

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON
MONDAY 18th DECEMBER 2006 AT SUNDERLAND CIVIC CENTRE**

The following members of the Forum were present: -

Mrs Y Gray (Headteacher Rep. – Church of England Primary) – Chair of Forum
Mrs S Carter (Headteacher Rep. - Nursery)
Mr D Ambrose (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mr H Brown (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mrs D Butler (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mr J Clarke (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mrs D Elliott (Governor Rep. – Special)
Mr M Foster (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)
Mr M Hartnack (Governor Rep. - Primary)
Mrs A Hodgson (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Sunderland South)
Mr D Litchfield (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)
Mr A McCourt (Headteacher Rep. - Secondary (Roman Catholic))
Mrs M D Mitchell (Non-schools Group – Pupil Referral Unit)
Mr S White (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary (Post 16))
Cllr L Williams (Non-schools Group – Early Years & Childcare Partnership)

Together with: -

Mr D May – Finance Manager
Mr K Moore – Deputy Director of Children’s Services
Mr S Scrafton – Governor Support Team (Clerk to the Forum)
Ms V Thompson – Finance Service
Cllr Mrs P Smith – Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services
Ms B Scanlon (BSF Manager)
Mr T Walsh (Acting Director of Education)

Action Points

06/63 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mrs P Bevan – (Headteacher Rep. – Junior)
Mrs G Danby – Head of Resources
Mr J Hallworth – (Headteacher Rep. –Community Secondary)
Mrs S. Hyland (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary (Foundation))
Mr J McKnight (Headteacher Rep. – Special)

06/64 BSF/Academies Update

Beverley Scanlon and Terry Walsh were welcomed to the meeting and invited to give their presentation.

Beverley gave an update on the current position. It was noted that there had been a great deal of progress since 2004. A quick win would be completed in April 2007.

In 2005 there was a City-wide consultation looking at falling rolls and Academies. Following this consultation in 2006 the LA asked Mike Tomlinson to carry out a review. A working group set up in

2004 had agreed to put forward a unique Sunderland Model. Following the review Mike Tomlinson had agreed that Sunderland should go ahead with this proposal. Government agreement on this proposal was given in June 2006. Negotiations on this process took 18 months and had delayed the progress on the overall BSF programme. It was pointed out that despite these protracted negotiations all parties were signed up to the Sunderland Model. It was made clear that Academies were independent from State Schools, however the model had been developed as part of the overall provision with shared admission arrangements and criteria, shared SEN and Inclusion arrangements, joint planning for 14-19 arrangements. There would be parity with community schools and all academies would operate TUPE arrangements.

Members were given details on wave 1 development. There would be three new Academies built in Sunderland at Hylton Red House, Castle View and Pennywell (an amalgamation with Quarry View Primary School). Washington School would be replaced and three would be 3 rebuild/refurbishments. Two vocational skills centres would be refurbished and built at Pallion and Harraton.

Beverley gave an update on the progress that Sunderland was making. Governance arrangements were in hand and a BSF Academies Project Board had been set up. Mike Foster would be attending this board. Details were given on current Project Management arrangements. There were three Academy Steering Groups who were looking at the vision for teaching and Learning, building arrangements, curriculum and governance.

Arrangements were underway to organise BSF teams. The Education Leadership Board was looking at the strategic direction of Education across Sunderland. This Board would be chaired by Estelle Morris. The Board had met once and the next meeting would be held in February and would look at the diagram of how it all fit together.

Beverley reported gave an update on procurement. It was pointed out that a National Building Framework was being set up with 6/7 building consortia on this framework that would be asked to compete for the bids. ICT provision would be secured separately through a Managed Service. There was a need to work alongside each other. The framework would provide expert advice and was a design and build contract. This would mean that projects would not be starting from scratch.

Simon White raised an issue regarding those companies involved in the consortia their capacity to deliver and the need to build in a financial rescue plan. Beverley did point out that the companies involved were large conglomerates, which would have appropriate arrangements in place.

Dorothy Elliott welcomed the commitment of the LA in working together, however she did point out that actual Governor involvement in any of the working groups/board etc. was nil. She did feel that there should be some governor representation in order that issues could be reported back to schools.

Terry Walsh reported on the governance position for academies. There was a legal process, which needed to be followed, and this began with the setting up of a Trust and then the Trust appointing the governing body. It was anticipated that the expected date for three current schools to cease would be September 2009 with the new

schools becoming operational. Decisions on school governance would take place during the process. It was agreed that there was a need to get governors in place and have a formal meeting. Governance arrangements would bear no resemblance to current arrangements. The LA were aware of the issues that needed to be considered and were trying to get the processes through. The Government had made changes to how sponsors were engaged and these were in guidance. Some questions were raised as to the School Forum fitted into these processes and it was suggested that this would become clearer as processes moved on.

David Litchfield did point out that the DfES model for Academy Steering Groups did not include school representation and sponsors did not have a role in procurement. It was pointed out that Sunderland Project Board arrangements included a co-operation arrangement between the LA and the Lead Sponsor to follow the processes of procurement etc. It was pointed out that the LA had overall responsibility for the process. It was suggested that because of this innovative approach it was possible that Sunderland may achieve earlier release of contract.

Howard Brown did feel that as Sunderland LA was a lead sponsor they should have the ability to place any representatives they wished on Groups/Boards. It was stressed that Sunderland was a co-sponsor and not the lead sponsor on any of the academies.

Some discussion took place on the original decision that the LA would be able to provide two governors on academy governing bodies. Terry did stress that the LA were not at that stage, as yet, until the Trust was set up the governing body could not be established. He stressed that an academy was an independent school and the constitution of the governing body would develop a relationship that had dynamic tensions.

Simon White suggested that Governing Bodies would welcome information on the role of the School Forum and an overview of the mapping process for the next four years. It was important that the School Forum knew what was happening. He did stress that St Robert's Governors did feel that they were out of the loop of what was happening.

Some deliberation took place on the communication process. Governors on the Forum did agree that information received was sporadic and often was out of date. Keith Moore suggested that officers would make every effort to attend individual governing body meetings to provide information. Further information could be provided through the Governing Body Agenda Booklet.

Beverley Scanlon reported on funding. Wave 1 funding for building was 100 million with 12 million for ICT. Simon White raised the matter of funding based on revised numbers. He asked whether there was a constant dialogue on cost increases. Beverley reported that the Outline Business Case would set prices. It was made clear that there was no affordability gap.

Members were given details on the timescales. By March 2007 the Strategic Business Case would be approved. The Outline Business Case including the how the ICT Managed System would be approved. The Academies Funding Agreement would be signed and agreed. By January 2008 the procurement process would need to be in place to go forward with the project. Work would start on Academy sites and

Washington. By September 2009 it was hoped that Washington School would open and the three academies would be on site.

St Robert's would be delivered some time in 2010. The funding for academy schools was exactly the same as for community schools.

Lengthy deliberation took place on the ICT Managed Service. It was noted that an external provider would provide the equipment and the service. There was some concern that schools would lose members of staff, particularly network managers. It was noted that all 17 Secondary schools would be involved and ICT would be franchised out which emphasised that it was important that the group working on this got the process right. It was essential that there was connectivity between all phases.

It was emphasised that the Government was driving the Managed Service and if schools wished to maintain their current systems they would need to demonstrate cost efficiency for their system. Terry Walsh did express his confidence in Headteachers moving this process forward.

Some of the issues that were highlighted were as follows:-

- Getting the communication balance right.
- The need to look at getting a middle balance on the huge pressure on the management of schools.

Howard Brown wished to report that he was disheartened with the LA input on Academies and Managed Services and he did feel that the LA should no longer be involved with the projects, which could affect staffing in schools. Keith Moore fundamentally disagreed with Howard's comments. It was clearly the only way that LA's could now attract funding and should Sunderland even consider such a course of action would disadvantage young people for the foreseeable future.

Terry Walsh concluded that Sunderland had developed a family of schools and broadly half of these schools would be involved in the first phase of BSF. Terry did feel that those people involved in the specification of managed services, Vocational Skills, Teaching and Learning would deliver an excellent programme of rebuilding. He did stress that Sunderland were the only LA that was involved with joint collaboration.

Yvonne Gray thanked Terry and Beverley for their attendance at the meeting. Yvonne concluded by wishing Terry a long and happy retirement.

Terry thanked Yvonne for her kind sentiments and thanked governors and headteachers for the well respected working relationship that he had maintained over the years.