

MINUTES of the meeting of Herefordshire Schools Forum held at Council Chamber - Brockington on Friday 3 May 2013 at 9.30 am

Present: Mrs D Strutt (Chairman)
Mr NPJ Griffiths (Vice-Chairman)

Mrs S Bailey, Mr P Barns, Mrs L Brazewell, Mrs S Catlow- Hawkins,
Mr J Docherty, Mr T E Edwards, Ms T Kneale, Mr R Leece, Mr C Lewandowski,
Mrs R Lloyd, Mr S Matthews, Mrs J Rees, Mr S Robertson, Mr A Shaw,
Mrs L Townsend, Mrs S Woodrow, Mrs C Woods and Mr K Wright

In attendance: Councillor GJ Powell (Cabinet Member – Education and Infrastructure)

Officers: Mr C Baird, Assistant Director People's Services Commissioning, Mr M Green, Senior Finance Manager, Mr L Knight, Head of Provider Services (Additional Needs) and Mr T Brown – Governance Services.

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr P Burbidge, Mrs J Cecil, Mr J Chapman, Mr K Crawford and Mrs A Jackson.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins to the meeting as the new 14-19 Partnership representative in place of Mr I Peake.

119. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Ms E Stackhouse substituted for Mrs J Cecil.

120. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr S Robertson and Mrs S Woodrow declared interests in relation to agenda item 5: Dedicated Schools Grant Underspend 2011/12 as members of staff at Aylestone Business and Excellence College.

121. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

122. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT UNDERSPEND 2011/12

(Mr S Robertson and Mrs S Woodrow declared interests and did not vote.)

The Forum was asked to consider recommending to the Cabinet Member (Education & Infrastructure) an appropriate level of funding for retention in the provision for potential school deficits arising from sponsored academy conversions.

The Forum had agreed in January 2013 that a provision of £900k be allocated from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) underspend 2011/12 for potential sponsored academies deficits – to be released only with agreement of Schools Forum in future if deficits crystallised, and subject to a further report being made to the Forum on 3 May 2013 in the

expectation that further information would then be available from the Department for Education (DfE).

The Chairman informed the Forum that it was intended to propose that the recommended option in the report should be amended to provide that the retention of a provision to match the deficit at Aylestone Business and Excellence College (Aylestone) should be subject to further review in October 2013.

The Senior Finance Manager (SFM) then presented the report setting out the options identified for treating the £900k provision. These ranged from the retention of the whole £900k, the most risk averse option, to distribution of the whole amount to schools and early years providers. The financial benefit to schools under each option was detailed in the report. The SFM emphasised that the Council considered the risk involved in the distribution of the whole provision to be unacceptable.

The SFM drew attention to the statement in the report that there were no known Department for Education (DfE) plans for either Aylestone or Broadlands Primary School to become a sponsored academy. If, however, the GCSE results at Aylestone were below the floor target this year then the DfE might well review the School's status and begin discussions about a sponsored academy conversion. This had prompted the proposal that the Forum further review the retention of a provision to meet the deficit at Aylestone in October 2013.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was emphasised that the discussion was about the principle of making a provision for potential school deficits arising from sponsored academy conversions.

It was observed that there would be increasing potential for further directed conversions to academies as the floor target for exam results was raised. It was proposed that the Budget Working Group should therefore be asked to consider the implications of future forced conversions to academies and possible approaches.

- It was recognised that the Forum was, in effect, being required to make a risk assessment. The Headteacher of Aylestone was invited to comment and outlined the background to the current position. She explained that there had not been any contact with the DfE about the possibility of conversion to a sponsored academy for some months and the school itself had no plans to follow that route. However, as the report noted there was a risk.

It was questioned whether the DfE would in reality insist upon the authority clawing back funds from schools given the public opprobrium this would be likely to generate, especially if there were to be an increasing number of forced conversions across the Country. The Assistant Director informed the Forum that officers had to proceed on the basis of the statements made to the authority by the DfE, which were as set out in the report.

The SFM confirmed that, if it was agreed to revisit the need to retain a provision for Aylestone in October, information would be sought from other authorities on how they were dealing with the matter.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) the Cabinet Member for Education & Infrastructure is recommended to approve Option 4 – the Matched Retention for Aylestone only so that**
- i. a provision of £485,000 is retained for a potential deficit**

arising from sponsored academy conversion, subject to review in October 2013;

- ii. a distribution to mainstream schools, including academies of £371,840 is made on a per pupil basis;
- iii. a distribution to special schools of £20,750 is made on a commissioned place basis;
- iv. a distribution to Pupil Referral Units of £4,150 is made on a commissioned place basis;
- v. a distribution to early years providers of £18,260 is made on the number of pupils recorded by the January 2013 Early Years census; and

- (b) the Budget Working Group be asked to consider the implications of future forced conversions to academies and possible approaches.

123. MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

The Forum reviewed the membership of the Schools Forum and the Budget Working Group.

The report noted that, consistent with Department for Education guidance, the Forum had agreed to keep its membership under annual review to provide flexibility to ensure that broad proportionality of primary schools, secondary schools and academies was maintained. The current composition was not strictly proportionate but it was suggested that the Forum had the discretion to continue with its current membership if the relevant appointing groups were content.

No change to the membership of the Budget Working Group needed to be considered.

RESOLVED:

- That
- (a) subject to the agreement of Herefordshire Association of Secondary Head Teachers and the Herefordshire Association of Governors the current membership of the Forum continues; and
 - (b) it be noted that no amendment to the membership of the Budget Working Group is required.

124. MEETING DATES

Noted.

The meeting ended at 10.10 am

CHAIRMAN