

CITY OF SUNDERLAND

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2005 AT SUNDERLAND CIVIC CENTRE

The following members of the Forum were present: -

Mrs Y Gray (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Sunderland South) – Chair of Forum
Mr D Ambrose (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mr V Bovill (Non-schools Group – Teaching Associations)
Mr J E Clarke (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mrs S. Collingwood – Early Years & Childcare Partnership
Dr P Collins (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mrs D Elliott (Governor Rep. – Special)
Mr A Falconer (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Mr M. Foster (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)
Mr J Lishman (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Mr J. McKnight (Headteacher Rep. – Special)
Mr K McDermid (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)
Mr C Short (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Mr R Wilkinson (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)

Together with: -

Mr G Blyth – Senior Assistant City Treasurer
Mr J Magog – Former Acting Finance Manager
Mr D May – Finance Manager
Mr J G Robinson – Governor Support Manager
Mrs S Mitchell – Project Development and Business Support
Mr W Slack – Budget Manager - School Support
Mrs G Wall – Head of Strategy & Performance

Richard Wilkinson and David May were welcomed to their first meeting of the Schools Forum.

05/51 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mrs S Carter (Headteacher Rep. – Nursery)
Mrs P Gibson (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mrs J Hobbs (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Hetton/Houghton)
Mrs V Ingleton (Governor Rep. – Nursery)
Dr E Yeates (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)
Councillor P. Smith (Portfolio Holder for Education – Observer)

It was reported that Mr J. Busfield (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Washington) had resigned from his position on the Schools Forum. A replacement would be sought from Washington Primary Headteachers.

Action Points

Replacement
Primary
Headteacher
Rep. needed for
Washington

05/52 Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on: -

15th July 2005

13th September 2005

11th October 2005

20th October 2005

were approved as a true record.

05/53 Matters arising from the minutes

BSF/Academies – It was commented that the situation was changing constantly and there appeared to be no formal information about the final proposals.

05/54 Update on surplus positions of schools authorised to operate with licensed surpluses

A report had been circulated in advance of the meeting which set out the position of each individual school which was operating a licensed surplus.

In the case of Castlegreen School it was reported that there was a change of application for a licensed surplus. Bill Slack explained that the operation of Castle Green School was split-site. The original application was to modernise one campus. However, in the light of the SEN review the role of the school was to change and there was no need to carry out the original plan. The school now wanted to focus on IT as a priority.

Members of the Forum questioned Authority officers about the outcome of the SEN review. Sandra Mitchell responded that the review of SEN provision had examined the role of special schools and the support they gave to mainstream placements. Therefore it was intended to re-band SEN pupils and this would determine financial allocations. Support provided by Castlegreen was desirable rather than essential and it was probable that the school would receive less funding from the Authority for inclusion.

The Chair thanked Bill Slack for producing the comprehensive report to the Forum. Members of the Forum agreed to recommend to the Acting Director of Education that he approve the change of application from Castle Green School.

05/55 Feedback from LMS Review Group

There had been a review of formula factors because of the introduction of TLR payments to teachers and new staffing structures. The Authority was gathering information in respect of 1 F.E., 2 F.E. and 3 F.E. primary schools. It had transpired that it was possible to get some consistency although there

Recommend approval of change in application for operation of licensed surplus from Castle Green School

were exceptions. Consistency was also identified in special and nursery schools but secondary schools were not proving so easy. It was therefore intended to look at secondary schools separately and Sandra indicated that she would be working with secondary representatives on the LMS Review Group to take this forward.

Vince Bovill pointed out that there were problems in the implementation of TLRs and new staffing structures in central services such as BIP, PRU etc. He reported that the necessary consultation had not taken place as required. Mr Bovill raised issues about the level of TLR payments due to staff in these services in view of their responsibilities. He warned that this was likely to have cost implications. Sandra Mitchell replied that work was being undertaken in this area.

The LMS Review Group had considered Single Status but a lack of clarity meant that a decision was taken to leave the formula unchanged. Sandra confirmed that negotiations with unions were ongoing. Members of the Forum stressed that Single Status was having a detrimental impact upon schools and was affecting the recruitment and retention of non-teaching staff. George Blyth indicated that a further ballot of union members was likely to happen in January 2006.

There were a number of questions around utility costs for school meals provision. The group was likely to recommend that allocation be on the basis of 50% depending on the type of facility and the other 50% on pupil numbers. This had been modelled and would be distributed to schools for wider consultation.

With regard to the review of SEN funding, a paper had been produced regarding re-distribution of CAP funding. There had been discussions around the type of pupils educated in CAP units and the Authority intended to re-band these pupils if they were not MLD pupils. The principle behind this was to secure proper funding where appropriate but not to fund empty places. Funding for CAP units was currently based on planned places (approximately £5,000 per place) but some children placed in these units did not have MLD needs. Some needed to be funded significantly higher and the intention was to fund pupils irrespective of whether they were in a Cap unit or in a mainstream placement. This would therefore reflect the provision that was being made in mainstream schools. In special schools an exercise had taken place to re-band pupils considering the levels of support needed. Re-costing the bandings would identify how much funding was directed to special schools for pupils and how much to support inclusion.

Other developments had included a letter received in November regarding personalised learning at key stage three. This had been sent to secondary representatives on the LMS Review

Action Points

Authority to work with secondary reps on LMS Review Group to examine formula in the light of revised staffing structures

Consultation to take place with schools over distribution of school meals utility costs

Group. However, when the allocations had been received it had transpired that it was not just key stage three. There had also been an unexpected allocation in respect of primary funding. Criteria were targeting children who were behind in English and Maths, G&T provision and extended provision, particularly in deprived areas. Because of the time factor, Authority officers would carry out some work on this criterion and send it out to members of the LMS Review Group for consultation.

Sandra highlighted the need to consider funding for repairs and maintenance in PFI schools for malicious damage. This only affected Sandhill View at present. George Blyth replied to the Forum's questions concerning this matter. The principle was that anyone under the control of the school who caused damage was the responsibility of the school and not the contractor. Members discussed the distinction between accidental and malicious damage. They commented that future PFI contracts needed to be very carefully planned. George Blyth confirmed that changes were likely in the light of early PFI projects such as Sandhill View.

05/56 Payment of expenses to Forum members

The Schools Forum had considered its policy on expenses at their meeting on 20th October 2005. The Forum had set a policy in 2003 regarding eligibility of Forum members to claim expenses but, upon examination, it had been found that the policy needed greater clarity.

It was agreed that a revised policy would be prepared by officers and presented to the Forum at its next meeting for further consideration. Gary Robinson had prepared a completely revised policy and this had been circulated in advance. Gary explained that the main points about the revised policy were: -

- It was more comprehensive about what could/could not be claimed for
- The eligibility for compensation for loss of earnings had been removed
- There were tighter limits on the amounts that would be paid
- Attendance allowances could not be paid – only legitimate expenses
- It clarified the payment of supply costs both within the Authority and outside of the LEA
- Specific reference was made to members with special needs, language requirements etc.

Members of the Forum agreed to accept the revised policy with immediate effect.

Claim Forms were available from the Governor Support Team.

Agreed to accept revised Policy on Payment of Expenses to Forum members. Claim Forms available from the Governor Support Team

05/57 Schools Forum website – further consideration

Gill Wall circulated information at the meeting showing possibilities in respect of websites. The tabled information showed the City of Sunderland website and how it linked to other Forums.

If it was decided to proceed with a website, members would need to consider what content should appear on the site.

Gill Wall outlined the costs. Development started at £1,000 but could be up to £8,000 depending on how complex the site was. Once set up the site needed maintenance and the cost of this would be £800 per year. The Governor Support Team were willing to be responsible for updating the site.

Suggestions for possible content included: -

- Frequently asked Questions
- Minutes of Forum meetings
- Blogs – ‘have your say’

It was agreed that there would be further discussion regarding the possibility of a website at the next meeting

Further discussion re. possibility of Forum website at next meeting.

05/58 Section 52 – School Meals Funding

John Lishman had requested this item. He raised a number of questions regarding funding for school meals provision. Mr Lishman understood that there was a form that needed to be completed by schools regarding the cost of meals and he requested figures showing these returns to be presented to the Forum so that members could ensure that the 10p per pupil increase was being spent appropriately.

James Magog would liaise with Mr Lishman to clarify the information that was being sought and to formulate an appropriate response. This would then be circulated to all members.

James Magog to liaise with John Lishman to clarify information that was being sought and to formulate appropriate response which would be circulated to other members of the Forum

05/59 School Funding Settlement 2006/07 and 2007/08

George Blyth gave a presentation. He explained the national position and how it affected Sunderland schools.

- **Formula Grant per Head Increases**
 - England (headline) 3.0%
 - London Boroughs 2.9%
 - Metropolitan Districts 2.4%
 - Shire Counties 2.8%
 - Shire Districts 4.8%
- **Floor Damping – lower limit of Formula Grant Increase**
 - Education/PSS Authorities 2.0%
- **Dedicated Schools Grant**
 - DSG Increase 6.4%
 - Minimum Increase per Pupil 5.0%

He reminded members that the government was moving towards a three-year settlement but the announcement was initially just for a two year period 2006 – 2008. The new system meant a concentration on grants rather than spending needs

George highlighted the four-block grant system. The relative needs block was based on a formula for each service (sum per client including area cost adjustments, levels of deprivation), the relative resources amount (taking account of Council Tax), Central allocation and Floor Damping blocks. Specific Grants included the Dedicated Schools Grant, Concessionary Fares and Social Services Grants.

The changes meant that there were issues for the Council and for schools to address. A significant issue for Tyne & Wear was concessionary fares. The government had announced funding to support free travel for people over sixty and the disabled but the method of distribution meant a funding gap for Tyne & Wear Authorities. This was a significant budget pressure.

Formula Grant per head increases varied with the lowest amount of increase to Metropolitan districts. Floor damping meant that Sunderland would receive only a 2% increase but this did not include the schools element (which was now split off). The DSG was 6.4% nationally.

Floor damping was explained. There had been various options considered about how resources should be directed. The protection arrangements disadvantaged Sunderland. There was also a significant loss in Adult Services (where there was no protection). There was an expectation that Council Tax increases would be within 5% in 2006/07 and in 2007/08.

- **Formula Grant Increase**
- England (Headline) 3.0%
- Sunderland 2.0% (Floor)
- Comparative Indicators
- RPI 2.5%
- CPI 2.3%
- Teachers Pay Award (Sept. 2006) 2.5%
- Schools
- Minimum Funding Guarantee
- Earmarked Funding

Overall, this was described as a poor settlement for the Council. The work that had been done in relation to the 6% Gershon savings would therefore be helpful. This would lead to significant budget reductions in the Council although George stressed that there had not yet been full discussion within the Council.

The school settlement was more positive. The DSG increase at national level of 6.4% plus the minimum funding guarantee was as follows: -

MFG %	2006-07	2007-08
Nursery and Primary	4.0	3.7
Secondary and Special	3.4	3.7
Sixth Forms	3.4	3.7

National earmarked funding within the DSG was described: -

	06-07	07-08
	£m	£m
Personalised learning KS3	120	215
15% by pupils 11-15		
35% by pupils 11-15 x disadvantage		
50% by pupils 11-15 x KS2 attain		
Personalised learning KS2	100	130
15% by pupils 5-10		
35% by pupils 5-10 x disadvantage		
50% by pupils 5-10 x KS2 attain		
Practical learning options 14-16	40	70
100% by pupils 11-15		
Workforce reform PPA in primary	70	-
100% by primary pupils		
Increased early years entitlement	82	-
100% by 3+4 year olds in PVIs		
Converge LAs spending<SFSS	30	30
C25% of gap by LA		

Local earmarked elements were also set out: -

	06-07	07-08
	£m	£m
Personalised learning KS3	0.816	1.446
Personalised learning KS2	0.635	0.816
Practical learning options 14-16	0.241	0.417
Workforce reform PPA in primary	0.378	-
Increased early years entitlement	0.110	-
Converge LAs spending<SFSS	0.176	0.176

It was unlikely that there would be any 'headroom' in 2006/07 because of the factors described. There would be more detail available in the January 2005 consultation.

The modified method of DSG distribution was outlined as: -

05-06 budgeted spend
 +
5% per pupil
 +
headroom distributed by reference
to objective criteria

The Sunderland position was then outlined. The figures reflected falling rolls within the Authority but the percentage increases per pupil were as follows: -

05-06 base	06-07	07-08
£146,524m	£153,235m	£160,639m
% increase on prev year	4.6	4.8
% increase per pupil av	6.6	6.9

The above figures included Personalised Learning and the other elements set out previously. There were questions surrounding key stage one entitlement to this Personalised Learning funding. James Magog would provide clarification.

With regard to the pupil counts, it was confirmed that there would be use of single pupil count for DSG using January numbers. PLASC would therefore form the basis of distribution of the final allocation in April 2006. Because this was a two-year budget cycle, any adjustments would be made in the second year when consultation would take place.

Sixth form funding was outlined. The LSC allocation was still awaited. MFG was applied to sixth forms in both years at the same rate as the remainder of secondary schools.

Specific grants would be subject to some changes. There would be a significant amalgamation of Standards Fund grants (most into School Development Grant) – 3.4% per pupil increase. Matched funding for schools grants would end.

The Leadership Incentive Grant (which only affected secondary schools) would end but there would be new arrangements to succeed LIG. This would continue to support schools in deprived circumstances and would provide £120,000 per school if they had more than 20% pupils eligible for free school meals in January PLASC. If not eligible, damping would apply with the maximum loss of funding being 2% of 05/06 budgets including specific grants. In 2007/08 the threshold would go up to 2.5%. Kevin McDermid felt strongly that representations should be made to the DfES regarding the continued use of free school meals criteria when much more accurate data was available. He believed that the free meals data was a discredited and inappropriate measure and it particularly disadvantaged schools in metropolitan areas. He urged the Council to make representations at the highest level regarding this matter. Gill Wall confirmed that representations had already been made on the overall settlement position but Mr McDermid felt that separate representations needed to be made. Other members of the Schools Forum wholly supported Mr McDermid's proposal and it was agreed that these views would be communicated to the Director of Children's Services.

The draft budget would be presented to the Schools Forum at its January 2006 meeting. The final budget would be presented at the February meeting.

James Magog replied to a question regarding whether the Authority needed to accurately account for expenditure from individual specific grants. James indicated that there would not be separate budget codes but the Authority would need to give some evidence of how grants had been used.

Action Points

James Magog to provide clarification of KS1 entitlement to Personalised Learning resources

Agreed to communicate the Forum's views on the DfES use of FSM criteria to the Director of Children's Services with a request that the Council make representations on the matter

Indicative budget to be presented to Forum at January meeting

Colin Short asked for clarification of funding increases for pupils not educated in schools. He pointed out that the DSG implied that this was funding directly to schools and the Authority block had reduced by 6%. Authority officers indicated that there would need to be some consideration of what could be appropriately charged to the DSG and there would be further discussion with the Forum at a subsequent meeting.

Action Points

Authority Officers to further discuss with the Forum re. what could be appropriately charged to the DSG

05/60

Date and time of next meeting

Meetings of the Forum had already been scheduled as follows: -

- Thursday 26th January 2006
- Thursday 23rd February 2006

All meetings to be held in Committee Room 2, Sunderland Civic Centre at 9.30 a.m.

Signed _____
Mrs Y. Gray
Chair of Schools Forum

Administered on behalf of the Schools Forum by:


**Sunderland
City Council**

Education Governor Support Team