

## Schools Forum

**Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2009 at 4.00 p.m. at Room TR1, Beechdale Lifelong Learning Centre, Stephenson Square, Beechdale**

**Present:-** Mr. J. Baker (Chairman)  
Mr. S. Flynn (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr. G. Crowther  
Mr. J.P. Clarke  
Ms. M. Cryan  
Mrs. R. Poyser  
Mr. A. Davies  
Mr. E. Gee  
Mr. F. Hodgkinson  
Mr. D. Clough  
Mr. M. Atkins

**Observers:** Councillor Walker  
Mr. J. Murray

**In Attendance:-** Mr. D. Mortiboys (Walsall MBC)  
Ms. A. Walton (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)  
Ms. D. Morris (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)  
Ms. J. Taylor (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)  
Mr. K.C. Alex-Eyitene (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)

		Action
<b>1. 8.12.09</b>	<b>Apologies</b>  Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. A.F. Cheminais, Mrs. E. Maher, Dame M. Brennan, Mr. M. Barton, Mr. M. Sweeney and Mr. D. Brownsword.	
<b>2. 8.12.09</b>	<b>Minutes - 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2009</b>	Approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Mr. J. Clarke as present.

<p><b>3.</b> <b>8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Matters arising from the minutes</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b> <b>8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</b></p> <p>There were no items to be considered in private session.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b> <b>8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Carbon reduction commitment -clarification</b></p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mr. Alex-Eyitene informed the Forum that the scheme was a Government initiative and the commitment was mandatory for supplies over 6 million kw per annum, anything above that would be included in the carbon reduction commitment. During the year April, 2010-11, usage of CO2 would be monitored and emissions declared and carbon credits for CO2 would be purchased from 2011, this would include electricity, gas and heating oils. A league table would be introduced from the third year and would be determined by SMART meter and carbon trust standards. The Local Authority will apply for inclusion on the carbon trust standard from April, 2011 to assist the Authority in improving its rating and league table position. Any additional purchases of carbon credit would be made on the open market at a considerably higher cost. Although schools were under the umbrella of the Local Authority, they could be treated as a separate entity and declare its own CO2 emissions.</p> <p>The carbon reduction commitment energy efficiency scheme is aimed at driving down energy consumption within buildings.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor confirmed that the Local Authority would purchase the initial carbon credits for schools, this would not be charged to the schools budget. However, any losses attributable to penalties incurred by schools would be charged to the Schools Budget and would need to be recovered through a formula factor from individual schools, or</p>	

	<p>allowed for within the Central Expenditure Limit. Negotiations were ongoing with gas suppliers to establish whether they could install SMART meters on the same basis as electricity. The Carbon Trust Standard would be funded by the Council.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p>That the contents of the report be noted.</p>	
<p><b>6. 8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant</b></p> <p>Ms. Taylor informed the Forum that the information request had not been identified in time to complete a report for this Forum. A meeting would be arranged with the EMAG co-ordinator to look at information that had been provided in order to move the agenda forward. The Co-ordinator, Julie Griffiths, would attend Schools Forum on 19<sup>th</sup> January to discuss this.</p> <p>Mr. Flynn referred to the original idea of looking at the principle of moving more funds to the front line and felt that this would be an issue for the Forum in future years.</p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> that a paper be submitted to the 19<sup>th</sup> January meeting for discussion.</p>	
<p><b>7. 8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Early Years Single Funding Formula Consultation Outcome</b></p> <p>A report was submitted and Ms. Taylor enlarged on the content and highlighted the responses to the consultation.</p> <p>Ms. Poyser referred to the work carried out by the Sub-Group on this matter and felt that the best possible route to formula adjustment had been reached. Ms. Taylor highlighted the information contained in the financial section of the report and confirmed that any schools specific contingency to manage potential fluctuations in pupil numbers would be ringfenced in the schools budget and within the schools specific contingency.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor confirmed that Year 2 would be the start of the next multi-budget period and did not know</p>	<p>That a report be submitted every term</p>

	<p>what the Dedicated Schools Grant would look like in 2011 in view of the new, national education funding system due to be published for consultation in Spring 2010.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p>(1) That the transitional funding recommended in the report be agreed;</p> <p>(2) That the consultation to be carried forward to Cabinet be supported.</p>	
<p><b>8. 8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Contract Management Board</b></p> <p>Ms. Walton reported on the varying levels of meetings held to monitor the education contract. Meetings with officers took place on a two weekly basis to resolve any issues early as well as subject specific issues. Meetings with stakeholders also took place. A number of service level agreements had been entered into in respect of the delivery of the service. Meetings between officers of Walsall Children's Services - Serco and Walsall Council take place to look at finance, asset management and property issues and feedback is given on Serco's delivery of asset management. Should the Forum feel that it was under represented on any of the meetings mentioned above, representations could be made to the Director of Children's Services.</p> <p>The centrally retained part of the DSG was the sum of money used to fund part of the contract.</p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> that Walsall Children's Services - Serco write to the Chairman indicating whether or not the Forum was represented and the Chairman submit a request to the Director of Children's Services if additional representation was required.</p>	
<p><b>9. 8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Facilities Time</b></p> <p>Forum indicated that this matter had been dealt with at the last meeting.</p>	

<p><b>10.</b> <b>8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>2009/10 - DSG</b></p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor outlined to the Forum the differences between the indicative budget for schools as estimated in March and the actual funding received from the DCSF which was received after the start of the 2009-10 financial year. As the estimation was very close to the actual figure, there were no funding issues to be dealt with.</p> <p>The Forum noted the final settlement of dedicated schools grant to be paid to the Local Authority for the 2009-10 financial year.</p>	
<p><b>11.</b> <b>8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Balance Control Mechanism</b></p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor enlarged on the contents of the report and confirmed that it was proposed to allow schools to accrue money through the properly assigned sums process at the end of the current financial year to enable them to deal with:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Nursery schools - the implications of the Early Years Single Funding Formula;</li> <li>(2) All schools - to enable them to save for any potential liabilities there may be in Walsall schools arising from the implementation of single status and equal pay claims.</li> </ul> <p>The figures included in the report equated to the schools in question accruing on average, 5% of their non-teaching staffing costs to cover any future potential liabilities. The proposal would help to reduce the financial impact and help to protect service delivery within schools at a future date.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor reported on the new process for year end procedures for 2009-10 and confirmed that officers would make journal entries to move spend into the old year where appropriate and this should reduce</p>	

the amount required as prior year commitment at the end of the year. A number of training sessions had taken place for school finance staff and information on procedures would be circulated. Additional training sessions could be held for Head Teachers and other staff early in the new year. The next training session was scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2010 and a twilight session for Head Teachers would be carried out by the end of January. The Chairman suggested that two people per school should be trained in order to meet the standard.

### **Resolved**

That the Forum support in principle, the additional criteria to be applied to the Properly Assigned Sum criterion as detailed below:-

- (1) To allow schools to build up reserves to manage any future liabilities arising from local agreements relating to single status and/or equal pay claims;

The following maximum sums to be accrued each year:-

£10,000	Per primary and nursery school
£20,000	Per special school
£50,000	Per secondary school

However, Forum requested that a banding system be considered to reflect larger primary schools.

The above sums may be increased once further detail is available.

- (2) That approval be given to include a banding system based on the clawback banding and that information be circulated to schools accordingly.
- (3) That nursery schools be permitted to use the Properly Assigned Sum mechanism to manage the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula. Any such sums to be supported by outline staffing plans and timetables.

<p><b>12</b> <b>8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Transforming learning in Walsall - Financial Update</b></p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mr. Mortiboys enlarged on the content of the report. The finalisation of strategy for change deadline for submission to partnership for schools was 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2010 and the strategy for change submission deadline was 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2010.</p> <p>Table 1 of the report gave the expenditure breakdown from remit to financial close, March, 2012 and the total cost of £6.124 million was based on current estimates. Table 2 set out where the income to fund the expenditure would be provided and the timings. At present, the £6.124 million was fully funded and it was important that the scheme stayed within the funding envelope. No further income would be required in 2011/12 to meet the cost of the programme.</p> <p>With regard to the funding provided by Schools Forum, the money was earning interest and the forecast interest calculation would be made at the end of the year and used to offset the schools contribution in 2010/11. The money would be carried over from year to year and signed off by the Deputy Chief Finance Officer and referred to the Council's external auditors.</p> <p>In response to points raised, Mr. Mortiboys confirmed that if the work did not take place the money would not be spent and was of the view that the exercise would not be wasted as the programme also included transforming learning.</p> <p>Councillor Walker informed the Forum that she had spoken with Ministers regarding the security of Building Schools for the Future and they had been confident that as Wave 6A had commenced, it was a more secure project.</p> <p>With regard to the sums to be used for professional services, Mr. Mortiboys confirmed that half of the amount would be spent on technical consultants.</p>	

	<p>Ms. Taylor confirmed that some surplus school balances had been recovered and would be used to reduce the BSF contribution for schools next year.</p> <p>With regard to the primary capital programme, Ms. Walton stated that reports would be prepared for December and January and there was no danger of any of the primary capital programme being lost.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p>That the progress on the primary capital programme and Building Schools for the Future projects be noted.</p>	
<p><b>13. 8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <p>The Forward Plan of decisions was submitted.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor confirmed that the Audit Commission website held all central expenditure details going back a number of years and includes Section 52 outturn statements and budget statements.</p> <p>Mr. Flynn referred to a piece of work undertaken by a NHT consultant and agreed to forward the information to the Clerk for circulation to all Members of the Forum and it was agreed that this be included on the Forward Plan for 2010/11.</p> <p>Mrs. Poyser informed the Forum that the Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership no longer existed and asked if she could attend as part of the Early Years Consultative Group.</p> <p>It was also pointed out that the PVI representation on the Forum needed to be pursued.</p>	<p>Clerk to check Statutory Instrument Re: Membership</p>
<p><b>14. 8.12.09</b></p>	<p><b>Correspondence</b></p> <p><b>Correspondence from St. James Primary School</b></p> <p>A copy of correspondence was submitted.</p> <p>Mr. Atkins referred to a discussion that had taken place at Primary and Secondary Heads Forum when reference was made to the outcome of the Scrutiny</p>	



	<p>Panel on Bryntysilio and suggesting that a Business Plan be drawn up. The Members of the Forum who were connected with Bryntysilio had suggested that Schools Forum be requested to use some of the funding it held for consultancy purposes to buy in a specialist consult in the field of outdoor education to draw up a Business Plan and help secure and develop the long term future of Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre.</p> <p>Councillor Walker confirmed that the Council did not own the Outdoor Education Centre but did subsidise children to attend, the Centre was operated by Leisure Services and was owned by the Trust.</p> <p>After discussion it was,</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p>That the Forum would wish to support Bryntysilio moving forward and requested more information regarding the use of its fund for the production of a Business Plan as well as information from procurement for submission to the January meeting.</p>	
	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting</b></p> <p>It was <b>NOTED</b> that the next meeting of Schools Forum would be held on Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2010 at 4.00 p.m. at Room TR1, at Beechdale Lifelong Learning Centre, Stephenson Square, Beechdale, Walsall.</p>	

The meeting terminated at 5.50 p.m.