

## WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday 29 September 2010

**Present:**

R. Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

S. Dainty	M. Kophamel
I. Davies-Foo	G. Zsapka
K. Frost	J. Weise
I. Cubbin	B. Renshaw
C. Penn	P. Dixon
P. Sheridan	E. Cogan
S. Wall	A. Baird
J. Owens	

Non-Schools Group

G. Peters	N. Reilly
J. Kenny	D. McDonald

**In Attendance:**

H. Cooper	D. Armstrong
A. Roberts	J. Bulmer
P. Edmondson	J. Bevan
C. Warburton	P. Rutter
S. Ashley	Cllr. T. Harney
M. Lightburn	R. Richardson
N. Hickin	

**Apologies:**

M. Potter	M. Mitchell
B. Cummings	Cllr. S. Clarke

Mr. Howard Cooper in the Chair.

Mr. Cooper welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the academic year. Brief introductions were made round the table.

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2010-2011.**

Mr. Cooper asked for nominations for the position of Chair for the academic year 2010-2011. Mr. R. Longster was nominated by Gillian Zsapka and seconded by Steve Dainty. There were no other nominations so Mr. Longster was elected unanimously.

**Resolved:** That Mr. Richard Longster be elected to serve as Chair of the Wirral Schools' Forum for the academic year 2010-2011.

Mr. R. Longster in the Chair.

2. **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2010-2011.**

Mr. Longster asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chair for the academic year 2010-2011. Mr. S. Dainty was nominated by Irene Davies –

Foo and seconded by Gillian Zsapka. There were no other nominations so Mr. Dainty was elected unanimously.

**Resolved:** That Mr. Steve Dainty be elected to serve as Vice Chair of the Wirral Schools' Forum for the academic year 2010-2011.

3. **APOLOGIES.**

Apologies were received as indicated above.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JUNE 2010.**

The Minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

5. **MATTERS ARISING.**

\* **Minute 8 – Budget Update.**

Mr. Cooper updated members on the current budget situation.

Mr. Cooper re-iterated the fact that there had been reductions in Local Authority grant allocations during the year, the biggest ones relating to the Area Based Grants. There had been no changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant or the Revenue Support Grant.

CYPD's share of the scheduled cuts was in the region of £2.6m. Cabinet had reviewed committed and uncommitted expenditure and had decided to protect Children's Services as far as possible and had agreed £1.5m worth of cuts only.

It was expected that there would be very significant reductions in grants in future years. Further reports would be brought back to the Forum.

6. **DSG RESERVE AND FINAL GRANT ALLOCATION 2010/11.**

Mr. Roberts advised that the DSG grant for 2010/11 announced on 1<sup>st</sup> July was £194,032,000, an increase of £36,600 compared to the amount budgeted.

The Forum had agreed to carry forward any grant balances either from the final grant settlement or year end accounts until the end of the funding period in 2010/11. The DSG is calculated from January 2010 PLASC and early years Census data. This information can not be finalised before the budget process has been completed. The Schools Budget was set using an expected level of DSG of £193,995,400. The pupil data has now been agreed nationally allowing the DfE to set final DSG figures. The final census data for Wirral has increased the pupil count used for DSG to 45,456, an increase of 8 pupils which will result in an additional £36,600 more grant. The current DSG balance is £821,551.

Mr. Roberts reported that the Use of DSG Reserve was £65,000 for Gilbrook Outreach and £756,551 for School Pay harmonisation.

**Resolved:** That the DSG reserve balance and future use be noted.

7. **IMPLEMENTATION OF JOB EVALUATION AND HARMONISATION FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF.**

The report outlined proposals for the implementation of the Council's policy on Job Evaluation and Harmonisation of Conditions of Service across Schools' Support Staff.

Mrs. Rutter explained that the Council had implemented the scheme for all staff up to spinal point 34 and harmonised working conditions across centrally employed staff. The second phase was to implement the scheme for school support staff. Of the schools in Wirral, there are Community Schools where the Council is the employer and Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools where the Governors are the employer. Whilst Job Evaluation and Harmonisation has not taken place in Community Schools, the Council remains open to Equal pay claims from members of support staff. Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools are less liable to such claims.

Mrs. Rutter referred to the proposals listed and advised that they had been discussed in detail with the relevant Trade Unions who represent School Support Staff. The funding of the proposals will be in the region of £2.6m. It had been agreed previously by Cabinet that the costs would not be met by Council funds but would come from within the DSG and any such monies allocated by the Schools Forum. The sum of £300k had been agreed by the Forum in 2007/8 and set aside for this purpose. It was anticipated that the remainder will be funded through the DSG Reserve and in-year underspend.

The whole process had been very difficult and challenging across all public services. There had been several issues and concerns but it was felt that this was the only option available. Much support for the proposals was received at the meeting.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Schools Forum note the report  
(ii) That the Schools Forum agree unanimously to using the DSG Reserve in year for this purpose.

8. **UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS WITH SCHOOLS.**

The report updates the Schools Forum on the further progress of the review of traded services offered to schools by Wirral Council. These services are all due for renewal on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. Mrs. Rutter advised that the panel of representatives was convened to act as a conduit between schools and the Authority service providers in order to consult on the renewal of Service Level Agreements.

The service providers have presented proposals for the new Service Level Agreements and this information has been shared with all Primary Schools.

Schools will be asked to make decisions on which services they wish to procure and at what level where the options are available by January 2011.

A report to Cabinet in September by the Head of Corporate Human Resources and Organisational Development outlined the benefits of a centralised HR and OD service to the Council. It suggested a three staged approach to co-ordinate the move to centralisation. In recognition of the SLA for HR and the need to consult schools, the report stated that the position of schools would be assessed in Phase three in April 2011. A number of schools had expressed concerns over the implications a centralised HR service would have on the ability of schools to deliver on the Standards Agenda if the direct link to the expertise and knowledge of staff from the Children and Young People's Department was not retained. This concern was picked up by members of the Forum. Mr. Cooper assured members that there was a keen awareness of the importance of schools as customers and that there was no wish to jeopardise relationships with schools. The point had been made strongly to Corporate HR.

The regular meetings between CYPD Officers and the Professional Associations were valued and cherished and were seen as very positive.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

9. **CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF GILBROOK OUTREACH SERVICE AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**

Mr. Bulmer referred briefly to the previously highlighted problems regarding the long term funding of the Gilbrook Outreach Service and its viability. The Schools Forum had previously agreed that the shortfall in funding be found from the contingency for 2010/11. This was seen as a temporary measure and the purpose of this report was to provide the opportunity for further consultation.

Mr. Bulmer re-iterated that the Gilbrook Outreach Service had played an important part in supporting primary schools in dealing with pupils who present behaviour problems. Approximately half of the primary schools had purchased support through service level agreements but others would certainly benefit from the service.

The Schools Forum working group considered various funding methods for the service. The working group considered the option of raising charges to the level required to cover all costs but this would double the charges to individual schools and make the service too expensive. All schools would benefit from having access to the specialist knowledge available at some time although frequency would vary from school to school. The working party concluded that the most sensible way forward would be to consider funding the service centrally from the DSG.

The review of the future of the Gilbrook Outreach raised issues concerning the Authority's arrangements for providing general support and advice on behaviour issues in the primary sector. Support had been available from a number of different services and individuals in the past, support needed to be more systematic and better coordinated. The report outlined a plan to

offer behaviour support to all primary schools from a coordinated team of professionals. The proposal could only be successful if the Gilbrook Outreach Service was secured as an important component of the Authority's arrangements for behaviour support. All primary schools would have access to a number of services as indicated in the report.

If the Schools Forum were to agree to centrally fund the Outreach Service, it would enable the Authority to provide a more effective support for schools. It was proposed that schools be consulted on two proposals:-

- (i) that the Schools Forum should agree that £150,000 from the Direct Schools Grant should be used to fund the current Gilbrook Outreach Service from April 2011
- (ii) that the £45,000 currently set aside for permanently excluded pupils money to new schools should also be used to assist schools supporting pupils at risk of permanent exclusion

**Resolved:** That the Schools Forum agree unanimously to the proposal indicated above.

#### 10. **UPDATE FROM THE DEPRIVATION WORKING PARTY.**

Mr. Roberts reported on the first meeting of the working group which is examining and reviewing deprivation funding and the impact on school performance. The work will contribute to the review of the School Funding Formula.

The group looked at a range of data about the performance of schools and the analysis focused on the key indicators for KS2 and KS4. Data from 2008 and 2009 was presented in order to see if there were any emerging trends. Raw results and Contextual Value Added scores were presented. The data focused on the FSM to non-FSM gap as this was the one that is currently a National Indicator. Data was presented ranked in order of the level of deprivation funding received. In this way the group could look at the impact not only in those schools who received the greatest amount of deprivation funding but also the impact in those schools who received least. The group made a number of observations from the data presented.

Mrs. Cogan asked whether the group looked at those schools that do not receive deprivation funding but have suffered a reduction in funding.

*(Note: This data was included in the report. It has been part of the working group's term of reference and will be updated at the next meeting.)*

The group identified a number of steps to be reported to the Autumn term meetings.

**Resolved:** That the Schools Forum note the report and endorses the future work outlined.

#### 11. **DFE SCHOOL FUNDING CONSULTATION 2011/12.**

Mr. Roberts explained that the DfE had begun a short period of consultation on school funding ahead of the Comprehensive Spending Review and

Indicative Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Allocations for 2011/12. The consultation paper asks Authorities a number of questions and these are set out in the report along with the suggested responses. The paper is predominantly about national changes but the outcome will have some impact on the local scheme. The DfE have indicated that they do not wish to amend the DSG formula at this time and they will concentrate on the introduction of a Pupil Premium.

Mr. Roberts referred in turn to the questions posed in the report and the suggested answers. The consultation will close on 18<sup>th</sup> October so Mr. Roberts indicated that he would be happy to receive any feedback and co-ordinate this with the Chair of the Wirral Schools Forum.

The Schools Forum and the Cabinet are asked to note the consultation and approve the responses set out in the report.

**Resolved:** That the Schools Forum note the consultation and approve the responses as set out.

## 12. **PLAYING FOR SUCCESS.**

Mr. Armstrong reported on the current position in respect of the Playing for Success initiative based at Tranmere Rovers and managed by CYPD. The initiative started in 2004 and current funding support will finish in March 2011 however, at its meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> September, Cabinet agreed to extend funding until August 2011 to allow further time to develop a possible basis for part or full funding.

Mr. Armstrong described one possible way to maintain this very successful scheme into 2011/12.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Playing for Success initiative be funded in 2011/12 from the centrally managed SEN/Behaviour budget, subject to the clauses as described

(ii) That the Playing for Success initiative be the subject of a further report once consultations with the School Forum and schools are completed and following research on other funding options.

## 13. **EARLY YEARS SINGLE FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE.**

The report updates the Forum on the implementation of a funding formula for Early Years.

A Working Group had met to consider how a single formula should best be designed, taking into account guidance from the DfE and models operated by pilot authorities. There were a number of outstanding issues that the Working Group would need to consider before finalising the new Formula for Early Years. A number of providers had offered 15 hours free Early Years Education from the start of term and a small number of others had confirmed that they are making a flexible offer available to parents either within or outside the school day. Progress and feedback from these changes would also be considered by the Working Group.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report be noted.  
(ii) That the proposed Formula be reported to the Forum for approval at the December meeting.

14. **CONSULTATION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO LMS FUNDING FORMULA TO SCHOOLS.**

The report proposes consulting schools on a number of changes to the LMS funding formula with effect from 1st April 2011. The changes referred to Gilbrook School, equal pay and harmonisation costs and consolidation of grant funding.

Schools would be contacted in early October requesting their comments and these will be reported to the next Forum meeting.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

15. **CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL FINANCE REGULATIONS 2011.**

Mr. Roberts reported that the DfE had launched a consultation exercise on the new School Finance Regulations 2011.

The main changes from previous regulations relate to decisions and proposals outlined in the 2011-12 school funding consultation document issued in July. These include the requirement for all authorities to introduce an early years single funding formula from April 2012 and mainstreaming of some specific grants into the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Mr. Roberts commented that they seemed sensible changes. Responses needed to be received by 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS.**

\* **Special School Numbers.**

Mr. P. Edmondson reported that the numbers of pupils attending some of our Special Schools had started to reduce. It was difficult to predict, however, whether this was a trend or a short term issue. He intended to discuss this matter in more detail with Special School Headteachers in order to consider the best way forward.

17. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING.**

Confirmed that the next Meeting will take place on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2010.