

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 6 July 2011

<u>Present:</u>	Chair	R Longster	
	School Group	S Dainty I Davies-Foo K Frost M Jackson J Kenny M Kophamel	J Owens S Peach P Sheridan S Wall J Weise G Zsapka
	Non-schools Group	D McDonald S McNamara G Peters	M Potter N Reilly
<u>In attendance:</u>		P Ashcroft S Blevins Cllr S Clarke N Clarkson	M Parkinson A Roberts C Warburton
<u>Apologies</u>		D Armstrong E Cogan B Cummings P Dixon L Ireland	C Mann M Mitchell C Penn E Renshaw

105 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as recorded above.

106 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the meeting were accepted as a true record

107 MATTERS ARISING

Item 5: Traded Services – Working Group Update

The working group met on 23rd May. Grounds maintenance was discussed and the notice period required to withdraw from an SLA (1 term to be given by the first Friday). An update will be brought to the next meeting.

Item 6: Special Education Needs – Green Paper

The DfE have contacted LAs about participating in a pilot. The Learn Together Partnership will meet to discuss.

108 SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN 2010-11

Andrew Roberts summarised his report on the Schools Budget outturn. There are a number of significant variations which are explained in the report.

The cost for closing schools was queried. Andrew Roberts explained that this was because these schools closed with deficit budgets which don't transfer to successor schools and must be met from the schools budget. There were also redundancy costs for staff.

Mike Potter declared an interest as a governor of the University Academy of Birkenhead, and asked for a comparison between the budgets for Rock Ferry High and Park High compared to the UAB budget. Andrew Roberts can provide the school budgets but does not know the academy budget.

Neville Reilly asked what would happen to any buildings sold. Andrew Roberts reported that any sales proceeds would come back to the LA, not rest with the Academy.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forum notes the report

109 SCHOOL BALANCES AS AT 31ST MARCH 2011

Andrew Roberts summarised his report on school balances. Balances have increased significantly from £8.4m to £11.6m. This increase is comparable with a number of other local authorities. Schools appear to be taking a more cautious approach in a time of uncertainty over future funding. Similarly, there are fewer schools with deficit budgets.

The excess balance control mechanism was withdrawn from 1st April, therefore this is the last time that excess balances will be recovered.

A query was raised about the impact that excess balances will have on future levels of funding, and about the qualitative impact of this more cautious approach in schools. Andrew Roberts responded that there is no direct impact on future funding, and that the LA is not aware of any consequences of a more cautious approach to spending. The focus has been on ensuring that plans are in place for the impact of current and future funding levels and the impact of falling rolls.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forum notes the report

110 PUPIL PREMIUM PAYMENTS FOR THE WIRRAL HOSPITALS SCHOOL

Carolyn Warburton outlined the report. The Hospitals School completes a school level Census as compared to the pupil level Census in other schools. As a result, the DfE are not providing the Pupil Premium to hospital schools. Wirral Hospitals School (WHS) had 39 pupils eligible for Free School Meals, 23 with single registration, resulting in an expected pupil premium payment of £9,890.

The Forum were asked to consider providing the pupil premium to WHS from the schools contingency. Sandra Wall asked if the underspend in the SEN budget could

be redirected to pay WHS the pupil premium amount. Andrew Roberts noted that the 2010/11 underspend had already been factored into the 2011/12 SEN budget. Schools contingency is the fund specified for unforeseen costs. Andrew Roberts noted that there were three hospital schools nationally in the same position.

Carolyn Warburton noted that the DfE were planning to investigate payment to hospital schools for 2012-13. M Potter suggested approval for one year and that the LA aim to recover the money from the DfE.

Forum members were interested in the work of WHS. R Longster suggested a presentation at the next meeting.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forum agrees to the use of contingency for the pupil premium payment to WHS for the current year.

111 ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROVISION AT GILBROOK SPECIAL SCHOOL

Paul Ashcroft outlined the proposals for temporary use of the funding released by the closure of Brookdale Primary's Education Inclusion Base. The base will close at the end of this academic year.

It is proposed that the funding released in-year is transferred to Gilbrook School for the academic year 2011-12 to commission a pilot assessment class for primary pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties. This will allow the school and the local authority to examine needs and plan to meet them.

Steve Dainty expressed his support for this proposal, noting the pressure on primary schools to make provision for pupils with BESD and that Gilbrook is already oversubscribed.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forum notes Brookdale's decision to close the Education Inclusion Base

(2) That the Forum accept the proposal for the temporary use of the funding released by the EIB closure to pilot the use of an assessment class at Gilbrook School for the academic year 2011-2012 with a further report to a future Forum.

112 HARMONISATION IN SCHOOLS UPDATE

Sue Blevins updated the Forum on the current position in relation to Harmonisation in schools. This included a revised timeline with final implementation of Job Evaluation and Harmonisation in November 2011. The original plan was to implement this in September but has been delayed to give sufficient time to consult and brief staff. It was acknowledged that it would not be ideal to implement part way through an academic year but there is a need to avoid continued delay.

The funding available to meet the costs was outlined. It was noted that the amount of the Council loan has reduced because the reserves have increased, and it is anticipated that the position will improve in future.

All TAs have the right to Job Evaluation and Harmonisation. If schools become academies, they will have to ensure that they won't face equal pay for equal value claims. They will be wholly liable if they choose not to implement Harmonisation.

Mike Potter felt that the Forum needed confirmation that there would be no further delays, or there may be a requirement to cap the backpay period to avoid building up a large backpay bill. Sue Blevins said that the council did not foresee any further slippage on the November date as they were in the final stages of the process. Further delays are not sustainable for the council.

Steve Dainty queried whether a move to a 39 week year would affect pensionable service. Sue confirmed no, this would be counted as a full year with pay and years of service unaffected for pension purposes.

This will be an agenda item at the September meeting.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forum notes the report

113 **SCHOOL REDUNDANCIES UPDATE**

Sue Blevins and Andrew Roberts updated the Forum on the current position regarding school redundancies. Revised anticipated numbers and costs were presented - an amendment to the table was noted with secondary costs at £840,000 in 2011/12.

The responses from the recent schools consultation were summarised. Amongst the responses, schools felt that the LA should seek approval to capitalise costs, and the LA is awaiting a response from DCLG. Schools expressed a view that delegated school budgets should not be top sliced, and that if schools were to make a contribution to costs this should be no more than 25%.

Schools agreed that a redeployment scheme was a reasonable response to the issue. Sue Blevins explained further that the voluntary redeployment scheme asked all schools to advertise vacancies initially within schools affected by redundancy or experiencing downsizing. There was a mixed response from the consultation but sufficient support to implement the scheme.

A query was raised regarding possible redundancy costs for staff employed to cover secondments to the EQ service. Sue Blevins explained that secondment is a fixed term contract, and that discussions regarding cover were still to be held, but that there would be a case for employing cover on a clear, fixed term contract, with a clause about continuation being subject to budget.

Neville Reilly was concerned that, for schools already facing budget problems, making the 25% contribution would lead to more redundancies and increased costs. Andrew Roberts said that the Council would do what it could to facilitate a longer repayment term.

Ken Frost expressed disappointment at the return rate. Andrew Roberts commented that the response rate is variable on all surveys and that a low rate was not unusual.

Mike Potter queried the rationale for a 25% contribution. Andrew Roberts advised that this was the best estimate available currently, based on the anticipated costs and the other sources of funding available. Mike Potter requested that the level of 25% be limited to one year with a review at the end of the period.

Resolved:

- (1) Taking into account the views expressed in the consultation, that a schools contribution to redundancy/severance costs of 25% is introduced from 2012, limited to one year with a subsequent review.
(9 For, 5 Against and 3 Abstentions)
- (2) That a voluntary staff redeployment scheme is drawn up and introduced in schools from September 2011.

114 PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS DELEGATED BUDGETS

Carolyn Warburton explained that PRUs will be required to have delegated budgets from the 2012-13 financial year. It is proposed that in Wirral, the PRU is funded under that same formula as other special schools whilst continuing to be supported by the secondary exclusions mechanism that is in place for in-year exclusions. Proposals will be discussed with the headteacher and management committee of the PRU before going out to wider consultation with schools and coming back to the Forum for agreement.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Forum notes the report

115 PLACES IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS - RE: SURPLUS FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Paul Ashcroft outlined his report on the surplus funding pilot for Special schools. Under the pilot scheme, 5 schools with surplus funding submitted proposals for the use of this funding.

One proposal was supported. Orrets Meadow will convert funding for surplus stated places into places for non-stated children with severe literacy difficulties to attend for 12 months, with the aim of supporting children to progress sufficiently to return to mainstream school after 12 months.

The remaining 4 schools will have their funding reduced by 5 places from September 2012. It is recommended that the surplus funding be used for the exceptional needs budget, to commission additional places for children with social and communication difficulties, and to fund a growth in demand for other special school provision.

Resolved:

- (1) To convert the £196,665 of funding at Orrets Meadow into temporary places for non-stated children with severe literacy difficulties with effect from September 2011
- (2) To allocate £100,000 to the exceptional needs budget in September 2012

(3) To reserve £120,000 to commission 8 places for children in the growing area of demand of social and communication difficulties in either a special school or primary school for September 2012

(4) To use the balance of £66,685 to fund additional demand for places in over-subscribed special schools and to meet the cost of primary provision in Wirral Hospitals School

116 **SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2012 - 13**

Carolyn Warburton introduced likely changes to the school funding formula for 2012-13. The DfE have not yet published the outcome of their first consultation. The timescales indicate that a national formula will not be in place for 2012/13, and therefore decisions need to be taken on the Wirral formula.

The report outlined 6 areas for consideration: mainstreamed grants; formula factors; PRU funding; Wirral Hospitals School; Special school surplus places; and city learning centres.

Schools will be consulted in the Autumn term. Richard Longster noted that the working party has met once and will have further meetings.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forum notes the areas for consultation within the funding formula for 2012-13

117 **DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FINAL 2011-12 GRANT NOTIFICATION AND CENTRAL LIMIT**

Andrew Roberts withdrew this paper and will resubmit it in September. This is because the DfE have not yet confirmed the final grant amount, and have issued revised figures for the central limit calculation.

118 **CONSULTATION ADMISSIONS - CODE OF PRACTICE**

Nancy Clarkson summarised the main points in the DfE consultation on the admissions code and appeals code as detailed in the report.

A draft response was circulated with the meeting papers, with the expectation that forum members will want to make changes to the suggested responses. The Forum were asked to send any responses to the Chair and to Andrew Roberts by the end of July. Nancy Clarkson will collate the responses and circulate the final consultation response by email to Forum members before submitting to the DfE.

Nancy Clarkson also summarised the changes to eleven-plus testing which are not open to consultation. Under the new code, parents must have received test results before completing preference forms, taking effect for admissions in 2013. This will have a significant effect on Wirral arrangements. Children are currently tested in November and December, whilst preference forms have to be returned by 31st October.

In 2007, when this item was first discussed, options were considered to test pupils in Year 5 in the spring term, or to test Year 6 pupils in September. Neither were considered to be appropriate. A working party will need to meet in the Autumn term to discuss arrangements for Wirral.

Resolved:

(1) That for Forum respond to the consultation and send any comments by the end of July to Andrew Roberts and the Chair

(2) That the Forum write separately if they wish regarding the impact of the 11+ changes

(3) That a working group be convened in September to look at the 11+ changes

119 **FORUM WORKPLAN**

A workplan for the Forum was provided in the meeting papers. The Forum noted the areas of work for future meetings.

120 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 27th September 2011 was agreed for the next meeting.

Steve Peach asked if it would be possible to plan dates for the year rather than one at a time. Feedback from the Forum meetings is provided at WASH, and the meeting need to be co-ordinated. The Forum meeting dates need to retain some flexibility because it is difficult to know when information will be available, particularly around December and January. Steve Peach will provide Andrew Roberts with a list of WASH meeting dates to improve co-ordination of these meetings.