

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2009

PRESENT: -

School Members: Nick Capstick, Primary Headteacher
Lauren Connor, Primary Headteacher
Chris Davis, Primary Headteacher
Debbie Kalyinka, Primary Headteacher
Terri Menham, Primary Headteacher
Paul Boyles, Primary Governor
Mr David Easter, Primary Governor
Steve Colledge, Secondary Headteacher
Rachael Matthey, Secondary Headteacher
Peter Wells, Secondary Headteacher
Clive Zimmerman – Secondary Headteacher

Non-School Members: Sally Inskip, Diocese Representative
Phil Baker, Trade Union Representative
Debbie Waldron, Early Years Representative

Officers: Ian Bickerton (Director Access and Provision), Paddy Bradley (Director of Schools and Learning), Sue Wald (Director Strategy and Commissioning), Stuart McKellar (Director of Finance), Karen Murray (Group Finance Manager Children's Services), Nicki Archer (Deputy Group Finance Manager Schools), Carmel Burton (Sure Start Partnership Manager), Mark Green (Integrated Service Manager), Peter Holbourne (Advisory Teacher)

Apologies for absence were received from Jan Downie (14-19 Partnership) and Pete Crockett.

19.

Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2008 be accepted as a correct record.

20.

Feedback from Meeting on 16 October 2008

Ian Bickerton (Director of Access and Local Provision) presented a report by the Group Director Children's Services to provide feedback on the recommendations made at the previous meeting.

It was noted that, at the last meeting, the Forum did not support the proposal on the Forest Schools Initiative and asked that further consideration should be given to this issue. Discussions had since taken place and it has been decided, in consultation with the Chair of the Forum, not to pursue this matter. Information that had been received about this initiative was circulated.

Sue Wald advised that a Steering Group had recently been established with regard to Parent Support Advisors.

21.

Schools Block Budget Monitoring 2008/09

The Group Director, Children's Services submitted a report concerning the latest budget monitoring information to the end of November 2008 in respect of the Schools Block Budget for 2008/09.

It was noted that the projected year end overspend of £276k presented to the Forums October meeting had now increased to £511k as at the end of November 2008, an increase of £235k. In addition to this the additional £747k of DSG funding on the non-schools budgets agreed at the October meeting has resulted in the Central Expenditure Limit being in breach of the Section 52 Statement 2008/09 report.

The Forum and Local Authority were not aware of the breach when budget decisions were made at the October meeting, it was only when the Section 52 statement had to be resubmitted with the additional allocations included that the breach of the central expenditure limit was identified.

It was commented that there was a major difficulty in making budget decisions based on estimated figures in February / March. However, as the Department for Children, Schools and Families do not confirm final DSG figures until June and a budget has to be set by the end of March then this is unavoidable at present.

Further work has been carried out on the Recoupment budget following the identification of a budget pressure of £492k. This has identified a significant additional budget pressure in the area. Further detailed work is needed to be able to accurately state the full amount of the pressure. This will be available in the next monitoring report. There was a consensus that more accurate forecasting on the Recoupment budget need to be undertaken.

It was noted that of the additional £747k budget that was agreed at the last Schools Forum meeting that there would be potential savings of £147k in the current financial year, £55k of this is already included in the main monitoring report. This would reduce the overall DSG overspend to £419k. The savings identified are on School Meals, the Secondary Behaviour Support Team, Stepping Forward and Forest Schools.

Resolved – (1) That the 2008/09 financial projections in respect of the Schools Budget for the current financial year be noted.

(2) That the Group Director Children Services continue rigorous and robust monitoring of the Schools Block budget and to bring budget monitoring reports to future meetings of the Schools Forum Sub-Group.

(3) That to coincide with budget timetables Officers investigate ensuring that the Schools Forum meets at the beginning of September 2009.

22.

Funding of Special Equipment

The Group Director Children's Services submitted a report concerning the increasing pressures on the budget to fund special equipment for children and young people with disabilities.

The Chair on behalf of ASSSH made the following comments:
What is being requested should be deemed an entitlement on human rights ground for a cohort of pupils with low incidence and severe/complex individual needs. Without the equipment this funding will provide these pupils will not have the remotest chance of fulfilling their innate potential nor of accessing the curriculum in a way which allows them to experience meaningful success.

It was noted that the Schools Forum Sub-Group had recommended that the

PCT should part-fund this budget increase.

Resolved – (1) That the Special Equipment budget be increased to £143,000 for the 2009/10 budget.

(2) That proportionate funding be explored from within Health and the PCT.

(3) That a further report be submitted to the April meeting of this Forum showing a breakdown of funding from the PCT.

23. Set-up Funding for New Schools.

The Group Director, Children's Services submitted a detailed report concerning the provision of set-up funding for new schools and took the Forum through the main aspects of the contents.

Resolved – (1) That the expected future programme of new and additional schools that will require set-up funding to be made available, as set out in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 and Appendix of the report be noted.

(2) That consideration of the possibility of the widening of the eligibility of set-up funding for new schools, together with its implications for the DSG, be deferred until the March meeting of the Forum when next years DSG is considered.

24. BESD (Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties) Review

The Cabinet Member for Children and the Group Director Children's Services submitted a joint report concerning the outcome of the review into provision and support for children and young people with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) in Swindon.

Resolved – (1) That the report into the provision and support for children and young people with BESD (Appendix A) be noted.

(2) That the proposed actions (Appendix B) to the report be noted.

25. Review of the Support for Ethnic Minority Achievement in Swindon

The Director of Schools and Learning submitted a report concerning the outcome of the review into support for ethnic minority achievement in Swindon.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted

(2) That a Working Party be established to develop options for providing support for ethnic minority achievement in response to the recommendations of the review and comprising the following members:

Rachael Matley
Lauren Conner
Nick Capstick
Peter Wells
Paddy Bradley
Karen Murray

26. Early Years Flexible Offer

The Group Director Children's Services submitted a report on the outcome of consultation on proposed changes to funding early years free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

It was noted there had been 24 responses from a possible 82.

Resolved – (1) That the funding timetable as set out in Option 1 of Proposal 1 contained within Appendix A be agreed.

(2) That the report be noted and the Proposals 1 – 6 contained within Appendix A to the report be accepted.

27. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget 2009-10

Karen Murray submitted a report concerning the draft Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2009/10.

The 2008/09 DSG budget was the first year of a 3 year settlement from the Government which gives all schools a minimum funding guarantee increase of 2.1% per pupil per annum. The items that the DSG can be spent on are prescribed by legislation and primarily represent funding for maintained schools, although certain centrally retained items are also included. It is a requirement that the Schools Forum is consulted on DSG budget proposals for 2009/10.

If the budget pressures identified in the current financial year continue in 2009/10 and the overspend of £511k in 2008/09 is the final position at the end of the financial year then there will be a deficit budget of £335k in 2009/10. The Local Authority is unable to set a deficit budget so will do further work to achieve a balanced budget.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a special meeting of the Schools Forum be arranged in mid March to discuss the final DSG 2009/10 budget.

(3) That a special meeting of the Schools Forum be arranged to discuss Single Status.

28. Standards Funds 2009/10

The Group Director Children's Services submitted a report concerning updated Standards Fund allocations for 2009/10.

Resolved – That the revised Standards Fund allocations for 2009/10 and 2010/11 attached at Appendix A to the report be noted.