

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON
12TH DECEMBER 2007 AT HERTFORDSHIRE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

ATTENDANCE

Chair:

Alan Gray

Schools members:

Annie Brown
David Bent
Richard Haynes
Martin Post
Paul Rosen
Michael Scandrett
Peter Brook
Steven Drake
Alison Saunders

Substitute:

Sue Sheffield

Observers:

Keith Emsall
Ivor Miskelly

Officers:

Claire Cook
Simon Pickard
Jonathan Burberry
Justin Donovan
Cheryl Faint
Mike Robinson
David Ring
Steve Saint
Lin O'Brien

1. Apologies

Richard Thake
Michael Taylor
John Grubb
Mike Connell
Barbara Snijder

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 12th December were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters arising

CRB Checks in Schools

Forum's request for further information about the different bands of CRB checks was deferred until the January meeting of the Forum.

4 Primary and non-residential special school meal buyback and the major pressures facing the service together with school lunch grant 2008/9 onwards

This report, presented by Lin O' Brien, updated Forum on a number of pressures facing the school meals service and the Government's recent announcement about School Lunch Grant from 2008/9.

There was a discussion the condition of kitchens and responsibilities to meet costs. It was agreed that the issue in respect of responsibilities in VA schools and Foundation schools would be clarified.

Forum was particularly concerned that the Authority's inspections were fully aligned with the standards of the Environmental officers in order to ensure that resources were used efficiently.

It was agreed that proposals for the allocation of School Lunch Grant 2008/9 be presented to schools Forum in February 2008.

5 Key Stage 4 Learning Centres

Justin Donovan and David Ring attended for this item. Justin Donovan presented an update on the implementation of KS4 learning centres. The first three KS4 learning centres had been successfully introduced and the Authority thanked the Heads of the school and ESCs involved for their support. Forum noted the progress of the first phase of Key Stage 4 centres and the intention to proceed with the second phase.

The report looked at proposals to fund the second phase of the learning centre developments. There was a discussion about the appropriateness of funding this from either Headroom or personalisation. It was emphasised that the Dedicated Schools Grant was for the purposes of educating children and this was not restricted to those in schools.

Funding of ESCs was discussed. It was explained that the Schools Budget assumes a predicted level of exclusions from which funding to ESCs is made. This budget is then met by the recovery of AWPU. This recycles the funding within the Schools budget and money is not lost to schools. Funding follows a cohort of children and not a specific child. Any variance on this budget would show on the relevant monitoring reports.

Forum discussed the role of KS4 centres. The Authority explained that KS4 centres will have been judged to have failed if they prove to be merely an extension of excluded pupil provision. The outreach function of KS4 centres is very important in preventing and finding alternatives to permanently excluding pupils.

KS4 centres will play an important role in working to improve the education received by excluded pupils. It is accepted that excluded pupils are not currently receiving adequate education.

Forum discussed the alternative proposals for funding. It was emphasised that the funding to be provided in 2008-9 for the personalisation of teaching and learning and support of SEN, and put forward as a potential part of the funding stream for KS4 centres, is new money.

Schools Forum requested to see the totality of claims against Headroom before making any decision as it was difficult to see the full picture and any claims on SEN. It was agreed that any decision on the preferred method of meeting the funding requirements of KS4 Learning Centres would be deferred until the January meeting of the Forum at which details of all proposals against the Headroom would be discussed. It was explained that Hertfordshire's performance in meeting the requirement to provide full time education for excluded pupils remained an area of concern,

Forum agreed to the proposal detailed in paragraph 6.8 to extend the length of time which is taken into consideration when calculating the cost for an excluded pupil from the current arrangement of the summer term to a revised arrangement of the end of the financial year where that child had been included on the PLASC count for that year. This would be used as a source of funding for the revenue budget of KS4 centres. It was also agreed that a contribution from the residual budget for Boxmoor House would also be used to meet the revenue budgets of KS4 centres.

Forum discussed dual registration. The original concept was based on the principle that schools would make a contribution to support a student's provision, enhancing the core budget of ESCs. In practice, there was varying levels of support from schools in accepting these charges. Forum confirmed this experience of variations in working practice in this respect across different areas.

Forum agreed that there should be an overall framework which gives guidelines but allows local flexibility. However Forum agreed that it should not be a post code lottery. It was agreed that this agenda item be deferred until the January meeting and be discussed as part of the overall discussion about the School Budget.

6. Traded Services Pricing 2007-8

This paper was presented by Simon Pickard and informed Forum of the charges to schools for traded services in 2008/9. Schools Forum noted that the rate increases for traded services for 2008/9 will increase in line with inflation, however some schools charges will also be affected by decisions taken in the previous year.

The report also updated Forum on the projected under recovery of the payroll service costs for 2007/8 and proposals for charging payroll administration costs in respect of supply teachers. Schools Forum approved the proposal to charge £3.00 per timesheet for processing supply teachers payrolls during 2007/8.

7 Supply Sickness Insurance Scheme

Cheryl Faint introduced this paper which updated Forum on the current position of the Scheme and made proposals for future operation of the Scheme and the premiums to be levied in 2008/9.

Forum approved the increases in premiums and benefits for 2008/9 as detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report. Forum also agreed that a formal target balance be set for the Scheme and that this should be between 30% and 50% of annual premiums.

The new Special School Funding model included an element of £1500 per FTE for a 0 waiting day contract. The proposal to offer Special schools a 0 waiting day option, for teaching staff only, at a charge of £1500 per FTE for 2008/9 was also agreed.

Forum discussed reasons for differences between the Primary and Secondary sectors in terms of take up of the Scheme. It was suggested that greater co-operation between schools may reduce the need to pay supply teachers.

Forum requested that the category of Nursery Nurses be reviewed as this title was becoming less commonplace.

8 School Budget Monitor 2007/8 - Quarter 2

Claire Cook presented this paper which updated members of the Forum on the forecast outturn for the Schools Budget 2007/8 as at the end of September 2007.

The overspend on Admissions was highlighted. It was explained that this related to consultancy costs to resource ongoing development of the replacement admission system and additional staff requirements for testing.

Forum discussed the projected overspend on the provision for permanently excluded pupils. The requirement for fulltime provision for permanently excluded pupils from day 6 had been formally notified after the budget process had been completed and so additional costs had not been reflected. Children have to be placed in an appropriate setting by day 6 before negotiations can take place with schools. Expenses such as transport costs have therefore increased.

Forum noted the contents of the report.

9 DSG Funding Block Analysis

This paper provided Schools Forum with information on the impact of previous funding decisions on the split of funding between sectors and to provide context for the budget settlement 2008/11. It was emphasised that the analysis should be treated with caution as it provided a snapshot and alternative approaches could have been taken due to changes in the structure of school funding since 2005/6.

There was a discussion about the findings of this report. It was felt that this provided a useful background paper which may influence a review of the formula split between

sectors. It was confirmed that the last major review took place approximately six years ago. The Authority explained that its favoured approach was to gradually review arrangements due to the effect of the Minimum Funding Guarantee.

It was agreed that there had been a shift of resources since 2005 due largely to pressures from the DCSF.

10 School Funding announcements 2008-09 to 2010-11

This report presented by Simon Pickard provided information on the school funding announcements for the forthcoming three year funding period 2008/9-2010/11,

There was a discussion about the tightening of resources for schools over this period and the Government target of 1% efficiency in each of the next three years. It was not expected to be a major issue in 2008/9 due mainly to the negative inflation on energy. However the pattern of impact on schools will be variable. The impact is anticipated to be greater in subsequent years. A letter will be sent at the end of January to disseminate this message out to schools.

Schools Forum noted the contents of this report.

11 School budget Share Documents

Schools Forum welcomed the proposed changes to the School Budget share documents laid out in this report, prepared by Jonathan Burberry. The proposal to use the new style document was agreed for both the 2008/9 Final budget share and the indicative budget shares for 2008/9 and 2010/11.

12 Summary of Formula Funding Changes

This paper provided information on the combined effects of the formula changes proposed in the Autumn consultation entitled School Funding Arrangements 2008/9.

Members of the Forum agreed that this was a useful document but requested that schools who would be significantly impacted should be directly contacted by the Authority. Officers stated that this could only be looked at after the consultation was complete. It was emphasised that very few schools are adversely affected by all proposals with most receiving a mixture of gains and losses.

Forum noted the contents of the report.

13 Essex Schools Forum Networking Seminar

Richard Haynes reported to the Forum on his findings from the Essex Schools Forum Networking Seminar.

There was a discussion about the similarities and differences between the Hertfordshire Schools Forum and other Forums. One particular aspect discussed was the prevalence of in depth funding reviews in other Authorities. It was explained that Hertfordshire has favoured a gradual development on an annual basis.

The Forum thanked Richard Haynes for representing Hertfordshire Schools Forum at this meeting and his subsequent report.

14. Schools Forward work Programme

The contents of this report from schools Forum were noted. Concerns were raised about the agenda for the meeting scheduled for January 16th 2008 in view of the requirement to reach decisions on budget issues relating to 2008/9. It was agreed that the meeting be extended.

15 A.O.B

The terms of reference and protocol for bringing issues before the Hertfordshire Schools Forum was raised as a future agenda item. It was felt that clarity should be brought to the process for including items on the agenda and the capacity of Forum to consider such items. It was agreed that this would be revisited.

16. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled January 16th 2008. The meeting is scheduled for 13.00 to 16.00 at HDC. However the room booking will be extended until 18.00 in view of the heavy agenda for this meeting.