

Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on 23 January 2007 at 6.00 pm at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall, Walsall

Present Mr N Chomyk (Chairman)
 Mr J Baker
 Mr M Barton
 Miss S M Bradford
 Mr J P Clarke
 Mr G Crowther
 Mr G Deakin
 Mr S Holtam
 Ms H Lomas
 Mr M Sweeney
 Mr R Yeomans

In Attendance: Mr G McQueen (Education Walsall)
 Ms D Morris (Education Walsall)
 Mr S Read (Education Walsall)

		Action
1. 23-01-07	Apologies Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Zahid Ali, Mrs R Poyser, Ms C Green, Mr A Bowater, Mr A F Cheminai, Mr A Davies, Mr S Haywood and Mrs E Maher	
2. 23-01-07	Minutes – 5 December 2006	Minutes approved as a correct record.
2.1 23-01-07	Receipt of Papers	Postal address and e-mail address for Mrs Letts checked and Mrs Letts supplied with necessary papers.
2.2 23-01-07	Budget 2006-07 – Extended Schools Funding	On agenda at item 7

2.3 23-01-07	Delegation of funds for schools meals	Clerk to invite Mr C Holliday to next meeting of Forum to update on this issue.
2.4 23-01-07	Deprivation Funding – Child Poverty Fair Funding for schools	Working Group to be held at Beverley Hotel on Friday 26 January 2007 at 8.15 am. Awaiting recommendation for Working Group
2.5 23-01-07	Section 52 Table 4 Data for 2006/07	Revised Table 4 re-issued.
2.6 23-01-07	Analysis of School Balances at the end of the 2005/06	Report not yet listed for Cabinet. With David Brown, Executive Director, at present
2.7 23.01.07	<p>Election of School Governor Representative on Schools Forum</p> <p>Only one expression of interest received from Councillor C Ault. Advised initially that Councillor Ault's nomination would need to be endorsed by Primary Forum. Subsequently realised this advice was incorrect and that election of governor representative must be undertaken by way of a ballot of all governors. George McQueen/Clerk to arrange.</p>	
3. 23-01-07	<p>Matters arising from the minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Digital Infra-Structure for Schools <p>Stephen Read in attendance for this item. Indicated that this was a one-off fund from the DFES and it had four key aims:-</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved use of data - To unify systems - To reduce the burden on schools - Coherent technology <p>The amount of grant was £177,636 The individual projects for consideration were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remote backup - Aggregated Procurement - FiTS - Primary FiTS - Collaborative data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMSiS, inclusion of nursery schools <p>George McQueen reported very little response, only one school wanted to transfer from Tranche 2 to Tranche 1. It was noted that Early Years were not represented at the meeting but there was a need to make a recommendation to take this issue forward.</p> <p>Concern was expressed about the workload for individual schools. It was pointed out that nursery schools would be in Tranche 3, although it was not mandatory for nursery schools to be included.</p> <p>Mr Yeomans asked for an assurance that any small schools in need of additional support in the lead in to this would be offered the necessary support. Mr McQueen confirmed that resources would be available but he could not give an assurance that they would be provided free of charge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deprivation Working Group 	<p>Agree project proposals as per the report.</p> <p>Agree to include nursery schools in Tranche 3.</p> <p>Agree to this item remaining on Forward Plan until Working Group produces recommendations.</p>
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<p>4. 23-01-07</p>	<p>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</p> <p>The Forum was advised that there were no, items for consideration in the private session.</p>	
<p>5. 23-01-07</p>	<p>Remit and Responsibilities of the Schools Forum</p> <p>A report was submitted</p> <p>Reference was made to the Contract and the point was made that, should there be a penalty or a bonus in terms of targets, these would previously have been put back into the Borough. The question was raised as to who would make this decision.</p> <p>Mr McQueen stated that this would depend on the Contract. It was not part of the funding mechanism and the Forum would have no influence on this. The Chairman made the point that penalties would not be imposed as they were not legally enforceable although a sum could be set aside to be payable or not payable, dependent on whether targets were achieved.</p> <p>The point was made that the Forum would have further powers with effect from April 2007. At a recent conference concern was expressed regarding that impact on an already busy workload for Forum members and it was suggested that training for Forum members should be revisited in April.</p> <p>Reference was made to the issue of claw back and whether the Forum would have a role. Mr McQueen indicated that the claw back would go back into DSG. The Forum</p>	<p>Clerk to include in Forward Plan for meeting in March 2007.</p>

	<p>would have a role in this in deciding whether the central expenditure limit is exceeded.</p> <p>Dawn Morris indicated that a Funding Conference would be held in April. One of the issues for consideration was the remit of the Schools Forum. These issues would be revisited then.</p>	Report noted.
	At this junction it was pointed out that Barbara Leese, Nursery Head Teacher had resigned.	Clerk to amend membership of Forum accordingly.
6. 23-01-07	<p>Updating School Budgets for 2007</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mr McQueen indicated that the number of pupils appeared to be falling more quickly than anticipated and that this would have an effect on the centrally retained element. The £1.15m reduction in DSG would be borne by ISB and centrally retained elements. If pupil numbers were falling, the money put into schools would fall.</p>	Noted that a further report will be brought to the Forum when all PLASC returns are available.
7. 23-01-07	<p>Funding for Extended Schools</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>The point was made that not all schools were aware of the clusters they were in.</p>	Report noted and a list of clusters be circulated to all Forum members. Mr McQueen to arrange.
8. 23-01-07	<p>Changes to the Financial Guidelines for schools – Bank Imprest Accounts</p> <p>A revised report was submitted.</p>	Report noted.

<p>9. (i) 23-01-07</p>	<p>New Delegations from April 2008 – Maternity Leave</p> <p>A report was submitted</p>	<p>Agreed to consult the Primary and Secondary Forums and report to next meeting of Schools Forum in March.</p>
<p>9. (ii)</p>	<p>Further Delegations to Schools: Additionally Resourced Unit for pupils with Sensory Impairments.</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>It was suggested that, should there be Headroom in the budget, schools should be asked to look favourably on establishing and funding this unit for seven months. The point was made that although the report had identified the location of the proposed ARU to be Joseph Leckie Community Technology College, no decision on location had actually been taken.</p> <p>The Forum was of the view that rather than allocating Headroom to this project, consideration should be given to all items for Headroom for 2007/08. There should also be an audit of the use of ARUs to ensure that all places were taken up.</p> <p>Mr Yeomans made the point that this could undermine the provision in special schools. In reply, Dawn Morris indicated that she had met to discuss Table A – Special Needs and schools had been asked to indicate an account of how funding had been used.</p> <p>The view was expressed that it would be appropriate for this issue to be brought back to the Forum or to a focus group.</p>	

	<p>With regard to how funding should be used, Mr Yeoman suggested that there should be rigorous accounting to ensure funding was spent correctly. Dawn Morris indicated that this would happen and there would be feedback by the summer</p>	<p>Report noted. Issue of Headroom to be included on Forward Plan for report to Forum at March meeting.</p>
<p>10. 23-01-07</p>	<p>School Specific Contingences</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mr McQueen outlined the report and in doing so, indicated that he was not aware of any other similar incidents.</p> <p>The view was expressed that the process was flawed and that Education Walsall should accept liability for the mistake. In reply Mr McQueen indicated that the Forum needed to decide whether to fund this from School Specific Contingencies. The Forum was advised that there was sufficient funding in the budget to accommodate this.</p>	<p>Approve payment of £14,000 to Woodlands School with the proviso that similar errors do not occur in the future and that Education Walsall be invited to consider reimbursing the Education Budget.</p>
<p>11. 23-01-07</p>	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>A copy of the Forward Plan was submitted.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Forward Plan be received and noted and that the following items, be added:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical Learning (13-03-07) • Extension of role of Schools Forum training (13-03-07) • Personalised Learning 	<p>Clerk to update Forward Plan for submission to next meeting.</p>

	<p>Next meeting</p> <p>It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be at 4.00 pm on Tuesday 13 March 2007 in the small hall at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall.</p>	<p>Clerk to provide a list of dates of future meetings to next meeting.</p>
	<p>The meeting terminated at 7.40 pm.</p>	