

## Schools Forum

**Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2007 at 4.00 p.m.  
at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall, Walsall**

**Present:** Mr. N. Chomyk (Chairman)  
Mr. J. Baker  
Mr. J.P. Clarke  
Mr. G. Crowther  
Mr. A. Davies  
Mr. E. Gee  
Mr. F. Hodgkinson  
Ms. H. Lomas  
Mrs. R. Poyser  
Ms. E. Stringer  
Mr. M. Sweeney

**In Attendance:** Ms. A. Walton (Education Walsall)  
Ms. D. Morris (Education Walsall)  
Mr. C. Holliday, Walsall Council

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1. 4.12.07</b>	<b>Appointment of Vice-Chairman</b>  Appointment of Vice-Chairman deferred to next meeting.	Clerk to action.
<b>2. 4.12.07</b>	<b>Apologies</b>  Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. M. Barton, Ms. S. Bradford, Mr. A. Davies, Mr. S. Haywood, Mr. P. Heath, Ms. M. Letts, Mrs. E. Maher and Ms. M. Harmitt.  The Clerk reported that Mr. Malcolm Barton was currently in hospital recovering from an operation to amputate his leg following a blood clot.  <b>Agreed</b>  That a letter be sent to Mr. Barton conveying the Forums best wishes for a speedy recovery.	Clerk to action.
<b>3. 4.12.07</b>	<b>Minutes – 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2007</b>	Minutes approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Mr. F.

		Hodgkinson and Ms. H. Lomas in the list of apologies.
4 4.12.07	<p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p><b>Delegation of School Meals</b></p> <p><b>Deprivation Review</b></p> <p><b>School Funding</b></p> <p><b>Practical Learning</b></p> <p><b>HCSS Software Presentation</b></p> <p><b>PVI Representative</b></p> <p>It was noted that Kim Delaney had been nominated but that she could not become a Forum Member until the Bill was enacted. It was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>That in the meantime she be invited to attend meetings as an observer.</p> <p><b>Funding Formula</b></p> <p><b>Diploma Funding</b></p> <p>Request for head teachers to be notified of dates of future meetings through the school users monthly newsletter.</p>	<p>Included as an agenda item</p> <p>Included as an agenda item</p> <p>Included as an agenda item</p> <p>Included as an agenda item</p> <p>Letters sent to all schools inviting them to two sessions</p> <p>Included as part of agenda item on Early Years</p> <p>Clerk to action</p> <p>Included as an agenda item</p> <p>Included as an agenda item</p> <p>Avril Walton to action</p>

<p><b>5</b> <b>4.12.07</b></p>	<p><b>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</b></p> <p>There were no items on the agenda which the Forum considered should be dealt with in private session.</p>	
<p><b>6</b> <b>4.12.07</b></p>	<p><b>Benchmarking</b></p> <p>Avril Walton outlined the report and responded to questions.</p> <p>Mr. Cheminaiis referred to two services which were included in the report but which did not form part of the Education Contract. These were Music Service and Outdoor Education both of which were highly regarded. He asked how these were linked with the appropriate budgets. Avril Walton explained that Education Walsall did not hold the budgets for these and that Walsall Council would direct the monies to the appropriate areas.</p> <p>Reference was made to the heading Total Strategic Management and an explanation of “includes school insurance costs” was requested. Dawn Morris explained that most schools had chosen not have insurance delegated but a small number have.</p> <p>Mr. Crowther made the point that benchmarking for catering would be misleading. The Chairman explained that it was the start of a useful exercise and that he would like to see it timelined in comparison with other local authorities. He expressed the view that it would be useful to monitor the situation on a regular basis.</p> <p>Avril Walton indicated that at a recent conference it was implied that, in the future it was likely that the Forum would hold schools to account. The Chairman confirmed that he had attended the conference and circulated copies of presentations from the conference. He referred to the Powers and Responsibilities of Schools Forums and indicated that the role of Schools Forum would change next year and that the level of detail the Forum would be expected to look at would be much greater. It would be a more challenging role. He added that there was disquiet, however, about the possibility of</p>	

	<p>School Bursar's attending Forum meetings as substitutes for head teachers. By way of explanation, Dawn Morris indicated that as well as substitution, there is a proposal that for school representatives on Forum it will be possible for other members of school leadership teams to elected, rather than only head teachers. She added that more information on the proposals can be found on 'Teachernet'.</p> <p>The view was expressed that this could devalue the work of the Forum and that there was a need to consider the funding issues of having a bursar, particularly in respect of primary schools.</p> <p>The Chairman indicated that there had been talk of schools sharing bursars and went on to say that the regulations said that the Schools Forum could be made up totally of head teachers. He added that, although there were already 8 such Schools Forums, it was good practice to have a variety of members.</p> <p>The point was made that there was a need to have people on the Forum who had children's interests at heart not just those people who knew about finances. The Chairman reiterated his earlier comment that it was not just about finances, the Forum would be asked in future to look at other elements in more detail.</p> <p>Following a further period of discussion it was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>That this issue be referred to the Primary and Secondary Heads Forums for consideration, the responses to be forwarded to the Schools Forum in due course.</p> <p>The Chairman suggested that it was good practice for a one page bulletin to be circulated to all head teachers after every Forum meeting and asked if it was possible for Education Walsall to do this.</p>	<p>Avril Walton to action.</p> <p>Avril Walton to consider.</p>
<p><b>7.</b> <b>4.12.07</b></p>	<p><b>Servicing of the School Forum</b></p> <p>A report was circulated and Avril Walton outlined the</p>	

	<p>report – she indicated that the Forum needed more support than Education Walsall or the council could provide to support members to acquire the skills needed to understand the responsibilities they have. The point was made that, of the current budget of £10k, very little had been spent, and the question was raised as to whether the Education Authority had the responsibility of servicing the Forum.</p> <p>Avril Walton confirmed that the Authority had the responsibility to service the Forum and that this was in the contract for Education Walsall. The post, if agreed, was not seen as a full-time post by Forum members. The Chairman made the point that the issue had been brought to the Forum to ensure that money would be put into the budget for the next 3 years. He suggested that it might be possible to undertake a comparison with other Local Authorities to see how they operate their Schools Forum.</p> <p>Dawn Morris stated that there was now a network of Schools Forum Lead Officers involving around 12 Local Authorities. She undertook to find out what they spent in terms of administration of their Forum.</p> <p>Following a short discussion, it was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>That the proposal contained in the report be not agreed and that this issue be revisited at the meeting scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2008.</p>	<p>Dawn Morris to action.</p> <p>Avril Walton / Clerk to action.</p>
	<p>At this juncture it was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>To take item 10, School Meals, as the next item on the agenda.</p>	
<p><b>10.</b> <b>4.12.07</b></p>	<p><b>School Meals</b></p> <p>Chris Holliday was in attendance for this item, at the request of the Primary Heads Forum.</p> <p>Joe Baker explained that the Primary Heads Forum was against the introduction of a management fee, and had raised several questions on the issue:-</p>	

	<p>(1) How was the school meals grant for 2006/07 spent?</p> <p>The ingredient cost for meals used to be 50p per meal and the service now expected to spend in the region of 60p per meal (although the current cost was 62p per meal). The service proposed to spend the same in the current year.</p> <p>(2) Is it legal to pay a management fee out of the schools budgets?</p> <p>Dawn Morris explained that this was legal.</p> <p>(3) Would there be any redundancy costs in respect of the redeployment of catering staff?</p> <p>Chris Holliday explained that there would be no redundancy costs if the forum chose to stay with the catering service. Should the forum choose to allow schools to arrange their own catering, redundancy costs would fall on the council. However, if a private contractor was brought in and they chose to make redundancies, the costs would fall on the contractor. He indicated that Maxine Nicholls on 01922 652353 was the contact officer.</p> <p>(4) What power does the forum have on this issue?</p> <p>Dawn Morris replied that the forum had the power to agree the method of allocation of DSG to schools. It was then up to the individual schools to decide themselves what they buy in to.</p> <p>Chris Holliday then replied to the issues raised and indicated that the service was looking at every single aspect of the school catering service to try to drive down costs. However, if the action plan was not implemented by the service, there was a strong possibility that the service would fail within twelve months. It was a business decision that the schools must make. The catering service would do everything they could to ensure the service was run efficiently in the future. He felt this was the right way for this to be done.</p> <p>In answer to a question from Heather Lomas, Chris Holliday confirmed that Special Schools had been looked at but the provision of meals had proved to be very expensive.</p> <p>Mr. Baker reminded the Forum that details of individual schools requested at the previous Forum</p>	
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	<p>meeting had still not been provided. The Chairman asked that this be done.</p> <p>In answer to a question from the Chairman, Chris Holliday indicated that there was no set timeline for this but it was an operational decision. Discussions had been held with appropriate Cabinet Members and the Executive Director. The issue would not be an item for discussion at Cabinet but there would be a meeting of all parties tomorrow and would be raised then.</p> <p>It was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>That it be noted that the Primary Heads Forum is unhappy with the implementation of a management fee; that they feel it is a serious issue given the workload head teachers are currently working under; and that they would like to see this item forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.</p>	<p>Avril Walton to action.</p> <p>Chris Holliday to note</p>
<p><b>8. 4.12.07</b></p>	<p><b>Funding Formula 2008-2011</b></p> <p>A report was circulated. Dawn Morris outlined the report and responded to questions.</p> <p>Clarification of the term 'change of character' was requested.</p> <p>It was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>That a report on this issue be submitted to the Forum at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2008:-</p> <p>It was further:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>(a) That in respect of data changes across a multi-year period, approval be given to the request to add floor area changes to the permitted data item to be up rated when actual budgets are calculated;</p> <p>(b) That with regard to use of school specific contingency, approval be given to include a contingency payment which will be triggered</p>	<p>Dawn Morris to action</p>

	<p>where a floor area increases by more than 5%, the payment pro-rata to the months of the financial year remaining;</p> <p>(c) That with regard to new funding factor within the funding formula, approval be given to the proposal to introduce, from April 2008, an additional element within school specific factors which will enable the application of a funding mechanism to generate or reduce a schools individual funding to recognise the change in character and responsibilities.</p>	Dawn Morris to action.
<p><b>9.</b> <b>4.12.07</b></p>	<p><b>Early Years Funding Review</b></p> <p>A report was circulated.</p> <p>It was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>That the report be noted and that it be further noted that the Early Years Funding Review Sub-Group will report to the Forum.</p>	
<p><b>11.</b> <b>4.12.07</b></p>	<p><b>Diplomas 14-16 Funding Review</b></p> <p>Dawn Morris indicated that there will be two secondary schools, linked with the college, who will offer a diploma from September 2008, namely Pool Hayes and Blue Coat.</p> <p>Walsall chose to devolve rather than delegate the Practical Learning Grant to schools and this decision will help target the funding more over then next few years. Many LA's did delegate the main grant funding diplomas and are no.</p> <p>Changes in regulations require the Forum still to have a representative from the 14-19 Partnership.</p> <p>The point was made that more time was needed to make a decision on this.</p> <p>It was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>That this issue be deferred for consideration at the next meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2008.</p>	Dawn Morris / Clerk to action.



<b>12.</b> <b>4.12.07</b>	<p><b>School funding Settlement for 2008/09 to 2010/2011</b></p> <p>A report was circulated. Dawn Morris outlined the report.</p> <p>It was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	
<b>13.</b> <b>4.12.07</b>	<p><b>School Development Grant</b></p> <p>A report was circulated. Dawn Morris outlined the report and responded to questions.</p> <p>A report on 'Schools Lunch Grant' was also circulated. The DCSF require the local authority to discussed and agree with Forum a method for allocating this funding. It was important to note that this grant is not a continuation of the Targetted Meals Grant received previously. She suggested that it might also be possible to use the current meals strategy group to look at this issue. The Chairman indicated that there was also a need to decide how to deal with PRUs.</p> <p>After a short discussion it was:-</p> <p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>(a) That with regard to SDG and the small residual amount, that the allocation will be made on the basis of pupils numbers. Report back to the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2008;</p> <p>(b) That with regard to the School Lunch Grant, officer be requested to report further on this issue to the next meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2008.</p>	<p>Dawn Morris to action.</p> <p>Dawn Morris to action.</p>
<b>14.</b> <b>4.12.07</b>	<p><b>Breakdown of Cost Pressures for the 2008/2011 Multi-Year Period</b></p> <p>A report was circulated. Dawn Morris outlined the report. She referred to an item in the Centrally</p>	

