

**MINUTES of the meeting of Herefordshire Schools Forum held at Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford. HR1 1SH on Tuesday 2 June 2009 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:** Mr NPJ Griffiths (Vice Chairman)

Mr R Thomas, Mr T Edwards, Mr P Whitcombe, Ms T Kneale, Rev. D Hyett, Mr T Knapp, Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Mr J Docherty, Mrs S Bailey, Mrs E Christopher, Mrs A Pritchard, Mr A Shaw, Mrs A Jackson and Mrs R Lloyd

**In attendance:** Councillor PD Price

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

That Mr N Griffiths be nominated and seconded for Chair for this meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That Mr N Griffiths be elected Chairman of the Herefordshire Schools Forum for this meeting only.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

That Mr N Griffiths be nominated and seconded for Vice- Chair.

**RESOLVED:** That Mr N Griffiths be appointed Vice-Chair of Herefordshire Schools Forum for the ensuing year.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Harrisson, Mrs JS Powell and Mrs C Garlic.

**4. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)**

There were no named substitutes.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**6. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**7. LATE ITEMS/ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A Member requested that a further item be added to the agenda regarding music fees. It was agreed that the item be taken at the end of the agenda (Minute No. 11 refers).

**8. HARNESSING GRANT TECHNOLOGY**

The Head of Improvement and Inclusion presented a report regarding the delegation of

£1,224,968 Harnessing Technology Grant for 2009/10. She reminded the Forum that this matter had been considered at the Forum meeting held on the 19 March 2009 and in accordance with the decision of the Forum, the current report set out a model on how the lump sum could be distributed based on school size, paragraph 7 of the report refers. The report also advised on the standard formulae for irrecoverable VAT and the governor's capital contribution in voluntary aided schools. She emphasised that Appendix 1 to the report modelled the funding schools would receive for the base allocation, as set out in paragraph 7 of the report, giving the standards, delivery and expectations of the suggested priority areas. She advised that the original formula proposal identified that the fixed base amount of funding for high schools would reduce to the same amount as primary schools.

A member questioned why an aided school had to find 10% capital contribution plus VAT from governors as referred to in paragraph 8 of the report. The Head of Improvement and Inclusion advised that this was in accordance with national guidance but that she would feed back the member's concern on the issue to Becta.

The School Improvement Advisor informed the Forum that the notes from Becta in Appendix 1 set out how the grant should be used. He emphasised that all High schools now had a very high broadband width. He made reference to On Line Parental Access which would allow parents to check data held by a school in respect of their child and one such example being whether the child was present at the school. Primary schools would need have the On Line facility available to parents by 2012 and details were available to schools on request. He advised that the SIMS team was available to make a presentation to schools on the new facility. The Director of Children's Services informed the Forum that she would ensure that the SIMS presentation issue would be taken forward with The Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads (HASH) and the Primary School Headteachers Association (PSHA).

The Cabinet Member for ICT, Education and Achievement asked what the consequences were if a school had not taken up the grant. The Finance Manager advised that the 200910 grant allocation must be used by August 2010 otherwise the unused grant would need to be returned to the Department of Children Schools and Families.

**RESOLVED: That**

- (a) the devolution of the Harnessing Technology grant as set out in paragraph 7 of the report be approved;**
- (b) the standard formula for irrecoverable VAT and the governors' capital contribution in Voluntary Aided schools be adjusted as set out in the Appendix to the report be approved; and**
- (c) HASH and PSHA be advised to approach SIMS regarding a presentation in respect of On Line Parental Access to reporting systems and information.**

**9. REVISED CONSTITUTION FOR SCHOOLS FORUM**

The Head of Planning and Performance presented a report regarding proposals to revise the Constitution of the Schools Forum. He reminded the Forum that at its meeting in February 2009 it had considered an overview of ways of working for the Forum and its working groups. The intention was to provide a constitution which was clearer with regard to membership, roles of the Forum and its rules and procedures in relation to agendas and reports. The report had taken into account discussions and comments from officers, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Forum. He drew members' attention to Annex 1 which set out the main local authority funding streams relating to schools, the classes of expenditure which may be deducted from an authority's Schools Budget and the Individual School Budget. He informed the Forum that the

text in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report had been taken from the Department of Children, Schools and Families guidance on the roles, consultation, decision making powers and duties of the Forum. He emphasised that the Appendix which set out the proposed revisions to the constitution attempted to give a joint approach with regard to the relationship between schools and the local authority. The membership of the Schools Forum as referred to in paragraph 4 was also in accordance with government guidance and set out the observer status. He advised that members who are elected as Chair and Vice-Chair would extend their term of office as a member by the period of office in those roles. With regard to Managing the Business, paragraph 6.2 refers, the frequency of meetings needed to conduct scheduled Forum business were set out but did not preclude additional meetings should the need arise. It was also proposed to establish a forward plan on an annual basis which would become a standard item on Forum agenda and could be amended appropriately at the wish of the Forum. The proposed constitution also included the various working groups which were available to the Forum to provide on request advice to the Forum.

A member took the view that the proposed revision of the constitution was welcomed.

A member referred to paragraph 4.6 of the revised constitution, and expressed the view that Headteachers should only be represented by Deputy Headteachers. The Director of Children's Services suggested that Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads and the Primary Schools Headteachers Association should debate the issue and present a view back to the Forum.

A member suggested that the constituent groups should be able to re-appoint persons for a further term of office, paragraph 4.3 refers.

A member was of the opinion that induction training should be given to new members. The member suggested that currently, it could take several meetings for a member to become accustomed to the way in which the Forum conducts its business and that subsequently their term of office could almost be at an end.

The Director of Children's Services took the suggestion of induction training for new members on board and advised that new Headteachers and other members should be given all the necessary support in their role as a member of the Forum.

The Early Years representative referred to the proposed reduction in membership from two Early Years members down to one member, and expressed the view that the one member representation would not give the Forum a wide enough representation from Early Years nursery settings and childminders.

The Chairman referred to annex 1 to the report regarding budgets and to the difficulty of the Forum being able to find continual savings currently in the sum of £400,000 per year. The Director of Children's Services informed the Forum that there would be an item on the agenda for the September meeting of the Forum explaining the core elements of the Schools Forum budget, whether they are ring fenced or not, with a view to providing members with useful information when determining budgets.

**RESOLVED: That consideration of the draft revised constitution for the Forum be deferred to enable the constituent bodies who nominate members to be consulted for their views, these views to be reported back to the Forum at its July meeting.**

#### 10. SCHOOLS FORUM WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Forum considered a report which proposed that a work programme be established for the Forum in the form suggested in the appendix attached to the report. It was emphasised that

the programme would set out the necessary business to be considered by the Forum throughout the year and would be included as a standard item at each meeting. It would then be for the Forum to amend the programme as necessary.

The Director of Children's Services stated that the work programme had been suggested as a way of looking forward to future agenda, work and diary planning and followed the lines of similar work programmes currently in use by other groups within the authority. She referred to the July Forum meeting and suggested that two items should only be considered at that meeting. These were School Task Group report on schools finance and a Revised Constitution report.

The Finance Manager requested that an item be placed on the agenda for the September meeting regarding the underspend in Dedicated Schools Grant from 2008/09 and the rebates received from charitable rates relief for schools.

**RESOLVED: That**

**(a) the principle of a work programme together for the Forum together with details of issues for 2009/10 as set out in the appendix to the report be approved; and**

**(b) the following issues be added to the work programme**

- (i) School Task Group Finance report – 7 July 2009 meeting**
- (ii) Revised Constitution – 7 July 2009 meeting**
- (iii) Budget Underspend and Rates Rebates – 29 September 2009 meeting**

**11. SCHOOL MUSIC SERVICES**

A member expressed concern at the increase in charges for the Music Service from £27 to £32 for peripatetic music lessons at a number of high schools particularly when private tutor charges being between £20 and £25 per hour. It was likely, therefore, that schools and parents would engage the private tutors instead of schools thus taking away income from the Music Service which could mean the decline of school peripatetic music lessons. The member had recently received a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which set out the increased charges.

The Head of Improvement and Inclusion informed the Forum that the Schools music service had been the subject of costings, charges and inspection feedback. The service had been operating at a loss since 2002 although the picture was distorted by Standards Fund grant and instrument purchases. The losses had been met through underspend in the past but now would be setting a recovery budget for the future. She stated that the SLA had been sent to schools prematurely and that the SLA should have been issued as part of the SLA booklet. She also stated that she would investigate the matter further.

The Director of Children's Services stated that any service has to be one that schools want and transparency was a factor. In reviewing services some of which had not been reviewed for sometime, the affordability factor also had to be taken into account.

The Head of Improvement and Inclusion informed members to base current arrangements on current funding levels and any new charges on school music SLAs would be effective from April 2010. She would email schools with the timescales in relation to those issues.

**RESOLVED: That in the light of the concerns of the Forum, the Head of Improvement and Inclusion would consider the current charges for high schools peripatetic music lessons having due regard for market value for such lessons and that written**

**clarification on these charges be given to all schools. Also that the Music Service would take into consideration what schools want to add to the menu of activity on offer as part of its improvement and modernisation planning.**

The meeting ended at 3.10 pm

**CHAIRMAN**