

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON
THURSDAY 24TH MAY 2007 AT SUNDERLAND CIVIC CENTRE**

The following members of the Forum were present: -

Mrs Y Gray (Headteacher Rep. – Church of England Primary) – Chair of Forum
Mr H Brown (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mrs J Brown (Non-schools group – Teaching Associations)
Mr J Clarke (Governor Rep. Secondary)
Mrs S Collingwood (Headteacher Rep. – Infant)
Mrs D Elliott (Governor Rep. - Special)
Mr M Foster (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)
Mrs T Hambleton (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Hetton/Houghton)
Mrs A Hodgson (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Sunderland South)
Ms G McDonough (Non-schools Group – Voluntary sector)
Mr J McKnight (Headteacher Rep. - Special)
Mrs J McLagan (Governor Rep. - Primary)
Mrs M D Mitchell (Non-schools Group – Pupil Referral Unit)
Mr C Short (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Cllr L Williams (Non-schools Group – Early Years & Childcare Partnership)
Mrs S Wright (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Washington)
Dr E. Yeates (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary (Church of England))

Together with: -

Mr P Campbell – Head of Resources
Mr J G Robinson – Governor Support Manager (Clerk to the Forum)
Mrs V Thompson – Principal Finance Officer

07/43 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr D Ambrose (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mrs T Bevan (Headteacher Rep. – Junior)
Mrs D Butler (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mrs S Carter (Headteacher Rep. - Nursery)
Mr J Hallworth (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)
Mr M Hartnack (Governor Rep. - Primary)
Mr D Litchfield (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)
Mrs A Mackay (Headteacher Rep. – Roman Catholic Primary)
Cllr P Smith – Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services
Mrs M Snaith (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Mrs T Stoker (Headteacher Rep. (Community Primary Sunderland North))
Mr S White (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary (Post 16))
Mrs K Wilkinson (Governor Rep. – Nursery)
Mr R Wilkinson (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)

Action Points

07/44 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

07/45 Introduction of Paul Campbell

Members of the Forum began by introducing themselves to Mr Campbell. Mr Campbell explained that he had been working in education for over twenty years although his background was as a Chartered Accountant. Paul informed colleagues that he had worked in the DfES and was instrumental in setting up OFSTED and the Teachers' Pensions Agency. He then worked in the Funding Agency (for GM schools) and was made redundant from this post when GM schools were abolished. He then joined Local Government in 1999 initially in York for one year and then Darlington for seven years. Paul therefore had a lot of experience with schools. He had also been Chair of Governors at a Primary School, which had been judged to be a good school.

Paul had already found that Sunderland was an excellent Authority to work in. He hoped to make a difference and bring about further improvements. Mr Campbell welcomed contact at any time with Headteachers and school governors.

On behalf of the Forum, the Chair welcomed Mr Campbell to Sunderland. She informed him that members of the Forum were committed to their role and acted as a critical friend.

07/46 Minutes of previous meetings held on 22nd March 2007

The minutes were approved as a true record.

07/47 Matters arising from the minutes

School Meals – The Forum's request for information showing whether the number of meals being consumed had increased as a result of the recent consortium initiatives was to be discussed by the Consortium Management Board and David May would report back to the Forum at its next meeting.

SEN amendments – Sally Collingwood asked whether there had been any further consideration of the issues raised at earlier meetings regarding interim or retrospective funding for SEN pupils in Infant pupils in mainstream schools. Val Thompson confirmed that this issue had been discussed at the LMS/LMSS Review Group and that the Forum would receive a report when proposals were formulated by the group.

BSF documentation – The inaccuracy identified by the Forum at its last meeting had been drawn to the attention of relevant officers and subsequently corrected.

Travel Plans – The Chair confirmed that Michael Hartnack had pursued the issues raised in respect of St Robert of Newminster RC School with appropriate officers of the Highways Authority.

Dr Yeates wished to record his gratitude to Cllr P Smith for expediting the road marking near to his school that he had referred to at the last meeting.

David May to report back at next meeting on School Meals Consortium issues

Report on SEN funding to be brought at a later date

Unallocated School Resources – Val Thompson confirmed that unallocated school resources had now been devolved to school budgets according to pupil numbers.

Scheme of Delegation Amendments – Val Thompson advised that the local scheme of delegation did not need to be amended to reflect the national changes. However, the outcome of the current national consultation would need to be taken into account.

Nursery free meals entitlement – Sally Collingwood was continuing to pursue the issues regarding nursery pupils' entitlement/eligibility. A meeting had taken place with Authority officers and it had transpired that DfES guidance did not specify a minimum length of time that a pupil needed to receive education before and after lunch to qualify for free meals. Sally felt this was a step forward if provision was shaped to comply with these rules and any increase in qualification levels would result in improved PLASC figures. Paul Campbell felt that this advice from the DfES needed to be formalised as it had significant implications. He made it clear that the DfES did not provide any more money to Authorities to provide for any increase in free meals consumption. Val Thompson added that there would be potential issue for private and voluntary providers to be reimbursed for any free meals. Mr Campbell was to seek formal clarification on the points raised.

Paul Campbell to seek formal clarification of nursery pupil free meal eligibility and report back

07/48

Minutes of Children's Trust

There had been no further meetings of the Children's Trust.

07/49

Feedback from Standards Fund Monitoring Group

Minutes of the last meeting of the Standards Fund Monitoring Group held on 19th April 2007 had been circulated with agenda papers.

There had been scrutiny of the centrally retained primary and secondary strategy grants.

Among the issues raised, Sue Morgan (School Improvement) had been asked to supply details of which schools had received targeted funding under the Primary National Strategy initiatives. This information would be provided to the next meeting of the SFMG.

The SFMG had also received a presentation from Steve Auster regarding Music Standards Fund.

07/50

Consultation on School, Early Years and 14-16 Funding 2008-11

The Authority had prepared a response to the national consultation on school funding. There had been a good response rate from schools.

Most of the responses mirrored the majority of responses received from the school. There were, however, some exceptions. One of these was in relation to targeting pockets of deprivation. The Authority during the consultation process had initially thought this may be a good idea, however on close examination of the detail it was clarified that Sunderland would have less money for distribution due to the dilution of available funds. Howard Brown asked whether the implications of this had been made clear in the consultation documents. Val Thompson replied that it needed careful studying to

understand the implications of many of the questions being asked by the DfES.

In relation to the Grant for Exceptional Circumstances, the Authority wanted to know what would trigger the funding and which Authorities would meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances. The Authority's response was therefore to ask for more explicit information.

Another question was related to the taking forward changes to the distribution of SDG over the period 2008-11 and the method of transition. Most school responses had indicated that they would prefer the same arrangements as 2007/08. The Authority had noted, however, that this would not take account of changes to pupil numbers and flexibility was necessary. The Forum supported the Authority's view.

The Forum approved the Authority's response to the funding consultation. Members thanked Authority officers for preparing this.

07/51

Update on Children & Young People's Plan

The Forum had received a presentation at their last meeting on the revised CYPP. A further report had been circulated with agenda papers for information. The report was noted. There were no comments.

07/52

Section 52 Child Protection Detail 2006/07

The Schools Forum had considered the Section 52 benchmarking information at its January 2007 meeting. A question had been raised at an earlier meeting regarding Sunderland's expenditure on child protection compared to other Authorities. A report had been produced in response to this and circulated to all members for information in advance of the meeting.

Paul Campbell warned against making direct comparisons between Authorities simply based on spending figures as each Authority shaped its services differently. It was important to consider performance rather than expenditure.

The Forum had previously been supplied with full section 52 benchmarking information. Members asked that the Authority supply them with comparisons against geographically neighbouring Authorities. Mr Campbell confirmed that this was possible to extract these figures but he could not provide details of the context behind the figures for each Local Authority.

Section 52 figures could be viewed at: -
http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/Public/Editable/Themes/childrens-services/schools/finance/s52_education_budget_statement_2006-7.pdf

07/53

Independent Travel Scheme

A report had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting for information. Tony Davey (Principal Finance Officer) was the contact officer for this report and members were advised to contact him with any enquiries.

Forum approved the Authority's proposed response to national funding consultation

Paul Campbell to provide Section 52 figures for N.E. Authorities

Dorothy Elliott pointed out that a Young Persons' Travel Forum already existed in Sunderland. The report related to post-16 independent travel and she suggested that these could link up. Mrs Elliott added that it was important to review the adequacy of provision in the primary and secondary sectors also. Paul Campbell replied that the funding was specifically post-16 but he welcomed the suggestion that this be considered in a wider context.

The report was noted.

07/54

Building Schools for the Future Update

Following the last meeting of the Forum, Mike Foster was asked to take up questions about withdrawal of capital funding with the BSF project management board. Mike confirmed that he had drawn attention to the concerns around the withdrawal of this funding and he had cited the case of St Robert of Newminster RC School as an example of injustice. The project management board had agreed that this was anomalous and agreed to write to the DfES. It was understood, however, that the DfES response was that the protocol would not be changed. The response would be considered formally by the project management board and could then be shared with members of the Schools Forum.

The project management board was looking at how the situation with capital funding could be addressed locally.

In reply to a question, Mr Foster indicated that the Academy Principals were likely to be in post up to five terms before the opening of the new Academies.

07/55

Date and time of next meeting

<u>Schools Forum</u>	<u>SFMG</u>
5th July 2007	21st June 2007
27th September 2007	13th September 2007
29th November 2007	15th November 2007

It was noted that the next meeting of the Schools Forum coincided with the Secondary Headteachers' conference. Members expressed their disappointment at this oversight when planning dates for the Forum meetings.

Items to appear on the agenda for the July meeting would include Applications for Licensed Surplus but members also asked that they be provided with a report on budget deficits

Report on surpluses and deficits to be provided to July 2007 meeting