

MINUTES of the meeting of Herefordshire Schools Forum held at Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 hafod Road, Hereford HR1 1SH on Tuesday 23 February 2010 at 2.00 pm

Present: Mrs JS Powell (Chairman)
Mr NPJ Griffiths (Vice Chairman)

Mr JA Chapman, Mr P Burbidge, Mr N O'Neil, Mr S Woodrow, Rev. D Hyett, Mrs J Cecil, Mr P Box, Mr S Pugh, Mrs J Baker, Mr T Edwards, Mrs S Bailey, Mrs E Christopher, Mr J Docherty, Ms A Pritchard, Mr M Harrisson, Mr A Shaw and Mrs A Jackson

In attendance: Councillors PD Price and WLS Bowen

65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Catlow-Hawkins, Ms T Kneale and Mrs R Lloyd.

66. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

Mrs D Coates substituted for Ms T Kneale.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

7. SCHOOL FUNDING 2010/11.

Mr M Harrisson, Personal, Trades Union representative for secondary schools..

7. SCHOOL FUNDING 2010/11.

Mrs JS Powell, Personal, Trade Union Branch Secretary..

68. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on the 1 February 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

- (i) the words 'current year' in line 7 of paragraph 2 of Minute No.62 be replaced by the figures '2010/11';
- (ii) Resolution (ii) of Minute No.62 be deleted and replaced with the following words:

 'Schools Forum notes the 2010/11 allocations of the proposed spending plan and that a report be submitted to the May Forum meeting detailing 2010/11 proposed allocations';
- (iii) the word ' fee' in line 3 of Minute No. 63 be replaced by the word 'free' and the words 'sub group' be deleted from line 5 in paragraph 2 of that Minute.

69. LATE ITEMS/ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to a question by the Chairman, the Director of Children's Services informed the Forum that to her knowledge, there were no volunteers from Forum Members to participate in the group reviewing Service Level Agreements (SLA). She added that perhaps there was a lack of understanding of what would be required of an SLA group member and that she would ensure that the Assistant Director Planning, Performance and Development would clarify this for Forum members.

The Chairman referred to the Budget Working Group and that it would be helpful that reports from that group included the names of its members. The Schools Finance Manager informed the Forum that he would ensure that membership names would be stated on future Working Group reports. He also advised that the group would be asked to elect a Chairman from the Headteacher members of the group at its next meeting and that it would be envisaged that the Chairman would present Working Group reports to the Forum. In response to a question raised by a member, the Forum was informed how the membership of the budget working group was elected.

The Forum agreed to the Chairman's proposal to take Agenda Item No.9 (Minute No. 71 refers) before Agenda Item No.7 (Minute No. 72 refers).

70. HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY GRANT: PERCENTAGE RETENTION BY LOCAL AUTHORITY TO PURCHASE EDUCATIONAL DIGITAL CONTENT AND HARDWARE FOR ALL SCHOOLS

In response to the Schools Forum request in December 2009, the ICT Advisor presented a report regarding the retention of a proportion of the 2010/11 Harnessing Technology Grant (as permitted under the rules of the grant) for the purchase of digital content and specific hardware at substantial discounts and as part of strategic county-wide, properly supported initiative for schools. He also advised the Forum that the Education City product was primarily for primary schools, early secondary and secondary special needs. He drew members' attention to the table of costings against a sample of schools at paragraph 19 of the report and advised that the figures were for illustration purposes and would be revised when the current pupil census numbers were confirmed.

In response to a member's question, the Assistant Director Improvement and Inclusion advised that the purchase of software licenses was for a two year period thus covering 2011/2012 when there would be no further grant available and also enabling the purchase to be capitalised. Kathy Roberts also noted that any further purchases after that time could be coordinated centrally in order to continue to benefit from bulk purchasing discounts. Mark Sanderson noted that any school which had already made such purchases could add their existing licence fee onto the end of the two year period.

The ICT Advisor informed the Forum that the penultimate paragraph on page 13 should be deleted as it was not a capital cost.

In response to an issue raised by a member, the ICT Advisor informed the Forum that the cost proposal before members would only be possible if all primary schools subscribed to it. The discounts currently available would be significantly less if schools were to purchase individually.

The Schools Finance Manager advised that the savings listed in the table in paragraph 19 were for illustrative purposes only. Final allocations of Harnessing Technology Grant would only be calculated when final pupil numbers were available and that there would also need to be a small adjustment for irrecoverable VAT.

The Chairman suggested and the Forum agreed, that any vote by the Forum should be in accordance with the majority view expressed by the primary school representatives in respect of primary schools and the secondary school representatives in respect of secondary schools.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- (i) **approves the retention of 27% of the Harnessing Technology Grant for primary schools, special schools and Pupil Referral Units (£204,672) for the specific purchases / projects outlined in the report; and**
- (ii) **does not approve a fixed sum of £3,515 per secondary school (i.e. between 10% and 29% depending on school size) for the specific purchases / projects outlined in the report but approves the distribution of this grant to secondary schools budgets for them to decide how the grant will be spent.**

71. REPORT OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP - 22 JANUARY 2010

The Schools Finance Manager presented a report which requested the Forum to consider the recommendations of the Budget Working Group in agreeing a final budget for schools.

The Chairman referred to the recommendations on page 35 of the report and advised members that recommendations a, f, g and h were for consideration and decision and that recommendations b, c, d and e were for consideration at Item 7 on the agenda, Minute No. 72 refers.

The Schools Finance Manager informed the Forum that the agenda and reports of Budget Working Group were attached as an appendix to the report so that all the financial information and analysis would be available to all Forum members.

With regard to an issue raised regarding trades union facilities budget, the Director of Children's Services informed members that with the likelihood of more school redundancies more time will be taken on such issues by the trades union representatives. She informed the Forum that a review of expenditure was being undertaken by Human Resources to develop a new financial control process.

The Schools Finance Manager advised that the School balances claw-back proposals contained a typing error and that the parity Proposal figure of 80 in the penultimate line of the table on page 57 should read 68. Also, that the figure £45,0000 in the penultimate paragraph on page 57 should read £45,000.

The Schools Finance Manager drew members' attention to a further recommendation in paragraph 7 relating to Capital Transfers from Revenue which was an additional recommendation to those referred to on pages 35 and 37 of the report. He advised that currently, schools were able to transfer revenue to capital without limitation. However, the recommendation proposed was the first step to control such transfers.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) **the trade union facilities budget be cash limited at £32,000 for 2010/11 and measures be introduced for improved financial control**

with a report to be submitted to the July Forum meeting detailing these measures;

- (ii) sixth form free school meals be funded from the Learning and Skills Council funding allocated to schools and excluded from the percentage used to calculate all other factors relating to pre-16 pupils;**
- (iii) the changes contained in Proposal B of the Balance claw-back scheme i.e. the minimum amount for the primary schools and high schools be reduced by £5,000 i.e. primary £25,000 and high schools £45,000 for financial year 2010/11;**
- (iv) approves the rates rebates funding to be distributed to schools as follows;**
 - Primary and High schools to receive £46.65 per pupil.**
 - Special schools to receive £208.79 per pupil.**
 - Pupil Referral Units to receive £183.47 per pupil.**

and schools be given the choice of either full payment in 2010/11 or equal payment over the three years 2010/11-2012/13;

- (v) schools should not be able to transfer Revenue funding to Capital unless a Capital scheme has been approved by the local authority on a timely basis, or in the case of VA schools the Locally Controlled Voluntary Aided Programme Committee, and that a report be submitted to the Forum meeting in July to show how this will be implemented and monitored and the Head of Access and Capital Commissioning would be requested to present this at the July Schools Forum meeting.**

72. SCHOOL FUNDING 2010/11

The Schools Finance Manager presented a report with a view to recommending to the Cabinet Member for ICT, Education and Achievement the schools budget for 2010/11. He advised the Forum that he had drawn extensively on the Budget Working Group recommendations in setting out the report and the recommendations referred to on pages 17 and 18 on the agenda.

In response to a member's question, the Schools Finance Manager informed the Forum that in respect of the Single Early Years Funding Formulae for early years settings, the formula was comparable to other authorities in West Midlands and further work would be undertaken to compare the Herefordshire formula with Worcestershire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire early years formulas and the analysis would be brought back to the Forum.

The Schools Finance Manager referred to the table in page 20 regarding pupil numbers and informed the Forum that the figures in the table emphasised that the rate that pupil numbers were falling had slowed down.

The Assistant Director Improvement and Inclusion referred to the Provisional Pupil Referral Units (PRU) figures in Table b on page 21 and informed the Forum that a new

strategy was being prepared for PRUs and this would be reported to the July Forum meeting. The Head of Additional Needs would lead on this development and present to the Forum at the July meeting.

RESOLVED: (i) That the following schools budget for 2010/11 be recommended to the Cabinet Member for ICT, Education and Achievement:

- (a) The existing budget strategy be confirmed as
 - (i) Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of 2.1%;
 - (ii) Headroom distribution of 50% on pupil numbers and 50% social deprivation;
 - (iii) Small Schools Protection remains frozen at 06/07 level;
 - (iv) The continued cash freeze of the PVI nursery budget until parity with Worcestershire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire is achieved;
 - (v) Changes to Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funded budgets to reflect known budget pressures/savings as indicated below;
 - (b) Budget planning be approved on estimated pupil numbers of 22,580;
 - (c) Budget increases be approved as set out in the report
 - (i) Banded Funding £260,000.
 - (ii) Special Schools in year admissions £75,000.
 - (iii) Out County placements £136,000.
 - (iv) Inter-authority recoupment £100,000.
 - (vi) Schools Forum approves these increases in the central expenditure limit to meet these demands;
 - (d) Increases in school budgets in paragraph 9d be noted;
 - (e) School budgets be subject to final adjustments when pupil numbers are confirmed from the January 2010 census and when banded funding allocations from the February panel are known.
- (ii) That the introduction of PRU charges of a fixed £6,500 per excluded pupil in 2010/11 and the £58,500 budget shortfall in 2011/12 be deferred for consideration at the July Forum meeting when the revised PRU strategy is to be considered.

73. SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

The Schools Finance Manager presented a report to approve statutory changes to the Herefordshire Scheme for Financing Schools for 2010/11.

RESOLVED: That the inclusion of paragraphs 2.15, 2.16 and 2.3.1 in the Appendix attached to the report into the Herefordshire Scheme for Financing Schools from April 2010 be approved

74. WORKPLAN

The Forum considered the Forum Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the following items be added or amended with regard to

(i) May 2010 Work Programme

(a) DSG Review – dependent on publication by central government.

**(b) Banded Funding
(From 23 February meeting).**

(ii) July 2010 Work Programme

**(a) Trades Union Facilities Agreement.
(From 23 February meeting).**

**(b) Pupil Referral Unit Strategy and Charges for 2010/11 and budget shortfall.
(From 23 February meeting).**

**(c) Revenue to Capital Transfers – proposed monitoring and control process.
(From 23 February meeting).**

**(d) Dedicated School Grant Outturn.
(From 23 February meeting).**

The meeting ended at 3.58 pm

CHAIRMAN