

# Wirral Schools Forum: Funding Consultative Group

## 11 June 2008

<b>Present:</b>	
Chair	Steve Dainty
Primary Headteachers	Nigel Greathead, Morag Kophamel
Primary Governors	Ken Frost, Alison Hardy, John Weise
Secondary Governors	Dr Ian Cubbin, Brian Cummings, Elizabeth Renshaw, Jean Roberts, Sandra Wall
Special Schools Representatives	Andre Baird, Richard Longster
Non-Schools Group	Pauline Hogan (Non-teacher representative), Ann Melville (Shrewbury Diocese), Gillian Peters (Chester Diocese)
In attendance:	Cllr Sheila Clarke
Apologies	Cllr Phil Davies, Cllr Frank Doyle, Steve Hyden, Julie Kenny (Shrewbury Diocese), Les Maxim, Phil Sheridan, Gillian Zsapka

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### **Minute 1 - INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies - as above.

It was noted that Ann Melville was deputising for Julie Kenny.

## **Minute 2 - MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 16 January (the meeting for 12 March having been cancelled) were accepted as a correct record.

## **Minute 3 - MATTERS ARISING**

None.

## **Minute 4 - CORRESPONDENCE**

None reported.

## **Minute 5 - ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM FROM SEPTEMBER 2008**

Moira Curran outlined the changes agreed by the Cabinet (on 22 May) to the membership of the Forum with effect from September 2008. The new Forum would be in place in time for the Autumn Term meeting, with membership as follows:

Schools Group (20)

- 5 Primary Headteachers\*
- 5 Primary Governors
- 4 Secondary Headteachers\*
- 4 Secondary Governors
- 2 Special School representatives

Non-schools Group (8)

- 1 from the Catholic Diocese
- 1 from the Anglican Diocese
- 1 from the 14 to 19 Partnership
- 2 from the PVI Early Years Providers
- 1 teachers representative
- 1 representative of non-teaching staff in schools
- 1 LSC observer

\* or a senior staff representative.

## **Minute 6 - PROVISION OF SERVICES**

Chris Batman outlined a proposal to review traded services with schools. He reminded the Forum of the procedure used by Blackpool to review and endorse services. He asked that a small working group be established to look at the process. Morag Kophamel asked if the services reviewed would include CPD, as the current arrangements worked satisfactorily. he replied that that would be

something that the working group could consider.

**Resolved - That a working group be established, consisting of Morag Kophamel, Richard Longster, Ian Cubbin, Ken Frost and Steve Dainty.**

#### **Minute 7 - DEVELOPMENT OF AN EARLY YEARS FORMULA**

Chris Batman referred to the need to develop a formula for the maintained and PVI sector. He suggested that the process would be helped by a small working group of the Forum considering the implications of the work done by officers. It was suggested that an approach be made to the Link Forum for PVI representatives.

**Resolved - That a working group be established, consisting of John Weise, Richard Longster, Gill Peters and Steve Dainty.**

#### **Minute 8 - PROPOSAL FOR CLOSING E.I.B. AT MANOR AND BRACKENWOOD**

John Bulmer introduced the item by outlining the current position. The pilot base at Manor Primary would be discontinued after discussion with the Governors. Discussions were under way to reassign the base to another school. The Governors of Brackenwood had also asked to close their base. Richard Longster asked if there was a long term plan. Andre Baird stated that there was a need to link proposals to future secondary provision.

**Resolved (unanimously) - That the proposals for EIBs be supported, namely that:**

**(i) the funding for the EIB at Brackenwood Junior School be transferred to Devonshire Park to open a KS1 base for Social and Communications Difficulties;**

**(ii) a KS1 base be opened at Eastway for Social and Communications Difficulties.**

#### **Minute 9 - PROPOSAL FOR CONSULTATION REGARDING THE OBSERVATORY SCHOOL**

Peter Edmondson advised the Forum of the requirement for SEBD places from September. Sandra Wall asked if Wirral had an exceptionally large number of children with such problems or if there was a high level of provision. Peter Edmondson replied that there was no reason to think that Wirral had more difficult children than elsewhere.

Howard Cooper explained that the reason the Solar School had been established was to avoid sending pupils out of borough. That strategy was working and the new Observatory School had been successful in taking those pupils. Peter Edmondson proposed that a working group of the Forum consider how to address the issues not only of how many young people attended the Observatory School but also how they were funded; a further question would be how could they be provided for in mainstream.

**Resolved** - That a working group be established consisting of Brian Cummings, Andre Baird, Sandra Wall, Pauline Hogan, Steve Dainty and Richard Longster.

#### **Minute 10 - SCHOOLS BUDGET OUT-TURN**

Chris Batman referred to the report previously circulated and informed the Forum that there was a small overspend of £131,000.

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

#### **Minute 11 - DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT - UPDATE**

Chris Batman commented on the paper previously circulated and asked the Forum to endorse their previous decision that the grant be carried forward until the end of the funding period.

**Resolved** - That the additional grant be carried forward.

#### **Minute 12 - SIXTH FORM TEACHERS' PAY GRANT**

Chris Batman referred to the paper previously circulated that outlined options for the distribution of pay grant to secondary schools. The result of the consultation with the schools was that they preferred Option 2, namely to allocate grant using LSC Standard Learner Numbers, which took account of the planned pupils and number and size of subjects.

**Resolved** - That Option 2 be used as the basis for distributing the additional funding.

#### **Minute 13 - CENTRAL EXPENDITURE LIMIT**

The Forum was asked to endorse the agreement to approve the increase in the central expenditure limit (CEL).

**Resolved** (unanimously) - That

(i) the Forum approves the change to the CEL for the funding period 2008/11 and

(ii) the limits agreed for 2009/10 and 2010/11 be reviewed in each appropriate year.

#### **Minute 14 - BALANCES FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2007/08**

The Director informed the Forum of the current position in relation to the outturn for 2007/08. Schools balances stood at £12m, compared with the Council's balance of £4m. Discussion took place regarding the reasons why schools retained resources and the impact that that had on individuals.

Ken Frost asked whether the Council's accounts were measured in the same

way as schools: if not, then it was not a fair comparison, and a different way of accounting might give a different view. The Director replied that the Council could spread the risk across a number of Departments, which individual schools could not. That was one of the reasons why schools were permitted to carry forward balances. However, that did not explain the continual growth in unspent resources. The Forum requested a report on the level of individual schools' balances after the adjustment for Standards Fund.

Neville Reilly stated that, if Workforce Reform were fully implemented, then many of those balances would be reduced. Chris Batman explained the process that would be undertaken to examine the balances in individual schools and the capping arrangements that might be applied in certain circumstances. Morag Kophamel asked if the report could be provided without formula capital, and an indication of whether there was a pattern of excess balances in certain areas.

**Resolved - That the Director's report be noted.**

#### **Minute 15 - EXCESS BALANCE REDUCTIONS**

Chris Batman explained that the surplus balances from 2005/06 that had been deducted from schools amounted to £63,850 and requests a decision about how the sum should be utilised. However, a further amount was likely to be identified from the 2006/07 accounts and it was therefore proposed to wait until outcome of the 2007/08 exercise was completed before reallocating the resources.

**Resolved - That a decision be deferred on the redistribution of these resources.**

#### **Minute 16 - DCSF PROPOSALS FOR NEW DSG FROM 2011**

Andrew Roberts outlined the purpose of the review, the terms of reference and outcome of the consultation with local authorities and schools forums on the operation of the review. He highlighted some of the issues currently under consideration and alerted members to the website where they could access up-to-date information.

#### **Minute 17 - 16-19 FUNDING AND TRANSFER FROM LSC**

The Director referred to the paper "Machinery of Government", which split the Departments of Children, Schools and Families and Innovation, Universities and Skills. He informed the Forum of the proposal to transfer the role and resources of the LSC to local authorities and the national skills agencies. From 2010, authorities would have responsibility for funding 16-19 year olds in colleges, work-based learning centres, etc, and not just sixth forms in schools. That was likely to involve a TUPE transfer of LSC staff. The resources would be used to commission provision. Schools forums would be affected, hence the change in membership with effect from Autumn 2008. Work would begin in 2009 on the implications and issues involved in the transfer, but at the current time the extent of transfer of resources was not yet known.

Ann Melville asked if the change would affect students' choice of placement. The

Director replied that it was not expected to do so, but discussions were taking place at a regional level to look at provision across the area.

**Resolved - That the Director's report be noted.**

#### **Minute 18 - SCHOOL MEALS UPDATE**

Chris Batman introduced the item by reminding members of the change to the formula to distribute the money for free school meals. David Armstrong explained that an exercise had been carried out to take anomalies out of the charging system and aligning it with the need to charge for a meal. The Department was undertaking a fundamental review of meal provision across the authority and would look particularly at the six schools that operated the service on their own. Matthew Humble (Business and Performance Manager) would carry out the review.

Ken Frost asked whether the charges during the current funding period would begin to take into account the increase in fuel and food prices or if the price would be held at the level explained in the letter circulated to schools in May. David Armstrong replied that the Department would look at using Government grant to offer a subsidy and work with the Council's Procurement Unit to try to obtain best costs for food. There was no guarantee that the price would not increase.

#### **Minute 19 - NEXT MEETING**

**Resolved - That the next meeting be held on Wednesday 8 October at 6.00pm.**