

Schools' Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2012 at the Civic Offices

Attendance

Members:

Derek Good
Mark Mitchell (Chair)
Jayne Pratt
Justeen White

Representative:

Gov - Secondary
Gov – Special
Gov – Primary
Gov - Primary

Alison Beane
Jackie Collins
David Jeapes
Louise Linscott

HT – Special
HT – Primary
HT – Secondary
HT - Primary

Carol Damper

EY – PVI

Cllr Ken Ferrett

Member – Labour

Observers:

Cllr Rob Wood

Cabinet Member

Officers:

John Bean
Eric Bell
Di Mitchell
Bev Pennekett
Maria Smith
Richard Webb
Susan Whitehouse
Julian Wooster

Head of Building Maintenance
Child Support Commissioning Manager
Head of Education
Finance Manager
Senior Accountant
Finance Manager
Acting AMS Education Business Partner
Strategic Director

Item

Action

1. Apologies: Irene Baldry, Tom Blair, Lynn Evans, Emily Fletcher, Bruce Marr

2. Declaration of interests:

Mark Mitchell declared an interest in item 7. Derek Good declared an interest in item 6.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2012

Actions:

Capital funding for schools considering academy status – Julian Wooster felt that it would be wrong to state that we would never allocate any capital funding to potential academies. As a local authority we have an obligation under pupil place planning to ensure that we have enough places available in the city. However there is no expectation that we would undertake any major works at academy schools.

Applications for grant support – Mile Stoneman has contacted the grant applicants and arranged payment.

Funding reform working group – Bev Pennekett has sought volunteers and set up the working group.

Funding reform consultation –Bev Pennekett produced a response to the consultation and emailed it to members.

Review of Harbour School provision – Eric Bell has brought a further report as requested which is discussed under Item 6.

Review of Sensory Impairment service – A paper with the additional information requested has been provided.

JW

Integrated Working and Safeguarding Training Programme – SLA information will be sent to schools around Christmas time and a list of options will be provided.

Scheme for Financing Schools – The revised scheme has been posted on Intralink and schools staff and governors advised accordingly.

Matters arising:

There were no matters arising

4. Asset Management Plan meeting programme 2012/13

John Bean presented a report informing Schools Forum of the changes being implemented to the annual Asset Management Plan (AMP) meeting process and to update members on associated matters in relation to landlord's approval for building works and standard specifications.

It was confirmed that AMP meetings with all schools will be concluded by the end of October 2012. In future years, all AMP meetings will be completed between September and November. This information will be used to inform the annual prioritisation of capital funds for schools.

Schools Forum were reminded of the need to gain Landlords's approval for

any building works which affect or alter the structure of the building, electrician services installation, heating services installation and below ground drainage. This is very important especially in light of the net capacity issues.

Schools Forum were also advised that standard specifications would be made available to all schools by AMS for toilet refurbishment, window replacement, external decorations and external paving.

Derek Good raised concerns that standard specification could inhibit innovation and design. John Bean confirms that the intention is not to impact on design but specifications.

AMS has introduced a new online property database through Concerto which will become available to schools from September 2012. Schools will be able to view and download key documents.

Justeen White questioned how this would work during the school holidays when for example a contractor would have to sign the asbestos register electronically. If the admin officer is not going to be available it would have to print off as a hard copy for the contractor to sign.

It was also confirmed that any documents printed off would have a date on them to show when they would no longer be relevant.

Schools Forum noted the report.

5. DSG 2012/13, Central Expenditure Limit, Contingency Provision and Pupil Premium

Bev Pennekett presented a report informing and updating the Schools Forum of budget issues regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant, the Central Expenditure Limit, the level of contingency and Pupil Premium.

The final DSG allocation for 2012/13 has not yet been published. However given the level of contingency it is not envisaged that the final settlement will present an issue, should it be less than the estimated level.

At the April meeting the Schools Forum were reminded that it was expected that the Central Expenditure Limit would be breached and that this had been approved in principle. The Forum was now required to approve the actual breach.

The actual central expenditure increase is 11.42% compared to the "limit" of 1.92%. The Forum were reminded that they had previously approved all increases in central budgets which have led to this breach.

It was questioned what the implications of this breach would be. It was stated that if School Forum approve the breach there would be no implications. If it wasn't approved then the local authority could apply to the Secretary of State for approval or the central budgets could be reduced.

The Schools Forum approved the breach of the Central Expenditure Limit.

Contingency Provision

It was reported that the agreed DSG contingency provision of £500,000 has increased due mainly to a higher than expected balance brought forward.

The current position regarding use of the contingency is set out below:

	£'000's	£'000's
Contingency provision 2011/12		500
Add:		
Increase in DSG brought forward	560	560
Less:		1,060
Grants to voluntary organisations approved 27/04/11	-26	
Provision for reduced income hard to place pupils from out of city	-100	
		-126
Retained contingency provision		934

It was proposed to retain the above contingency until September when the final DSG allocations will be known.

It was also noted that there was an item later on in the agenda which proposes a use of the contingency.

The Schools Forum agreed to retain the contingency provision.

Pupil Premium

The Pupil Premium funding values for 2012/13 are £600 for Free School Meal and Looked After Children and £250 for Service Children. The total funding for Portsmouth is about £1m more than last years and arrangements for school allocations are being finalised.

It was noted that there would be greater scrutiny of Pupil Premium from September and that schools should report to Governors and the DFE and publish on their website on their use of the Pupil Premium.

The Schools Forum noted the information on Pupil Premium.

6. Funding for Exceptional Additional Pupil Numbers

Di Mitchell presented a paper informing Schools Forum of the current high level of demand for Primary School places across the City and the arrangements that have been put in place to provide the level of pupil places required to meet this demand.

Due to higher than expected numbers of pupils starting year R in September 2012 additional places have been sought in a very short period of time and every child has now been placed.

It was made clear that the increased places listed in paragraph 4.1 of the report had been agreed temporarily for the academic year 2012/13 only. The places listed in paragraph 4.2 were expected to be permanent increases.

Schools Forum were invited to consider whether additional funding should be made available to support schools where they experience significant and sustained increases in pupil numbers following the September intake. Funding cannot be released by reducing in-year allocations to schools experiencing a reduction in pupil numbers. Therefore any such funding would need to come from the DSG contingency.

Concern was raised that if additional funding were agreed then although it may be affordable in year 1 it may not be affordable in future years.

Bev Pennekett confirmed that the new draft regulations include provision to retain contingency funding for schools in financial difficulty.

Schools Forum approved the recommendation in principle but reserved making a decision until various options are seen.

7. Special Educational Needs Provision at the Harbour School for Permanently Excluded Pupils and Placements from ISP

Eric Bell presented a report seeking the support of Schools Forum to open a further Key Stage Two class of 8 pupils in the autumn term. It was also recommended that capacity is increased by 20 places in Key Stage 4 in the autumn term. The cost of this increased capacity for both aspects will be £155,577 in the current financial year.

The Harbour School currently has insufficient capacity to meet the demand and without these additional places pupils would have to be placed out of city at a much higher cost. Dual registered pupils at the Harbour may also have to be returned to their mainstream school.

Eric Bell informed Schools Forum that he was going to have to make changes to the management of places and the Inclusion Support Panel (ISP) help address the pressure on places.

The number of permanently excluded pupils has increased significantly in the last year. It was recognised that in an authority where there is pressure on raising standards that there tended to be an increase in permanent exclusions.

A question was raised on whether there was a group of children at the Harbour School who shouldn't be there. It was felt that there may be a very small group and they were predominately at Key Stage 4.

The Schools Forum approved the recommendation for the Harbour School to open a further Key Stage 2 class of 8 pupils in the Autumn Term, and increase by 20 places at Key Stage 4 in the Autumn Term.

8. School Funding Reform

Bev Pennekett presented a report updating Schools Forum on the progress being made towards implementing changes to our local funding formula which are required as a result of the overall national school funding reform and to seek agreement to the principles for change.

At the last meeting, Schools Forum agreed that a working group should be set up to help inform proposed changes, to include a Head, a Finance officer and a Governor from each phase. Since the changes are quite diverse for different phases, the funding group has been split into two (mainstream and special) in the first instance so as to make best use of people's time. The groups will come together in the autumn term to inform the final recommendations to Schools Forum.

The first task of the working group was to agree a set of principles which will guide and inform our modelling. The principles were attached to the report at appendix 1. It was recommended that Schools Forum review and agree these principles.

Modelling work will continue during the summer and final proposals will be brought back to the next meeting of Schools Forum.

More work is needed on the delegation of the maternity budget and this will be consulted on at the Heads Phase Conferences.

Schools Forum approved the recommendations: (a) to note the progress made so far in implementing the changes, and (b) to agree the overall principles for changes as set out in Appendix 1 of the report as recommended by the funding working group.

9. School Services Team

A report was provided to Schools Forum giving an update on the outcome of the trial transfer of the Schools Services Team to Asset Management Services (AMS) and to confirm the permanent move of the team to AMS.

The role of the critical friend to schools will be undertaken by a nominated Business Partner and/or project lead depending on the nature of the project and the relationship with the school.

A communication has already gone out to schools (Annex 1) introducing the concept of the Education Business Partner and providing contact details of the nominated Interim Education Business Partner (Susan Whitehouse, Head of Design).

Schools Forum noted the report.

10. Use of the Capital Expenditure from Revenue Account (CERA)

A report was provided advising the Schools Forum on how the budget for Capital Expenditure from Revenue Account (CERA) was used in the financial year 2011/12 and the protocol that is being used to allocate funds from this budget in 2012/13 and future years.

It was noted that the DfE has confirmed that CERA is properly attributable to the DSG and that future spend will be restricted to the amount budgeted for 2012/13.

To ensure that funds continue to be allocated in a fair and transparent way, the following protocol for the use of CERA funding is being applied in 2012/13

CERA will be used to address priority health and safety, safeguarding and emergency repairs that fall outside of the norms of reactive maintenance that a school would be expected to fund and are over £5,000 for a Primary and £10,000 for a Secondary School.

Where a project has been undertaken at a school without the prior approval of the Local Authority and as a result has led to unexpected emergency works being required, CERA may be used but the school will be expected to pay back the funding over an agreed period.

Schools Forum noted the report and the basis of the centrally recharged costs.

11. Review of Central Services Recharges

Bev Pennekett presented a report reviewing the Central Service costs recharged to the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The recharges reflect costs “attributable” to the various central DSG spending lines as defined by the Section 251 regulations. These include such things as SEN provision, school admissions functions, central expenditure on education of children under 5, education out of school and support for inclusion.

The recharged sum of £593,300 represents 7% of total central spending of Dedicated Schools Grant. The amount recharged is based on either an estimated time analysis or other appropriate apportionment basis, or has been the subject of specific Schools Forum approval.

Schools Forum noted the report.

12. Funding for Cluster Initiatives

Di Mitchell gave a verbal update on funding for cluster initiatives.

A small amount of funding has been given to each cluster in order to help improve standards and produce an action plan to make a difference to low attaining groups. Marie Heinst is visiting all clusters to help put their plan together. There are no parameters on what the money can be spent on.

The feeling from Schools Forum members was that although the level of funding was small it acted as a trigger to put effective plans in place as it was greatly appreciated.

Schools Forum noted the report.

13. School Milk Administration

Bev Pennekett presented a report consulting Schools Forum on changing the current arrangements for administering the school milk scheme for primary schools.

Cool Milk Ltd (CML) is a national company which currently manages the milk contracts of over 100 of local authorities across the UK. The proposal is to transfer the administration of the contract to this company. There is a range of benefits to schools and the local authority for doing so.

CML is able to provide this service to local authorities as it is able to claim a nationally agreed rate per pint of milk from NMRA and RPA. The purchase price will vary across the country, depending on the local contracts in place, but overall the purchase price is lower than the claim price.

Communication with schools will be necessary to ensure that they are comfortable with the change and confident in the administrator. It is proposed that the administration changes hands either after October half term or in January 2013 to allow adequate time for consultation and to change systems.

The Schools Forum approved the recommendation to pass the administration of the school milk scheme to Cool Milk Ltd.

14. Schools' Balances 31st March 2012

Bev Pennekett introduced a report setting out the schools' revenue and capital balances as at 31 March 2012 detailing overall levels of balances.

Schools' revenue balances at 1 April 2012 totalled £8.6m, including £0.9m of community related balances. Of the £7.7m "curriculum" balances, £4.2m has been committed to specific projects or initiatives, leaving uncommitted balances of £3.5m, or 4.46% of the 2011/12 budget allocation. This is an increase of 1.4% on the equivalent figure for April 2011 and exceeds the

CIPFA guideline of between 2-3% of budget for uncommitted balances.

Two schools had year end deficits on their curriculum accounts although a number of schools were carrying minor deficits on community activities.

Schools' capital balances totalled £2.6m at 1 April 2012. It was reported that as schools' Devolved Formula Capital allocations were reduced by around 80% for 2011/12 and with future funding uncertain, it is possible that schools may wish to apply to the local authority loan scheme if they have priority capital schemes they wish to undertake.

Schools Forum noted the report.

15. Any Other Business

Mark Mitchell gave a formal farewell to Derek Good who is standing down as Governor representative. Derek has been a member of Schools Forum since it began. He also wished au revoir to Bev Pennekett who is taking a two year secondment at DFE.

Schools Forum were reminded of the change to the date of the next meeting which will now take place on 3rd October. The next meeting includes the election of the Chair. Nominations are to be sent to Richard Webb.

The new catering contract has been let to ISS Education for four years with an option to extend for a further three years.

David Jeapes gave his apologies for the next meeting.

Bev Pennekett reminded members of the following vacancies on Schools Forum:

Governors – 3 primary and 1 secondary
Head Teachers – 1 secondary

Dates of Future meetings

(all Wednesdays, 4.30pm – 6.30pm, to be held in the Civic Offices)

3rd October 2012 – Preliminary Budget meeting 2013/14. Elect Chair
(n.b – this replaces the meeting scheduled for the 26th September)
12th December 2012 – Budget update (Leader & S151 Officer invited)
13th February 2013 – Budget setting
24th April 2013 – Central Expenditure Limit
17th July 2013 – Final DSG allocation

***Schools Forum members - please contact Richard Webb
(023 9284 1203) if you would like to add any items to future agendas.***