to consider proposals to allocate funding to increase the numbers of LSUs in schools and to cushion the impact on the 2 schools who would no longer qualify.

There was a discussion about the effectiveness of LSUs. The Forum felt that they provided an effective approach to re-engaging students and that they made a big impact on inclusion in schools.

These proposals which are included in the Schools Budget proposals for 2008/11 were endorsed by the Forum.

7.d Exclusions

This paper detailed the current situation with regard to the requirement to make full time provision for excluded children from the sixth day and to consult on proposals for the provision of additional funding to assist schools and the local authority in meeting this requirement.

There was a discussion about the new 6 day rule and the difficulties it present for all involved. Forum was concerned not to give rise to a situation where exclusions may increase. Forum also discussed the range of options available for educating children from the sixth day and expressed an interest in seeing online learning options explored further.

Forum approved the allocation of £0.1m to ESCs to support the development of arrangements for 6th day provision for permanently excluded pupils. Forum also endorsed the second option detailed in paragraph in paragraph 8.6 of the report in order to support the further development of preventive support and reciprocal arrangements at local level.

7.e Additional Personalisation Funding 2008-11

This paper presented by Simon Pickard informed the Forum on the Authority's proposals for the application of additional personalisation funding in 2008-9 and to seek members of the Forum view on the allocation basis to be used.

It was explained that this was new funding which was not ring fenced but does target supporting children who are at risk of poor outcomes. Forum requested that advice be sent to schools on how this funding may be used. It was agreed that guidance would be sent to schools to support budget preparation. It was confirmed that guidelines would explain that it would not be necessary for schools to spend the funding on the specific key stage referred to.

Forum agreed with the Authority's proposals for the allocation on a per pupil basis and supported its inclusion in the personalisation allowance in budget shares. It was confirmed that an element of the personalisation funding would be used to support KS4 centres and the amount allocated on a pupil basis for KS4 personalisation be reduced. Forum also approved the retention of further personalisation allocations for 2009-10 and 2020-11 as a central budget pending further work to identify the most appropriate allocation basis. Members approved any element of the breach of the CEL arising specifically from the retention of additional personalisation funding in the indicative budgets.

In Special schools it was proposed that this funding would be included in the special school budget shares to support the new funding model and not included in the Personalisation allowance. However it was reported by Forum members that the Special School Heads had met, discussed this issue and preferred to identify the Personalisation allowance. It was therefore agreed that it would be included in the personalisation allowance shown in special school budget shares.

7.f Budget 2008/9 Funding for Dual Use Sports Facilities

This paper was presented by Jonathan Burberry. It was explained that Dual Use contracts have distinctive characteristics and represent an agreement between two authorities. Schools were not originally included in the decision to develop these facilities. This is distinct from schools who following LMS made decisions to develop sports facilities. Proposals in this paper seek to regularise the arrangements already in place for dual use facilities. Members of the Forum discussed concerns about the use of £0.5m for the benefit of 7 schools and that this proposal meant that this charge would be transferred into the schools budget.

There was a discussion about equity with schools who developed facilities after the introduction of LMS and which would not benefit from this funding. It was emphasised that schools with dual use facilities on site had not made a decision to develop these and therefore the support proposed in this proposal would be appropriate. It was requested that this subject be revisited at a later date.

Members of the Forum agreed to the proposals detailed in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.4 of the report.

7.g Deputy release/leadership Time

This paper informed members of the Forum of a specific funding review requested by Primary Heads Forum relating to deputy head teacher release time and the Authority's response to this request. The Authority recognizes the pressures on the leadership of

schools and, in particular, agrees with the need to develop future headteachers.

The Authority confirmed that due to the insufficiency of resources, additional funding could not be made available in 2008/9.

The Forum supported the view that resources should be put into releasing deputy headteachers for training and discussed their concerns about succession planning in Hertfordshire. Forum members would welcome a review in this area as part of the Hertfordshire Leadership strategy.

There was also a discussion about the transparency of the funding already available to schools in their School Budget Shares.

Forum welcomed the paper and endorsed its views. Forum considered this to be a crucial topic and requested that this be brought back to Schools Forum at a later date. It was agreed that this would be added to the forward work programme.

7.h Boxmoor House Budget 2008-9

This paper presented by Simon Pickard informed members of the Forum about the projected outturn for the Boxmoor House budget for 2007-8, the budget for 2008-9 and indicative budgets for 2009-10 and 2010-11.

There was a discussion about the expenditure reported and particular concern was raised about the project management costs. It was explained that this included a wide range of costs including surveys, external consultants etc.

8. Schools Forum Work Programme

This was noted by the Forum.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Forum will be held at 1pm on 27th February 2008 in the Ashbourne Room, County Hall.