

**MINUTES of the meeting of Herefordshire Schools Forum held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 7 December 2009 at 2.00 pm**

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

Mrs S Bailey, Mr P Box, Mrs J Cecil, Mrs E Christopher, Mr J Godfrey, Mr M Harrison, Rev. D Hyett, Mr T Knapp, Ms T Kneale, Mrs R Lloyd, Mrs A Pritchard, Mr S Pugh, Mr A Shaw and Ms S Woodrow.

**In attendance:** Councillors WLS Bowen and PD Price.

**36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Mr J Docherty, Mrs A Jackson and Mrs JS Powell.

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

There were no named substitutes.

**38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Vice Chairman suggested to Members that item nos. 8 to 15 on the agenda (Minute Nos.44 to 51) should be discussed with decisions on those items being made after discussion on whether to fund each item from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) underspend in 2008/09 (Minute No.52 refers).

**RESOLVED:** That

- (i) item Nos. 8, 9,10,11,12,13,14 and 15 on the agenda (Minute Nos. 44 to 51 refer) be discussed with a final decision being made on the funding of those items being made after discussion on the distribution of the DSG Underspend (Minute No.52 refers); and
- (ii) after discussion on the items referred to in (i) above, a separate additional item (Minute No.52 refers) be discussed regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant Underspend.

**40. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That subject to the addition of Mr P Box to those present at the meeting, the Minutes of the meeting held on the 12 October 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice Chairman.

#### **41. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SCHOOLS FORUM CONSTITUTION**

The Assistant Director Planning Performance and Development presented a report on proposals to amend the Schools Forum constitution, particularly representation of primary schools and business managers. The Assistant Director Planning, Performance and Development reminded Forum that as required by Department of Children Schools and Families guidance, representation should reflect the school community of Herefordshire. Different groups voting to elect representatives must bear this in mind when deciding representation and should conform to the constitution.

A Member suggested that should the Forum agree to an additional place being provided for primary schools as referred to in recommendation (b) in the report, the proposal that one headteacher should represent two schools as referred to in recommendation (d) would not be necessary.

Forum discussed the proposal relating to the representation of Business Managers. A member of schools forum suggested that the group of Business Managers should elect their own representative.

**RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum constitution be amended as follows:**

- (i) the number used to determine a small school in terms of membership for Schools Forum be changed from 60 to 105**
- (ii) that an additional membership place be provided for small primary schools; and**
- (iii) a Schools Business Manager, representing all Schools Business Managers, be added to the required membership of the Schools Forum and that the Business Managers Group be requested to nominate the representative from their members.**

#### **42. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS - UPDATE**

The Assistant Director Planning Performance and Development presented a report on the progress in developing Herefordshire's use of service level agreements (SLA) and buy back between schools and Council's services. He emphasised that the SLA booklet was the first stage in rejuvenating SLAs in Herefordshire and was designed to give schools an understanding of services they would be buying. He added that schools would be asked in spring of 2010 which services schools wish to buy back in 2010/11.

In answer to a Member's question, the Assistant Director Planning Performance and Development advised that he was currently discussing the issue regarding notice periods for different services. He was also aware that future developments could involve price advantages for combining choices of services. The Assistant Director, Planning, Performance and Development asked that two or three Headteachers volunteer to work with him to look at when schools should express choices of services during the financial year.

**RESOLVED : That**

- (i) the progress and comments to date as set out in the report with regard to service level agreements be noted, and**

- (ii) **Headteachers volunteer to work with the Assistant Director, Planning, Performance and Development on Herefordshire SLAs and the timetable for expressing choices.**

**43. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT UNDERSPEND (DSG)**

The Finance Manager informed Members that the total DSG underspend amounted to £1,280,408. He advised that this comprised as follows:

	£
DSG underspend on central services	904,690
DSG underspend on the Individual Schools Budget	438,181
Less Rates Rebates for 2008/09	<u>-185,668</u>
	1,157,203
Plus Recovery of School Music Service Deficit	<u>123,205</u>
<b>Total DSG Underspend</b>	<b>1,280,408</b>

The main reasons for the underspend on the central DSG were as follows

Banded funding underspend	£332k
Early years (mainly due to Surestart Grant)	£330k
Savings on Joint Agency Management	£268k

The Director of Children's Services informed the Forum that there was a need to ensure that the underspend was put to use strategically and effectively. She advised that the underspend could be distributed to schools using the current formulae, the Budget Working Group could consider how some or all of the underspend could be utilised, or the Forum could consider using the underspend for each the funding bids as set out on the agenda, Minute Nos. 44 to 51 refers. She emphasised that any use of the underspend was on a one-off basis.

**RESOLVED: That the information be noted.**

The following Minute Nos. 44 to 51 were discussed by the Forum with no decision being made on the items referred to in those Minutes until the item referred to in Minute No. 52 had been considered and a decision made on that item.

**44. PURCHASE OF EDUCATIONAL DIGITAL CONTENT FOR ALL SCHOOLS TO "PRIME" THE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The ICT Advisor presented a report which requested a one-off funding allocation of £354,932 for the purchase of digital content to "prime" the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and to secure best value through county wide purchase for all schools (2 year license). He emphasised that by making a bulk purchase of VLE on a county wide basis, such a purchase would bring considerable savings rather than by schools purchasing individually. He informed the Forum that VLE can integrate with many providers.

The Forum discussed the numbers of schools currently signed up to VLE and the retention of Harnessing Technology Grant.

**RESOLVED: That the funding request to utilise Dedicated Schools Grant underspend to purchase on line digital content be not approved.**

**45. PROPOSED USE OF DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT UNDERSPEND - BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE**

The Assistant Director of Planning, Performance and Development presented a report to which requested the use of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) under spend to enable Herefordshire to make best use of any Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme initiatives and money, to improve educational provision for children and young people in Herefordshire. He emphasised that the amount of work required to prepare the authority to take BSF forward should the Department of Children Schools and Families (DCSF) make an approach was set out in paragraph 3 of the report. Also that paragraph 11 indicated the areas of work needed and that costs were significant. He drew Members' attention to the fact that if the necessary work was not carried out prior to an approach being made by DCSF, this would present a problem in trying to do the work quickly.

The Director of Children's Services informed the Forum that in order to get approval from DCSF to proceed with the BSF programme, funds would be required to carry out the necessary work and that to date, such funds had not been identified.

A number of Members recognised the need to carry out the work, but also the uncertainty regarding the BSF programme nationally. The sums required were significant compared to the uncertainty surrounding the programme.

**RESOLVED: That the funding request to utilise Dedicated Schools Grant underspend to support the Herefordshire Schools development of school provision through the Building Schools for the Future programme be not approved.**

**46. PROPOSED USE OF DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT UNDERSPEND - HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS TASK GROUP (HTSG)**

The Assistant Director of Planning, Performance and Development presented a report which requested the use of Dedicated Schools Grant underspend to enable Herefordshire to support outcomes from the work of the HSTG and to ensure effective and supported communication and consultation events to implement recommendations.

**RESOLVED: That the funding request to commit £50,000 Dedicated Schools Grant underspend to support Herefordshire's implementation of the HSTG recommendations for the financial year 2010/11 be not approved.**

**47. IN-YEAR FAIR ACCESS SUPPORT**

The Assistant Director of Improvement and Inclusion presented a report which requested a one-off funding allocation for the support of children and young people who are placed in secondary schools in emergency situations within the In-Year Fair Access Protocol.

**RESOLVED: That the funding request of £20,000 from Dedicated Schools Grant underspend to enable targeted support to be made available to schools to better meet the needs of vulnerable students when transferring to new high schools as part of the In-Year Fair Access Protocol be not approved.**

**48. ESTABLISHING NURTURE GROUPS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND DEVELOPING AN APPROPRIATE SUPPORT NETWORK**

The Secondary Improvement Manager presented a report which requested

- To fund the implementation of five trial Nurture Groups to be established in five Herefordshire Primary Schools.
- To support the implementation of these five Nurture Groups and to facilitate development, networking and ongoing support for the five groups as well as the recently-established trial group.
- To monitor and assess the applicability of Nurture Groups as a means of meeting Additional Educational Needs in Herefordshire.

The Vice Chairman suggested that the nurture groups could be achieved through schools individually. The Principal Education Psychologist advised that setting up a Nurture Group on an individual school basis had proved difficult, the recent trial at Trinity primary school being the example. He added that by establishing five groups would provide a more effective Nurture Group facility.

**RESOLVED: That the request approve the funding request of £100,000 from Dedicated Schools Grant underspend to facilitate the implementation of Nurture Groups for 2010-11 only be not approved.**

**49. DEVELOPING EARLY INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN AT KS2 IN HEREFORDSHIRE**

The Leader of the School Based Intervention Project presented a report with a view to enabling Herefordshire Local Authority Improvement and Inclusion Service (to emulate the School Based Intervention project currently in Herefordshire High schools) at KS2, to establish School based Intervention in all of the primary schools which have at their heart the development of sound and lasting relationships.

**RESOLVED: That the request for £325,000 from Dedicated Schools Grant underspend to facilitate the development of Intervention strategies with children at KS2 be not approved.**

**50. MUSIC SERVICE FUNDING**

The Head of Herefordshire Music service presented a report which requested a one-off payment from Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to help with the current deficit budget of Herefordshire Music Service.

In answer to questions regarding the cost of the music service to schools, the Head of Herefordshire Music Service reminded the Forum that as a result of concerns raised by schools, the Forum had rescinded a previous decision to increase the hourly rate charged to schools which would have avoided a deficit for the financial year 2009/10.

The Head of Herefordshire Music Service advised members that the service was currently analysing the cost of providing instrumental lessons to schools with a view to determining their financial viability.

**RESOLVED: That request for a one-off funding of £100,000 from the DSG underspend to help with a budget deficit be not approved.**

## **51. DEVELOPING READING RECOVERY IN HEREFORDSHIRE**

The General Inspector Primary Strategy presented a report which requested a one-off funding allocation to enable Herefordshire Children's Services to set up and run a Reading Recovery Training Centre, to be based at Ledbury Primary School, in order for nominated teachers to be trained to deliver this intervention to the lowest attaining 5% Y1 pupils in Herefordshire.

A member referred to data received from the Primary Care Trust which suggested that there was a need for investment in the speech and language therapist area rather than reading recovery. The General Inspector Primary Strategy advised that the Department for Children Schools and Families was fully committed to the Reading Recovery campaign and it was, therefore, for the forum to decide whether to subscribe to it.

**RESOLVED: That the request for £50,000 from Dedicated Schools Grant underspend 2008/09 as one off funding to contribute to the setting up of Reading Recovery Training Centre to enable the delivery of Reading Recovery from September 2010 be not approved.**

**At this point, the meeting adjourned for 15 minutes.**

## **52. DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT UNDERSPEND (DSG)**

The Vice Chairman suggested that the Forum should consider whether the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) underspend should be distributed to all schools on a per pupil basis or that each of the items referred to in the previous Minutes should be considered individually for funding from the DSG underspend.

A Member asked if all the funding requests from DSG underspend could be considered as a whole rather than individually. The Director of Children's Services advised that there was insufficient monies in the DSG underspend to fund the requests as a whole.

The Director of Children's Services advised that all the items before the Forum were valuable work but emphasised that there were also pressures facing schools. Notwithstanding the decision the Forum would be making on the current DSG underspend, with the economic climate and future pressures, she asked the Forum to consider a way forward of how future surplus funds could be dealt with.

Members noted that each item requesting funding from the underspend could be considered individually but that should the Forum decide to allocate the underspend to schools for them to decide how it should be spent, such a decision would effectively mean that the funding requests from the DSG underspend would not be approved.

After further discussion it was suggested that the DSG underspend be allocated to all schools on a per pupil basis with each school to decide on whether to take the money in a lump sum or divided equally over 3 years.

**RESOLVED: That the £1,280,408 DSG underspend in 2008/09 be allocated to all schools on a per pupil basis with each school to decide on the allocation being either**

- (i) Divided equally over 3 years, 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12; or**
- (ii) In a lump sum in 2009/10.**

As a consequence of the above decision, the requests for funding from the DSG underspend, Minute Nos. 44 to 51 refers, were not approved by the Forum and the aforementioned Minutes record this decision accordingly.

### **53. REPORT OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP - 25 SEPTEMBER AND 13 NOVEMBER 2009**

The Finance Manager presented the reports of the Budget Working Group meetings held on 25 September and 13 November 2009.

In taking the Forum through the report, the Finance Manager drew Members' attention to the increased costs in SEN banded Funding which had resulted in the budget being overspent. He emphasised that an analysis of the costs was being undertaken to determine the causes.

A Member referred to instances where some schools were not making the most efficient use of revenue and were transferring revenue to capital.

A Member made reference to the redistribution of Dedicated Schools Grant underspend which would provide more money to schools when some schools were not making effective use of revenue as revenue.

That Finance Manager informed the Forum that the Budget Working Group would be looking at the subject of the transference of revenue into capital.

**RESOLVED: That the Forum**

- (i) Agrees the continuation of the existing budget strategy**
  - a. Minimum Funding Guarantee of 2.1%;**
  - b. Headroom distribution of 50% on pupil numbers and 50% social deprivation;**
  - c. Small Schools Protection remains frozen at 06/07 level;**
- (ii) Approves reductions to the following Central budgets for 2010/11**
  - a. Academies – Individually Assigned Resources £106k;**
  - b. Contingencies £80k;**
  - c. Hereford LEA Swimming Pool £89.5k;**
  - d. Travellers' Children £14k;**

- (iii) Approves budget increases for 2010/11
  - a. Service Level Agreements - £70k to provide for a Governor Services SLA;
  - b. SEN Banded Funding provisionally £260k for Bands 3 & 4;
  - c. Pupil Referral Units provisionally £100k;
- (iv) Approves the continued cash freeze of the PVI nursery budget until parity with Worcestershire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire is achieved;
- (v) Approves the application of a budget abatement for schools with nursery classes in response to revised early years funding formula; and
- (vi) Approves the issue of draft school budgets before the end of term on the basis of the budget assumptions agreed by Forum

**54. FUNDING FOR INCLUSION GROUP - REVISED MODEL FOR DELEGATED BANDS 1 AND 2 FUNDING 2010/11**

The Finance Manager presented a report which requested the Forum to consider changes to the allocation method of delegated Bands 1 and 2 funding for 2010/11.

**RESOLVED:** That the Forum approves changes to the Banded Funding delegation model as follows:

**2010/11**

- (i) The adoption of the “basket of deprivation indicators” to replace the Free School Meals factor;
- (ii) Formula Option B – 75% on the new funding model and 25 % on the adjusted/uplifted 2007/08 actual banded funding;
- (ii) Protection is 50% of the losses between option B and the uplifted/adjusted 07/08 banded funding actuals for primaries only;

**2011/12**

- (iv) Option C – 100% on the new funding model and 25% protection for primaries;

**2012/13**

- (v) 100% of the new funding model with no protection.

**55. SCHOOLS FORUM WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10**

The Forum considered the Forum Work Programme.

The Forum noted that due to the Christmas period providing a very short timescale for the production of reports for the meeting scheduled for 12 January, the Chairman had, therefore, agreed to cancel that meeting.



**RESOLVED:** That the items scheduled for consideration at the 12 January 2010 Forum meeting be transferred for consideration at 1 February 2010 meeting and that the following items be added to the Work Programme:

- (i) **Harnessing Grant Technology –**  
To consider the need for the authority to retain 25 per cent. –  
23 February 2010 meeting.
  
- (ii) **Schools Forum –**  
An information report on what the Forum is set up to do and  
how it should operate – 1 February 2010 meeting

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

**CHAIRMAN**