

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON
19th SEPTEMBER 2007 AT HERTFORDSHIRE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

ATTENDANCE

Chair:

Alan Gray

Schools members:

David Bent
Peter Brooks
Annie Brown
Stephen Drake
John Grubb
Richard Haynes
Martin Post
Paul Rosen
Alison Saunders
Michael Scandrett
Barbara Snijder
Michael Taylor
David Victor

Substitutes

Alisdair Skinner (For Mike Connell)

Observers:

David Lloyd
Ivor Miskelly

Officers:

Claire Cook
Simon Pickard
Jonathan Burberry
Cheryl Faint

Guests:

Jonathan Anstey School Funding Policy manager DCSF
Margaret Judd School Funding Policy adviser DCSF

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mike Connell and Richard Thake.

2. Minutes of last meeting

It is noted that apologies were also received from Richard Haynes. The minutes of the meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters arising

Election of Chair

It was proposed and carried that Alan Gray be elected as Chair. Richard Haynes was elected as Vice Chair. There were no other nominations.

Response from DCSF on charging cost of capital financing to DSG

Further to the Forum's agreement to pursue a change in School Finance regulations to allow the charging of capital financing costs to DSG, a written response has been received from the DCSF and was circulated with the minutes of the last meeting. The DCSF, whilst recognising the problem, could not agree to this change.

4. Capital strategy including building schools for the future and primary capital programme update.

Lindsay Martin attended for this item.

This report provided the Schools Forum with a progress report on Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and the Primary Capital Programme (PCP). The Forum discussed the issue of risk in the management of such large projects. The Forum raised concerns about how projects can be de-risked particularly to protect the project against contractors which go into liquidation or receivership. It was felt that only large consortia were competing in this market which minimised this risk.

As part of the PCP, primary heads will be invited to a meeting on 11th January 2008 to discuss the criteria for identifying schools to be either refurbished or rebuilt.

Forum raised questions on the strategic review of the condition of school meal kitchens. The immediate priority is to undertake work on those identified as the most non compliant kitchens.

5. Pay Progression Funding 2008-9 to 2010-11

This item was deferred from the July meeting. Attention is drawn to amendments made to the table in paragraph 4.3. The revised table is shown in appendix one to these minutes.

Forum noted that schools can be affected by the timing of applications for progression and potentially be unfunded for up to 18 months under this new funding arrangement. The emphasis was on stability of funding.

Forum commented that it was difficult to see the cumulative effect of changes to funding and it was agreed that a paper be brought to Forum on this subject.

It was agreed by Forum that the contingency budget for schools in financial difficulty be increased by £100K for 2008/9 to enable partial reimbursement of significant unfunded threshold costs in primary, special and nursery schools facing financial difficulties on transition to the new arrangements.

Forum approved the proposal to transfer UPS2 funding to the formula in schools other than secondary from April 2008 be taken to formal consultation with schools.

Ivor Miskelly confirmed that there were no anticipated changes to the LSC's arrangements for the funding of pay progressions in sixth form provisions and therefore it is not necessary to amend the Sixth Form deduction methodology.

Members approved the proposals set out in this paper for formal consultation with schools in the autumn term 2007.

6. Final Dedicated schools Grant and schools budget 2007/8

This paper was presented by Jonathan Burberry and detailed the changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Schools Budget following the completion of the January 2007 pupil count and the 2006/7 accounts.

It was agreed that the additional underspend be carried forward to support the Schools Budget in 2008/9.

7. Update on development of new special school funding model

Debbie Orton attended for this item and updated the Schools Forum on the new special school funding model to be implemented by April 2008.

A detailed paper will be brought to the October meeting of the Forum.

8. Mainstream SEN funding arrangements for predictable needs.

Simon Pickard presented this paper and informed members about the outcomes of visits to schools following the introduction of revised funding arrangements for predictable SEN.

It was confirmed that the need for a county –wide moderation group would be discussed by the working group but emphasised that the budgets and decision making powers would be still held in the district groups. Any moderation group could only ask a district group to review a decision.

The Forum approved for consultation the proposal that IDACI data is used for nursery pupils instead of attributing average data from the rest of the school when included in the Predictable SEN funding formula for primary schools.

The Forum approved the extension of transitional protection allocation as outlined in 6.8. and the capping arrangements outline in 7.3 for consultation with schools.

9. Review of Funding for Social deprivation

This paper was presented by Jonathan Burberry and updated the Forum on the review of deprivation funding. The paper concluded that the level of Free school meals (FSMs) was the better indicator of challenging schools (excluding nurseries) and that no change in funding arrangements be proposed. Further to the discussion in item 8, Forum agreed that social deprivation funding for nursery schools should be based on IDACI rather than FSM entitlements.

Forum raised concerns about the impact of tax credits and whether it has reduced FSMs. Forum was concerned to understand whether tax credits affect schools differentially or consistently. It was explained that the Authority does not currently have access to the data on child tax credits to allow analysis. However, the DCSF explained that this was being analysed at a national level and data will be available when the settlement is published. Forum requested that this subject be investigated further when the data is available.

10. Changes to floor area funding

This paper, presented by Jonathan Burberry, proposed changes to the arrangements for floor area related funding and specifically the move to using Integrated Asset Management System (IAMS).

It was explained that this system would allow schools to be able to access data on line bringing transparency to the process.

The Forum raised questions about the quality of the data. It was reported that whilst there were some concerns with the data, these were of a specific and consistent nature. Members of the Forum were concerned that Heads should be fully understand the codings to enable them engage in the process and ensure that data is correct.

Forum members sought reassurance on how IAMS worked and the data collection process which it is proposed will support floor area related funding. It was agreed that a separate report looking at grounds area funding would be brought to the next meeting of the Forum.

Forum agreed that transitional arrangements would be essential to protect losers in this change of data collection.

Members of the Forum discussed the funding of swimming pools. It was clarified that the funding of a swimming pool consisted of both funding for the area of the pool and a lump sum of £6k.

The subject of Schools Fire insurance in voluntary aided schools was discussed by Forum. It was agreed that the proposal to raise V/A fire insurance to the same level as other schools should go forward for consultation.

It was agreed that all the proposals detailed in 8.1 go forward to consultation with all schools.

11. School balances and clawback arrangements.

Simon Pickard updated Forum about high school balances at 31st March 2007 and the implementation of the clawback scheme.

Volunteers were requested from Forum members to sit on the Appeals Panel. Michael Taylor and Paul Rosen agreed to be available to represent Schools Forum on this panel.

Training of finance staff was discussed. Members of the Forum raised the issue of training finance staff to ensure that staff were able to manage the new financial issues in schools ; clawbacks, consortia, extended schools and therefore bring improvements to the management of school balances.

12. Changes to the funding arrangements for primary school reorganisations

Jonathan Burberry presented this item. Forum deferred a decision on the proposal described in 3.6 pending further clarification.

Schools Forum agreed that entitlement to reorganisation funding be extended to include existing schools which the authority has expected to take all the pupils from a closing school as detailed in 3.3.

It was agreed that the division of reorganisation funding and surplus balances from closing schools between infant and junior schools should operate on a pro rata basis to FTE pupil numbers at the closing school as detailed in 3.8.

Forum approved the proposal to discontinue the guaranteed 3% minimum opening balance as detailed in 4.2.

Forum considered that as reorganisation funding affected only a small number of schools, it was not necessary for the Authority to consult all schools on these proposals.

13. Schools Forum Forward Work Programme

It was agreed that the date for the July meeting would remain in the programme but would be reviewed closer to the date.

14. Any other business

The meeting closed and was followed by introductions and general discussions with Jonathan Anstey and Margaret Judd of the DCSF. The Forum was thanked for allowing the officers from the DCSF to attend and observe the operations of the Hertfordshire Schools Forum.

15. Next meeting

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 30th October 2007 in room D69, HDC at 1pm.

PAY PROGRESSION FUNDING 2008-9 TO 2010-11

Under

4.3 The table below summarises progressions past the threshold in primary, middle and secondary schools over the last three years:

	<u>Eligible to progress from</u> <u>Main Scale Point 6</u>			<u>Actual progressions to Upper Pay Scale 1</u>					
	<u>Full Time</u>	<u>Part time</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Full Time</u>	<u>% of eligible</u>	<u>Part time</u>	<u>% of eligible</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of eligible</u>
2004									
Primary	319	341	660	101	31.7%	30	8.8%	131	19.8%
Middle	6	11	17	2	33.3%	5	45.5%	7	41.2%
Secondary	215	142	357	77	35.8%	11	7.7%	88	24.6%
Total	540	494	1034	180	33.3%	46	9.3%	226	21.9%
2005									
Primary	313	331	644	95	30.4%	41	12.4%	136	21.1%
Middle	8	9	17	3	37.5%	0	0.0%	3	17.6%
Secondary	214	121	335	85	39.7%	20	16.5%	105	31.3%
Total	535	461	996	183	34.2%	61	13.2%	244	24.5%
2006									
Primary	319	457	776	121	37.9%	40	8.8%	161	20.7%
Middle	6	13	19	3	50.0%	0	0.0%	3	15.8%
Secondary	215	206	421	123	57.2%	23	11.2%	146	34.7%
Total	540	676	1216	247	45.7%	63	9.3%	310	25.5%