

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY 26TH JANUARY 2006 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)
 Mrs S Carter (Headteacher Rep. – Nursery)
 Mr J E Clarke (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
 Mrs S. Collingwood – Early Years & Childcare Partnership
 Dr P Collins (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
 Mrs J. Dowson (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Washington)
 Mrs D Elliott (Governor Rep. – Special)
 Mr A Falconer (Governor Rep. – Primary)
 Mr M. Foster (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)
 Mrs P Gibson (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
 Mrs J Hobbs (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Hetton/Houghton)
 Mr J Lishman (Governor Rep. – Primary)
 Mrs A Mackay (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Sunderland North)
 Mr J. McKnight (Headteacher Rep. – Special)
 Mr C Short (Governor Rep. – Primary)
 Mr R Wilkinson (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)
 Dr E Yeates (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)

Together with: -

Mr J Magog – Former Acting Finance Manager
 Mr D May – Finance Manager
 Mrs S Mitchell – Project Development and Business Support
 Dr H Paterson – Director of Children's Services
 Mr J G Robinson – Governor Support Manager
 Mr R Singh - Asst Head of Service Partnership & Service Integration
 Councillor Mrs P. Smith – Portfolio Holder for Education
 Mrs G Wall – Head of Strategy & Performance

Jan Dowson was welcomed to her first meeting of the Schools Forum.

Action Points

06/01 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr V Bovill (Non-schools Group – Teaching Associations)
 Mrs V Ingleton (Governor Rep. – Nursery)

06/02 Funding for Extended Schools

Raj Singh was welcomed to the meeting. He began by explaining how the government was promoting extended schools. By 2008 50% of schools would be extended and all schools would be offering

extended services by 2010. Extended services could include childcare, out of hours provision, family learning and parenting support.

The Authority had taken a strategic approach to delivering extended schools and took a long-term view of how to deliver sustainable provision across the City. Raj referred to a document showing mapping of where services needed to be provided based on identification of where needs existed. The Council had agreed an implementation plan during summer 2005 and this identified clusters of schools which would take forward this vision. It was felt that this was achievable in a three-year period and this formed the basis of the implementation plan. Other partners such as Health, Leisure, Social Services were engaged in delivery.

Reference was made to the national remodelling programme. This was about engaging the community and therefore influencing standards. This represented a culture change with schools at the heart of their communities. The remodelling programme was led by the National Remodelling Team (NRT).

Details of the extended schools team budget were tabled at the meeting. Standards fund grant 15 was split into three key elements. Programme management related to a programme manager and clerical staff. The budget was also to train staff to the necessary level, premises and office costs together with publicity and marketing.

School co-ordination staffing costs included two extended schools co-ordinators, marketing and publicity to make extended provision high on the agenda and web-based information for schools. Raj referred to links with City-wide out of hours programmes, space for sports and arts and other initiatives.

The third aspect to the budget was national remodelling which was a set of nationally approved tools to equip schools to actively engage in the extended services programme.

Raj was questioned about the announcement of a large sum of money nationally, which was intended to be devolved to schools. Raj would clarify this situation.

Raj was also asked to provide clarification of community consultation with national remodelling. He answered that it was a requirement to engage the voluntary and community sectors to undertake this community consultation rather than devolve this money to schools.

Members of the Forum asked that they be supplied with copies of the implementation plan.

Raj was thanked for his presentation and he withdrew from the meeting.

Raj to clarify whether any new funding available to schools

Copy of Extended Schools Implementation Plan to be supplied to all members of the Forum

06/03 Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th December 2005 were approved as a true record.

06/04 **Matters arising from the minutes**

BSF/Academies – Members of the Forum were unclear about the current position and they asked for clarification of progress in this matter. Dr Paterson reported that potential sponsors had been invited to express an interest in becoming joint sponsors and it was expected that expressions of interest would be received quite soon. Mike Tomlinson was talking to schools, pupils and governors about the 'Sunderland model' of academy. He would also meet with officers and members.

The Forum asked whether the DfES had approved the Sunderland model. Dr Paterson answered that the DfES were generally in approval of the model and were supportive. A further report would be taken to Cabinet in March. The Forum recognised that it was a complex programme but asked for an update to be given at their next meeting.

Single Status – Some Headteacher members had attended meetings with their staff in the past few days and it was clear that this was an emotive subject. The Director confirmed that this was a sensitive issue but she stressed to the Forum that some action needed to be taken. Personnel staff were working hard to meet with employees who were affected. There would be a ballot of affected members on 6th February. Headteachers highlighted issues that caused them concern about the single status process. One of the issues for school based staff was the grading of individuals. Headteachers had been asked to grade jobs in isolation and given insufficient time to do this properly. As a result there would be inconsistencies between schools. It was commented that if schools had been consulted in the first place many of the problems could have been avoided. Furthermore, schools were still not being listened to. The Director apologised for this and she confirmed that these messages had been conveyed to the corporate centre.

School meals – James Magog had been asked to investigate the points raised by Mr Lishman at the last meeting. He responded that in response to the request for a summary showing the average cost of School Meals per school, having consulted with Community and Cultural Services, it was felt that, whilst it was possible to provide the information for Consortium schools, the best course of action was to wait until the proposed standards (50p food spend in Primary schools and 60p food spend in Secondary schools) were in place. This was envisaged to be September 2006. The provision of such information would be dependent on all schools, either in or outside the Consortium, agreeing to provide such information and to make it available to the schools forum. A better approach might be to produce a consolidated report, rather than on a school by school basis. However, it should be noted that the proposed standards were flawed in the sense that one provider could provide a similar meal to another provider but due to economies of scale, purchasing power or longer-term contracts might not be spending the same for similar ingredients. James recalled that a report was recently presented to, and approved by, the Schools Forum, which included a proposal to fund the additional food spend to meet the appropriate targets. However, this was budgeted from September 2006.

Mr Lishman referred to the response form that was returned to the Authority by all school kitchens. There was some confusion about this form and James Magog was asked to clarify whether this was used by all schools

Forum to receive update on BSF/Academies at next meeting

The Director felt it important that all schools knew how much it cost to produce a meal in their school, particularly in the light of the 'Jamie Oliver' money. The Director asked that information be gathered and presented to the Forum and to herself.

Personalised Learning – Further to the query raised at the last meeting, James Magog confirmed that, according to all the guidance, entitlement was personalised learning for primary schools covering 5-10 year olds, and therefore covered both Key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Successor to LIG – James Magog confirmed that representations had been made to the DfES concerning the inappropriate use of free meals criteria as an indicator of deprivation. The DfES response was that this was the best available indicator but invited the Authority to investigate other indicators of deprivation. The Forum agreed that this would be discussed at their next meeting.

It was pointed out that the way that benefits were paid in Sunderland meant that schools were disadvantaged. This was clearly not the case in some other Authorities. Headteachers therefore needed to chase potential claimants to try to ensure that the school received its entitlement of free meals based funding. A reflection of the change in the way that benefits were paid was that only three secondary schools in Sunderland would now meet the LIG criteria. The Forum asked that work be done to look into this problem and to ascertain how changes to the Sunderland method of paying benefits could be used more advantageously for schools.

06/05 LMS Review developments

Sandra Mitchell provided a summary of what had been discussed by the LMS Review Group and she circulated examples of the figures that had been under discussion.

Pay grants – The allocation of pay grants was to be 'mainstreamed' although it was not yet known how much would be received by the Authority for distribution to schools. Indicative figures and the impact upon individual schools were tabled at the meeting. Part of the reason for paying this as a grant to individual schools was because of differences between staffing profiles in each school. Arguably it was felt that such distinctions should become less marked with the new staffing structures in schools. It was noted that there would be winners and losers if the system of distribution was changed and the Forum raised the possibility of floors and ceilings to damp the impact upon individual schools. Sandra confirmed that this could be considered. The general consensus of the Forum was that pay grants should be mainstreamed so that they were distributed as part of the LMS formula.

Nursery provision – When the LMS Review Group had considered nursery provision in the past they had agreed that should be a three-year rolling average. In 2006/07 numbers had been reviewed but it was necessary that the Forum agreed that this be exempted from MFG as this was the only way that adjustments could be made.

Action Points

James Magog to clarify response form used by school kitchens and to investigate meals production costs

Forum to discuss indicators of deprivation at next meeting

System for paying benefits in Sunderland to be considered to ascertain why this resulted in fewer free meals claimants. Comparisons to be drawn with other Authorities.

Special needs funding – new level descriptors were to be presented to Headteachers at forthcoming budget briefing sessions. The bands would be applicable to pupils in special and statemented pupils in mainstream schools. There had been some disagreements about the money for new intakes but principles had now been accepted.

Sandra was asked whether the group that discussed these changes had consisted of just special schools. She answered that initially the discussions had been with a group of special school Headteachers but had then been referred to the full LMS Review Group.

There had been a review of CAP units funding in the light of changes. A paper had been shared with Headteachers regarding the effect if monies were released from CAP units. It was explained that some monies were currently used to fund empty places in CAPs. The proposed changes needed the Forum's agreement to exempt this funding from MFG.

Conclusion – The Forum proceeded to discuss the aforementioned points regarding pay grants, nursery provision and special needs funding. Whilst the Forum agreed that pay grants should be mainstreamed, nursery provision should be exempted from MFG and CAP unit provision should be exempted from MFG, it was noted that the Authority would be consulting Headteachers about the proposed changes at forthcoming budget briefings. It was therefore resolved that a final decision on these matters would be taken at the next meeting of the Forum following this consultation.

06/06 Feedback from Standards Fund Monitoring Group

Minutes of the last meeting of SF Monitoring Group had been circulated in advance. The Chair of the Forum reported that there had been a great deal of discussion about holding central budget holders to account for their large underspends. Gill Wall confirmed that the Authority's leadership team would be monitoring closely the spending of these centrally held grants. The Forum stressed the importance of spending these centrally held grants and not leaving it too late in the budget cycle. This was particularly important in view of the frequent criticism of schools for under spending their budget allocations.

At their next meeting, the SF Monitoring Group would be considering whether additional reports were needed to monitor the best quality use of budgets. They would also consider how to handle evaluative reports and identify areas not monitored directly by other groups. Members of the Schools Forum were asked to consider whether the Standards Fund Monitoring Group was the most appropriate body to consider this. It was agreed that Gill Wall would prepare a breakdown of which fund areas needed to be scrutinised (i.e. those areas which did not already have monitoring groups) and this would be presented to a subsequent meeting.

Members of the Standards Fund Monitoring Group had asked that papers be circulated in advance of the meeting instead of being tabled.

05/07 Budget 2006/07 Update

James Magog indicated that the details had not been approved by Cabinet yet so the figures he presented at the meeting were still draft.

Action Points

Forum gave approval for consultation with Headteachers on: -

- Pay grants becoming mainstreamed as part of LMS formula instead of separate grants specific to each school
- Exempting nursery provision from MFG to enable adjustments to be made
- CAP unit funding being exempted from MFG

Forum to take final decision at next meeting.

Gill Wall to prepare report on which funding areas needed scrutiny (i.e. areas not already monitored by specific groups)

James outlined the School Funding Settlement which included DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) and specific grants. Overall Settlement figures included the Schools Block Budget (ISB and Central Spend) and the LEA Block Budget

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Covered Schools Block expenditure (including ISB): -

- National
 - 2006/07 £26.660m (6.4% cash increase)
 - 2007/08 £28.300m (6.0% cash increase)
- Sunderland -2006/07 £153.235m (4.6% cash increase)
- 2007/08 £160.639m (4.8% cash increase)

Minimum funding guarantee was as follows: -

MFG %	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2007-08</u>
Nursery and Primary	4.0	3.7
Secondary and Special	3.4	3.7
Sixth forms	3.4	3.7

DSG – Earmarked Elements

	<u>06/07</u>	<u>07/08</u>
•Personalised Learning KS3	0.816	1.446
•Personalised learning Primary	0.635	0.816
•Practical Learning Options 14-16	0.241	0.417
•Workforce Reform in Primary	0.378	-

All 06/07 figures roll forward into 07/08 Baseline.

With regard to Specific grants, It was explained that Pay Grants were now subsumed into DSG and there was significant amalgamation of schools grants with the end of matched funding for schools grants. There would be new arrangements to succeed LIG which was targeted at most deprived secondary schools (>20% fsm) - £120,000 per school in 06-07 with transitional damping for ineligible former LIG schools (max loss in 06-07 = 2% of 05-06 budgets including specific grants).

Overall settlement figures were

£bn	<u>06-07</u>	<u>07-08</u>
DSG	26.7	28.3
SSG	1.01	1.05
All other grants (approx)	3.0	3.0
Approx total	30.7	32.3

With regard to the Schools Block Budget – ISB, the principles were that it would meet MFG requirements, passport funding for government priorities, provide for pay grants at the 2005/06 Level, fund other relevant charges and provide for Formula Review if possible

The Schools Block Budget - ISB Was summarised as: -

Base Budget	£137,744
MFG Requirement	£2,500
Government Priorities	£2,070
Pay Grants (excluding 6 th Form)	£6,186
LSC 6 th Form Increase	£78
Sandhill View Sensory Unit	£191
Additional Funding from DSG	£1,727
Total Draft Budget 2006/07	£150,496

James referred to the additional budget pressure relating to pensions. There had been an Actuarial Review and the estimated cost was £1.4m (all funding streams). Tyne & Wear Authorities had agreed a change in superannuation and also a lump sum. In view of the difficult budget settlement this would not be directly charged to schools. This was a significant amount of money and the Authority was therefore planning a stepped approach of £0.7m. Overall the employers' contribution equated to 21.7%.

The LEA Block Budget (not funded by DSG) would suffer an increase of just 2% (which was a floor limit). The Authority had provided for 6% reductions.

James Magog was thanked for his presentation.

06/08 Schools Forum website – further consideration

At the last meeting Gill Wall had been asked to obtain details of the popularity of parts of the City of Sunderland website and its links to other Forums. She reported that the least active sites received 100 hits per week and the most active received around 1,000 hits per week. Corporate ICT did not monitor the number of hits as the indicator of quality of information. Instead they looked at the qualitative content. Nevertheless, members of the Forum believed that the number of hits was a practical indicator of the usefulness of a particular site.

If it were decided to establish a Schools Forum website a decision would need to be taken about the content. It was agreed that Yvonne Gray, Pat Gibson and Gary Robinson would meet with a representative of Corporate ICT to discuss this matter.

Yvonne Gray,
Pat Gibson and
Gary Robinson
to meet with
Corporate ICT
re. content of
website.

06/09 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the Forum had already been scheduled for Thursday 23rd February 2006 at 9.30 a.m. in Committee Room 2, Sunderland Civic Centre.

Signed _____

Mrs Y. Gray
Chair of Schools Forum