

Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 13 March 2007 at 4.00 pm at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall, Walsall

Present

Mr. A.F. Cheminais (Chairman)

Mr. J. Baker

Mr. M. Barton

Miss S.M. Bradford

Mr. G. Crowther

Mr. A. Davies

Mr. E. Gee

Mr. F. Hodgkinson

Mrs. E. Maher

Ms. E. Stringer

In Attendance:

- Mr G McQueen (Education Walsall)
- Ms D Morris (Education Walsall)
- Ms. C. Mergen (Education Walsall)
- Ms. E. McPherson-Jones (Education Walsall)
- Mr. C. Holliday – Head of Leisure and Culture
(Walsall Council)
- Ms. M. Harmitt – Interim Head of Finance for Children
and Young People (Walsall Council)
- Mr. S. Starrs – Senior Accountant, Finance
(Walsall Council)

		Action
1. 13. 3.07	Apologies: Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Zahid Ali, Ms. C. Green, Mr. P. Heath, Mr. S. Holtam, Mr. G. Deakin and Mr. N. Chomyk (Chair)	
2. 13. 3.07	Minutes: 23 January 2007	Minutes approved as a correct record, subject to inclusion of Mr. F. Hodgkinson in the list of attendees for that meeting and subject

		to the replacement of these words “Joseph Leckie Community Technology College” in Item 9(ii) with the words “a Walsall Secondary School”.
2.1 13. 3.07	Delegation of funds for school meals	On agenda at item 5
2.2 13. 3.07	Deprivation Funding – Child Poverty Fair Funding for Schools	On agenda at item 4
2.3 13. 3.07	Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS): George McQueen reported that four passes and one narrow fail had been achieved.	
2.4 13. 3.07	Further Delegations to Schools: Additionally Resourced Unit for pupils with Sensory Impairments: Connie Mergen, Strategic Leader SEN and Beth McPherson-Jones, Director of Learning, were in attendance for this item. Dawn Morris provided a summary of ARU provision on a school by school basis on a computer slide. Beth McPherson-Jones explained that any underspend would be ring fenced and offset against next year’s provision. With regard to specialised learning, there were issues around filling places for two reasons. Firstly, by the time children had been identified, approaching Year 5, the	

	<p>parents did not want them to move in Year 5 and again in Year 7. There were currently 171 children identified and the resource was going out to those children rather than the children going to the resource. On average, the service was supporting 15 children. There was a communications needs resource and there was considerable pressure on those resources for autistic children/challenging behaviour and also children with speech/language needs.</p> <p>The possibility of increasing the numbers with effect from September 2007 had been looked at, as had the possibility of increasing the communications needs resource to provide for about nine children. This effectively would mean that about three children would benefit.</p> <p>There was a rigorous monitoring framework and there were vacant places. Not all ARUs were full, it was felt that about 26 children were being supported.</p> <p>She went on to say that they wanted to develop an outreach facility if there was an underused resource, a pilot scheme was being implemented and Special Schools would come on board.</p> <p>Resource provision came out of SEN and the service was signed up to the consultation document. The service wanted to have a medium and long term view, but all resource provision was on an SLA for three years (expiring 2008). The service also wanted to look at what the trends were. A review of resource provision would be undertaken when</p>	
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	<p>trends would be identified. It was anticipated that this would be completed before the end of the Autumn term. The results and findings would be brought to the Forum at the appropriate time.</p> <p>The Chairman pointed out that provision was available for about one tenth of the children identified. The service wanted to build pools of expertise that don't exist at present. There needed to be core provision but this would be difficult to maintain. He added that the most pro-active people in terms of turning resources into outreach resources were Head Teachers. He asked that all Forum members be supplied with a copy of the slide and made the point that there was now a need to revisit the report previously submitted to the Forum. He asked that this issue be put on the Forward Plan for consideration at the meeting in June 2007.</p> <p>Beth McPherson-Jones asked that when all Forum members received a copy of the slide, if they had any questions, they should e-mail her or Connie Mergen direct.</p>	<p>George McQueen/Clerk to arrange</p> <p>Clerk to amend Forward Plan</p>
<p>5. 13. 3.07</p>	<p>Delegation of Funds for Schools Meals:</p> <p>Chris Holliday, head of Leisure and Culture, Walsall Council, was in attendance for this item.</p> <p>He explained that a review of the Catering Service was being undertaken. He had met with George and had outlined the position. Jamie Morris would be taking a report to Cabinet on 21st March. He went on to say that, prior</p>	

	<p>to the Jamie Oliver campaign, there had been a drop in the number of school meals provided. The situation had now stabilised and the service was getting the issue across that parents should buy better meals for their children through the school. The onus would be on the Head Teacher to check on lunch boxes to ensure this was being done.</p> <p>He went on to say that the issue of a review of cash collection had been looked at and the service was undertaking fewer cash collections and the frequency had reduced.</p> <p>Terms of conditions of staff had also been looked at in relation to new appointments rather than existing staff. Prices had been looked at (an increase from £1.65 to £1.75) and after consultation with other authorities, it had been established that a 10p increase would equate to a 10% reduction in provision.</p> <p>The service was being re-organised to include a marketing function and there would be a joined up message across the Authority so that it fitted in with other local authorities.</p> <p>The provision per meal had also been looked at. The Government recommendation was 50p and the Authority was currently spending 60p per meal. The staff view was that the Government figures were incorrect and that food costs were escalating. On the marketing side, the intention was to introduce reward schemes that were linked to leisure centres. It was hoped that with this review, it would remove Walsall from the bottom 10% of physical activity.</p>	
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	<p>The service operated currently on a deficit of approximately £320k and could not afford to continue on this basis.</p> <p>The possibility of introducing SLAs with schools was being considered to provide clarity of what was being provided.</p> <p>Kitchens had also been looked at and the point was made that Edgar Stammers School would be undertaking their own catering and there was a need to look at what happens to the kitchen equipment provided by the Authority. On the question of refurbishment of halls/kitchens, the Authority would not spend money on projects it did not wish to pursue.</p> <p>In conclusion, he suggested that one representative from secondary schools, primary schools and special schools should meet with him, George McQueen and Kathryn Waite (Area Manager – PSE, Walsall Council) to look at the situation and try to resolve the problem.</p> <p>The point was made that any representative should be approved by the relevant Forum. The point was also made that there was already a Committee dealing with this which some members of the Schools Forum were attending (the Jamie Oliver Group). It was suggested that this other Committee could be utilised. Reference was made to the Edgar Stammers situation and the insurance situation if other schools decided to “opt out”. Mr. Holliday indicated that he would need to examine the normal insurance policy should this occur.</p>	
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	<p>He went on to say that the service was provided to about 95 schools at present, he was awaiting information regarding primary schools, but he estimated that the service was losing about £450k. Mr. McQueen pointed out that the issue in question was delegation. Mr. Holliday was asking for help in sustaining the service and possibly putting it into profit. Dawn Morris made the point that the only issue delegated was free school meals. The delegation of all school meals was not an issue.</p> <p>Mr. Holliday advised that, to break even, the Authority would have to charge in the region of £2 per meal. The current free school meal cost £1.37.</p> <p>The question was raised as to what happens to the money for those meals taken up as opposed to those eaten. In reply, Mr. Holliday pointed out that the money for free school meals was insufficient. Melanie Harmitt endorsed Mr. Holliday's view and indicated that the money for meals going into schools went straight back out. By way of clarification, Dawn Morris indicated that the funding was based on take-up rather than eligibility.</p> <p>In bringing the debate to a close, Mr. McQueen reminded the Forum that Mr. Holliday had originally attended the Forum in October 2006 when the question of a delegation change was considered in 2007/08. It was now too late for that, but there was a need between now and 2008 to consider whether school meals should be delegated.</p>	
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	<p>Dawn Morris made the point that free school meals was already delegated, but there was a need to look at the way the delegation was being operated and to look at data on a yearly basis.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Jamie Oliver Group should discuss this issue further.</p> <p>Item to remain on Forward Plan.</p>	<p>George McQueen/Dawn Morris to action</p> <p>Clerk to action</p>
<p>4. 13. 3.07</p>	<p>Deprivation Funding:</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>The Chairman outlined work already done on this issue and explained how the work was done. Various ways of defining and refining the work had been looked at and the Working Group had come up with a combination of deprivation and free school meals. The correlation between IDACI and other factors such as ethnicity, had also been considered, but the Group had returned to free school meals and a formula had been produced to get an accurate correlation by combining IDACI and free school meals. He added that there would be a shortfall of £7 million. At the next meeting of the Group it was proposed that representatives from schools who have a high level of success would be invited in the hope of their assistance identifying how the funding should be divided.</p> <p>The point was made that IDACI was updated every three years (the last update being in 2004) and free school meals was updated annually on PLASC and that the Authority</p>	

	<p>had set a benchmark by identifying where in Walsall the deprivation was. The demographic impact has also been looked at.</p> <p>The Forum commended the work of the Group and noted the work in progress.</p>	<p>Await recommendations of Working Group</p> <p>Issue to remain on Forward Plan – Clerk to action.</p>
<p>6. 13. 3.07</p>	<p>Staff Side Associations: Request for representation on Schools Forum:</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Sue Bradford declared an interest in this item in her capacity as the Chair of one of the Unions and indicated that she had a place on the JNC.</p> <p>Mr. Malcolm Barton expressed the view that the Forum Constitution could only be amended at the AGM of the Forum. The Clerk indicated that, as far as he was aware, there was nothing in the Forum Constitution to prevent the Constitution being amended with immediate effect and also that the Forum was not required to have an Annual General Meeting. He would, however, check the Constitution and report back to the next meeting.</p> <p>It was resolved that, subject to confirmation that it is constitutionally correct, approval be given to amend the Forum Constitution with immediate effect to extend the non-school place on the Forum to be appointed by the JNC.</p>	<p>George McQueen/Clerk to action</p>

<p>7. 13. 3.07</p>	<p>Budget 2007/08:</p> <p>It was reported that the gap of £1.5 million had now closed, but there was still the possibility of a small shortfall.</p> <p>The Chairman referred to a breakdown in electronic communications the previous week which prevented all schools from receiving any electronic information. He asked that, if there were any problems in the future, all schools should be notified in some way.</p> <p>In reply, Mr. McQueen advised that the problems occurred due to a fire. A letter of apology from the providers would be circulated to all Head Teachers.</p>	<p>George McQueen</p>
<p>8. 13. 3.07</p>	<p>Dates for Future Meetings:</p> <p>A report was circulated. It was resolved that the timetable of meetings for the Forum for the year be approved as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday, 12 June 2007, at 4 p.m. (Summer) • Tuesday, 9 October, 2007, at 6 p.m. (Autumn) • Tuesday, 4 December, 2007, at 4 p.m. (Autumn) • Tuesday, 22 January 2008, at 6 p.m. (Spring) • Tuesday, 11 March, 2008, at 4 p.m. (Spring) 	

	<p>It was also resolved that, in the event of additional meetings proving necessary, provisional dates be agreed as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday, 11 September 2007 at 6.p.m. • Tuesday, 13 November 2007 at 6 p.m. <p>All meetings to be held at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall</p>	Clerk to action
9. 13. 3.07	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>A copy of the Forward Plan was submitted.</p> <p>It was resolved that the Forward Plan be received and noted and that the following item be added:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further delegations to schools: Additionally Resourced Unit for Pupils with Sensory Impairments (12.6.07) 	Clerk to update Forward Plan for submission to next meeting
10. 13. 3.07	<p>Next Meeting:</p> <p>It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be at 4 p.m. Tuesday, 12 June 2007, in the Small Hall at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall</p>	
	The meeting terminated at 5.36 p.m.	