

MINUTES of the meeting of Herefordshire Schools Forum held at Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford HR1 1SH on Friday 1 October 2010 at 2.00 pm

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

Mr JA Chapman, Mr P Burbidge, Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Mr S Woodrow, Vacancy, Mr S Pugh, Rev. D Hyett, Mrs J Cecil, Mr S Matthews, Ms T Kneale, Vacancy, Mrs J Baker, Vacancy, Mr TE Edwards, Mrs S Bailey, Mrs E Christopher, Mr J Docherty, Ms A Pritchard, Mr M Harrisson, Mr J Godfrey, Mr A Shaw, Mrs A Jackson and Mrs R Lloyd

(Barns, Goodman, Rooke and Sheppard)

In attendance: Councillors PD Price and WLS Bowen

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr P Box and Mr N O'Neil.

18. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were none.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

20. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Mr P Barns, Dr M Goodman, Mrs K Rooke and Mr J Sheppard to their first Schools Forum meeting.

21. MINUTES

It was noted that the first words of Minute number 13 resolution (a) should read "paragraph 11 (b) v", rather than "11 (a) v". An amended version of the draft Minutes had been prepared for signature by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to recording that Mrs J Cecil and Mr J Chapman had been present.

22. LATE ITEMS/ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were none.

23. CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL FUNDING 2011-12 - INTRODUCING A PUPIL PREMIUM

The Schools Finance Manager presented a report inviting the Forum to approve the response to the Department for Education (DfE) school funding consultation paper on the "Introduction of a Pupil Premium and Arrangements for Distributing Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2011-12".

The report set out the questions from the consultation paper together with a draft response. The Schools Finance Manager explained the options outlined in the consultation paper, the rationale for each of the proposed responses and invited comment.

The Forum discussed the responses and supported them as drafted. It was noted that the Interim Director of Children's Services was due to meet the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools shortly and it was requested that the Chairman be authorised to agree any changes to the response that were considered appropriate in the light of any new information arising from that meeting.

RESOLVED: That the proposed response as set out in the report be approved for submission to the Secretary of State for Education, subject to the Chairman being authorised to agree any changes to the response considered appropriate in the light of any new information received.

24. EARLY YEARS FINANCE REPORT

The General Inspector for Early Years presented a report providing the Schools Forum with an overview of the central funding for Early Years in Herefordshire in 2010.

The report proposed a review of the early years finances in January 2011 following guidance from Government on the allocation of Sure Start Grant and statutory requirements for early years provision.

It was noted that all Dedicated Schools Grant spending on early years (except salary costs) in 2008,2009 and 2010 had been offset by an underspend on the Sure Start Grant at the end of each financial year. Clarification was sought and provided on the operation of the Sure Start grant.

The interim Director of Children's Services commented that early years finances would need to be considered in the context of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and any subsequent ministerial announcements. He hoped that it would be possible therefore to report to the Forum in December, although the timescale may well be tight, necessitating a paper being tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the use of early years finances be reviewed in the light of the Comprehensive Spending Review and any other announcements by the Government and their potential implications.

25. EFFICIENCY SAVINGS IN SCHOOLS

The Schools Finance Manager presented a report considering further work to develop options to help Herefordshire schools make efficiency savings according the Department for Education advice set out in "Investing for the future, protecting the front line".

The report stated that in the next few years most schools would need to need to make efficiency savings in order to balance the budget due to predicted reductions in funding. Savings had been suggested by government in the following four areas: procurement (10%), back office costs (10%), energy (5-15%), and collaboration and federation (a global sum of £350m).

The Property Operations Manager commented on the procurement of catering, grounds maintenance and cleaning services. He explained the tendering process and the complications and timescales involved in letting contracts above £134,000, notice of which was required to be placed in the European Journal. He also commented on the use of approved contractors which enabled Property Services to ensure contractors were compliant with legislative requirements, so offering protection to schools.

The majority of schools purchased energy supplies through West Mercia Supplies (WMS). The Property Services Manager reported that he considered WMS's rates, which were monitored by Property Services, to be very competitive. He highlighted that schools could analyse their energy usage via the WMS website.

He also commented on a number of invest to save initiatives such as special light fittings and controls of which Schools could take advantage. Such initiatives would normally generate a saving after a five year period.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- Some concerns were expressed about WMS's billing arrangements. It had been suggested the Managing Director of WMS should be invited to address the Forum. Members of the Forum proposed that he should be invited to one of the scheduled meetings for all Headteachers.
- It was noted that the Wigmore Cluster had achieved an 8-10% saving on procurement on their grounds maintenance contract. However, it was suggested that the sum saved (£2,500) needed to be balanced against the costs of establishing the Wigmore and Bromyard Clusters (£100,000).
- That, on current prices, it was expected that it would take 20 years for a wind turbine to repay the investment in it.
- A member commented on the savings generated through use of the Government Procurement Card. The Schools Finance Manager commented that the intention was to trial the card with high schools to ensure that the scheme operated smoothly and then roll it out to the larger primary schools. Members of the Forum considered that the potential to achieve savings through use of the Card should be taken advantage of at the earliest opportunity and that the Procurement Card should therefore be made available to all schools and settings as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) a task and finish group, the Procurement sub-group, be established to investigate the potential to achieve procurement savings in schools and make recommendations to Schools Forum in mid-2011;**
- (b) progress reports be requested from the Wigmore and Bromyard clusters on the impact of the National Schools Leadership College pilots on school business management;**
- (c) the re-launch of the invest to save scheme be endorsed with a particular focus on energy savings;**
- (d) the Government Procurement Card should be made available to all schools and settings as soon as possible; and**
- (e) the Managing Director of West Mercia Supplies be invited to attend a scheduled meeting of all Headteachers.**

26. BUDGET WORKING GROUP

The Schools Finance Manager presented a report on the recommendations from the Budget Working Group's meeting on 25 October.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) **given the impending work of the Schools Formula Review Group, the Herefordshire schools funding formula is only amended prior to 2013/2014 to include the nationally prescribed formula amendments for the national pupil premium and the mainstreaming individual school grants into Dedicated Schools Grant; and**
- (b) **that further work on the social deprivation funding strategy be deferred pending the outcome of the Department for Education consultation on the National Pupil Premium.**

27. PERFORMANCE OUTCOME AGAINST EARLY YEARS SEN GRANT SPENDS

The Early Years Consultant presented a report on the current position regarding additional funding to pre-school settings for children with significant specific educational needs and requested that the School's Forum continue to provide additional funding for pre-school settings for children with significant special educational needs.

RESOLVED: That in principle the Schools Forum provide additional funding for pre-school settings for children with significant special educational needs at the 2010/11 funding level, provisionally and subject to review as part of the 2011/12 Dedicated Schools Grant settlement.

28. WORK PROGRAMME

The Forum considered its work programme.

It was noted that the Work Programme would be updated in consultation with the Chairman noting in particular the intention to report in December, if possible, on the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and any subsequent ministerial announcements and their implications.

It was acknowledged that the dates of meetings in February and April 2011 would need to be rearranged.

29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Forum noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held at 10.00 am on Friday, 3 December 2010.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm

CHAIRMAN