

Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 2nd March, 2010 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. M. Atkins
- Mr. A.F. Cheminais
- Mr. D. Brownsword
- Mr. G. Crowther
- Mr. J.P. Clarke
- Ms. H. Lomas
- Ms. M. Cryan
- Mr. G. Deakin
- Mr. E. Gee
- Mr. D. Clough
- Mr. A. Basi

In Attendance:-

- Mr. D. Mortiboys (Walsall MBC)
- Ms. A. Walton (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)
- Ms. J. Taylor (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)
- Ms. J. Black (Walsall MBC)

		Action
1. 2.3.10	Apologies Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Dame M. Brennan, Mr. M. Barton, Mr. F. Hodgkinson, Mr. A. Bowater, Ms. V. Richardson and Councillor Walker.	
2. 2.3.10	Minutes - 19th January, 2010	The minutes of the meeting held on 19 th January, 2010 be approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Mr. Brownsword in the list of those present.

<p>3. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Matters arising from the minutes</p> <p>School balances initial draft guidance</p> <p>The Forum was advised that the first meeting of the Working Group had taken place.</p>	
<p>4. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.</p>	
<p>5. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Single Status and Equal Pay</p> <p>Julie Black (Walsall Council HRD) gave a brief update relating to single status. School support staff were brought into the process and staff from Children's Services - Serco, together with the Trade Unions had been given places on the Job Evaluation Panel. The "Link" pay model was being used, this takes the score and provides a salary structure and range of the scales. A model for a range of allowances is considered to enable meaningful proposals to be put forward. Formal consultations with Trade Unions would take place on 3rd March, 2010 with a statutory consultation period of a minimum of 12 weeks. School support staff would be part of the school support staff negotiating body and Working Groups were required to submit criteria and pay models to the Secretary of State by 28th May, 2010; school support staff should be kept within the Council's single status programme.</p> <p>With regard to equal pay cases, the Local Authority was currently at tribunal with the hearing expected to last for 5 weeks.</p> <p>Ms. Black confirmed that the process included community and voluntary controlled schools only. The estimated costs were being considered to assess whether an out of court settlement would be</p>	

	<p>appropriate; the law allowed six years back pay dependent upon comparators.</p> <p>In response to points raised, Ms. Black advised that head teachers should inform the Council if they receive correspondence from firms of solicitors on this issue in order that they could be advised whether or not to provide information to them.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the information be received and Ms. Black be invited to the next meeting to provide an update.</p>	
<p>5(a) 2.3.10</p>	<p>Harnessing Technology Grant</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>The Forum was advised that this was the last year of funding and it was proposed that internet connection to schools would be completed.</p> <p>With regard to the Standards Fund Grant, Mr. Read confirmed that the Council was requested to match fund this under the national grid for learning. The traded services with schools did not cover all the costs and 25% went towards some of the central infra-structure necessary. Attempts had been made to be equitable with every school base being the same, however, some schools cost much more than others in view of their geographical location. Schools were paying for services on a year on year basis and capital work was not taken into account. National grid for learning funding was initially used for secondary schools followed by primary schools and over the last six years, there had been a significant increase in the use of ICT. Both BT and Telewest had been requested to quote for providing the facility in all schools.</p> <p>Members were concerned that a breakdown of the funding to cover hardware, contingency, staff etc had not been included and it was felt that an informal consultation should take place at the Heads Forums to enable a well informed decision to be made. Members referred to the use of Becta, which was a support package for the self review framework and requested information on how many schools used Becta in terms of their support.</p>	

	<p>Resolved</p> <p>(1) That approval be given to the retention of 25% of the harnessing technology ICT standards fund grant centrally, that schools keep 21% and the remainder be delegated out to schools;</p> <p>(2) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum to address the 21% of the funding.</p>	<p>S. Read to submit report to June meeting</p>
<p>6. 2.3.10</p>	<p>2009-10 Section 52 Benchmarking Data</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Julie Taylor went through the report and informed the Forum that Appendix 1 had been extracted from the DCSF website; Appendix 2 related to the calculation that explained how Walsall devolved 90% of school funding as compared with Sandwell devolving 94%.</p> <p>With regard to the contingency between the two Authorities, Walsall held £1 million for BSF, the rest related to rates and other minor budget changes. Sandwell and other Authorities did not hold non-devolved grants and this distorted the calculation.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the contents of the report be noted.</p>	
<p>7. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Early years single funding formula - pilot authority status</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Julie Taylor went through the contents of the report and confirmed that 56 Authorities across the country would be running the pilot status.</p>	

	<p>Resolved</p> <p>That the Forum continue to support the implementation of the early years single funding formula during the pilot phase.</p>	
<p>8. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Financial arrangements to support the transfer of Sneyd pupils during the closure period</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Julie Taylor outlined the contents of the report and confirmed that Sneyd was now a closing school and work was ongoing with the school to manage the situation.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>(1) That the Forum agree to the proposal for money to follow Year 9 pupils transferring from Sneyd in September, 2010;</p> <p>(2) That the Forum agree to a potential breach to the 2010/11 central expenditure limit as a direct result of the retention of £115,000 in the school specific contingency for the current Year 9 pupils in Sneyd, so that this funding can be allocated to receiving schools in the Autumn term 2010.</p>	
<p>9. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Charity of the School Holiday Camp Fund of Walsall (Bryntysilio)</p> <p>The decision of Cabinet from its meeting on 3rd February, 2010 was submitted.</p> <p>Mr. Cheminais informed the Forum that staff at Bryntysilio were taking bookings but if there was no substantial increase in income, the Trust would run out of money by Christmas, 2010.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the resolution and information reported be noted.</p>	

<p>11. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>The Forward Plan of decisions was submitted.</p> <p>The Chairman informed the Forum that there was potential for an additional meeting between now and June to consider single status and equal pay claims and it was agreed that the harnessing technology grant item and ICT be included should that meeting prove necessary.</p> <p>The Forward Plan was approved and it was agreed that the following item be included:-</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Early years single funding formula - pilot - progress.</p> <p>It was agreed that the following items be taken off the Forward Plan:-</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Charity of the School Holiday Camp Fund of Walsall (Bryntysilio)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2009-10 Section 52 benchmarking</p>	
<p>12. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>The Chairman reported that he had received correspondence from a primary school head teacher requesting an increase in funding to assist with seven additional pupils who had been allocated places following appeal and the knock-on effect that could occur in Years 1 and 2. The Local Authority had suggested that Reception, Years 1 and 2 be vertically streamed to overcome the problem.</p> <p>The Forum was advised that KS1 at the school had five teachers and five class bases with fewer than 150 children making it lower than the infant class size limit.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the request for additional funding be rejected.</p>	

<p>13. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Date and time of next meeting</p> <p>It was NOTED that the next meeting of Schools Forum would be held on Tuesday, 15th June, 2010 at 4.00 p.m. at Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Road, Blakenall, Walsall.</p>	
<p>14. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</p> <p>It was agreed that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item under Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.</p>	
<p>15. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Transforming Learning in Walsall - Financial Update</p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mr. Mortiboys went through the contents of the report in detail. As this was a one-off programme, there were no comparisons and no information was available in the public domain from other Authorities.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>That the Assistant Director and Project Director feedback to the six Head Teachers involved in the BSF project on progress to date, value for money, detailed finances and lessons to be learnt from Wave 6a of BSF.</p> <p>(Exempt information under Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)</p>	
<p>16. 2.3.10</p>	<p>Retiring Member</p> <p>The Forum was advised that Mr. Gee would be leaving Schools Forum after this meeting and Members expressed their thanks to him for his help and assistance during his term of office.</p>	

	Mr. Gee thanked Members of the Forum for their remarks and the value of the knowledge he had gained during his term of office.	
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The meeting terminated at 5.40 p.m.