

## Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2007 at 6.00 p.m.  
at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall, Walsall

**Present:** Mr. J. Baker  
Mrs. E. Maher  
Mr. G. Crowther  
Mr. J.P. Clarke  
Ms. H. Lomas  
Ms. E. Stringer  
Mr. A. Davies  
Mr. G. Deakin  
Mr. M. Barton  
Mrs. M. Letts

**In Attendance:** Mr. G. McQueen (Education Walsall)  
Ms. Avril Walton (Education Walsall)  
Ms. M. Harmitt - Interim Head of Finance for Children and Young  
People (Walsall Council)

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b> <b>11.9.07</b>	<b>Apologies</b>  Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. P. Heath, Mr. A.F. Cheminai, Mr.S. Holtam, Miss. S.M. Bradford, Mrs. R. Poyser, Mr. E. Gee, Mr. N. Chomyk, Mr. F. Hodgkinson, Mr. S. Haywood, Mr. A. Bowater, Ms. F. Bibi	
	<b>Election of Chairman for the meeting</b>  In the absence of both Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Mr. J Baker was elected Chairman for this meeting only	
	<b>Introduction</b>  Mr. McQueen introduced Avril Walton, Director for Learning (Management Support) to the meeting. He said that she would be working with his team on school funding and would be attending meetings of Schools Forum.	
<b>2.</b> <b>11.9.07</b>	<b>Minutes – 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2007</b>	Minutes approved as a correct record

<p><b>3.</b> <b>11.9.07</b></p>	<p><b>Matters arising from the minutes</b></p> <p>2.1 12.6.07 – Delegation of funds for school meals</p> <p>It was noted that a report will be submitted to 9 October, 2007, meeting</p> <p>2.2 12.6.07 – Staff side association request for representation on Schools Forum</p> <p>It was noted that Mrs. M. Letts was present at the meeting as the Staff Side Association representative.</p>	<p>George McQueen to action</p>
<p><b>4.</b> <b>11.9.07</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>5.</b> <b>11.9.07</b></p>	<p><b>Application of the Balance Control Mechanism and School Balances</b></p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen reported that requests had been received from the Governors of 62 Walsall Schools to carry forward money into 2007/08 financial year for Properly Assigned Projects.</p> <p>After agreement was reached on Properly Assigned Projects, two schools were found to have reserves in excess of the levels agreed under the Schools Forum protocol (5% Secondary; between 6-8% Primary and Special Schools).</p> <p>Fibbersley Park Primary had £5,000 and Jane Lane Special School had £50,000 clawed back from their budgets as their respective surplus balances, at the end of 2006/2007, exceeded the percentage allowable under the Balance Control Mechanism.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen said this showed the effort made by all schools to commit their reserves.</p>	

	<p>In answer to points raised, Mr. McQueen confirmed that the Secretary of State had made clear when the system was established that there would be no appeals system for schools having excess levels removed from their budgets.</p> <p>It was pointed out that the reason for the extreme excess balance at Fibbersley Park School was that it was a new school created by the amalgamation of three schools i.e. Clothier Street, Lakeside and Little London Primary Schools and that these were the cumulative balances of the three former schools.</p> <p>Comment was made on how proactive Education Walsall had been in ensuring that Schools had not retained excess funds.</p> <p>It was <b>AGREED:-</b></p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	
<p><b>6. 11.09.07</b></p>	<p><b>Deprivation Review.</b></p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that the DCSF had requested all Authorities to complete a Deprivation Funding Template, based on DCSF formula factors (Appendix 1) showing clearly which funding streams are to address the cost of deprivation and clarifying the percentage of funding allocated for deprived pupils that is directed towards them.</p> <p>A copy of the Authority's completed template was circulated at the meeting.</p> <p>The template showed that Walsall's current percentage of identified spending delegated to schools specifically for deprivation was 54%. Mr. McQueen said that DCSF required this to be at least 80%. The Authority's Children's Services Adviser for Government Office West Midlands would be visiting the Authority on 3 October, 2007, to discuss progress on the Deprivation Review and the work required to move towards the 80% target.</p> <p>A list of questions the Adviser would be asking in</p>	

	<p>respect of Deprivation Funding was set out in Appendix 2.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that the School Forum Working Group had discussed the future use of head room to increase the amount of money directed towards deprived pupils. A crucial question to ask the Adviser would be how quickly the Authority must move to the 80% figure and whether there would be a transitional period.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen confirmed that Mr. J. Baker from the Working Group had been invited to represent Schools Forum at this meeting in an observer capacity.</p> <p>It was <b>AGREED</b>:-</p> <p>That the Managing Director submit a further report to Schools Forum on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2007, reporting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2007, discussions with the Government Adviser and options for the formula review so that resources delegated to address the costs of deprivation move towards the 80% figure currently recommended by DCSF.</p> <p>It was noted that it may be necessary to circulate this report at 9<sup>th</sup> October meeting because of the time limit.</p>	<p>George McQueen to action.</p>
<p><b>7.</b> <b>11.09.07</b></p>	<p><b>Exceptional use of Contingency Funding.</b></p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>It was <b>AGREED</b>:-</p> <p>To receive the report for information and endorsement in line with previous Forum agreement.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b> <b>11.09.07</b></p>	<p><b>DfES response to the 14-19 and Early Years Consultation.</b></p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that there had been wide-scale consultation over the summer period with schools on the future of School, Early Years and 14-16 funding. The Government had now considered the responses and the report set out a summary of the</p>	

	<p>key decisions resulting from this.</p> <p><b>Early Years</b></p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that Early Years funding reforms were designed to bring the funding systems for private, voluntary and independent (PVI) and maintained sectors into better alignment. By April 2010 all Local Authorities will be required to use a single local formula for funding the free entitlement in maintained and PVI sectors. He said that the DCSF would like Local Authorities to introduce this earlier if possible.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that in the run-up to agreeing local budgets from April 2008 onwards, the DCSF expected each Local Authority to analyse the cost of delivering the free entitlement in PVI settings. A mechanism must be established to consult with providers about local changes to Early Years funding. The Local Authority had not had a relationship with the independent sector before but the Early Years team must now work through a set of government guidelines to draw them into future decision making.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that the recommendation from the Government was that Local Authorities should establish a mechanism to consult with providers about local changes to Early Years funding. This could be through a sub or working group of Schools Forum. There would be a change in the regulations so that at least one Early Years provider from the PVI sector would be included on the non-school membership of Schools Forum and the Government was suggesting that Forum may wish to elect a representative prior to the changes in regulation.</p> <p>The view was expressed that if the PVI received public money then they should be accountable. There should be a steer from the early years team to establish a forum meeting on a regular basis with PVI providers to feed into Schools Forum. Such a mechanism would provide a direct link to Schools Forum.</p> <p>It was <b>AGREED:-</b></p> <p>That representatives from nursery and primary</p>	<p>George McQueen to action.</p>
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	<p>schools with nursery classes work with the Early Years team to set up a forum for working with PVI representatives with a view to inviting a PVI representative to join Schools Forum as a non-school member.</p> <p><b>14-16</b></p> <p>With regard to 14-16 funding, Mr. McQueen said that three options were set out in the report for the routing and managing of diploma funds in respect of Key Stage 4 diplomas.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that the option favoured by the Government was option 1 i.e. for diploma funds to be held by the 14-19 partnership on behalf of the Local Authority. Contributions from cost reductions to be secured through a top slice of all participating schools' budgets either at average rate or in direct proportion to the number taking diplomas in each school. All payments to diploma providers to be arranged centrally by the partnership.</p> <p>It was pointed out that there would be a meeting of secondary head teachers on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2007. Another option that might be considered that would fit into option 1 would be the use of collaborative partnerships. All the options could be discussed at the secondary Schools Forum and the results of these discussions reported back to Schools Forum at 9<sup>th</sup> October meeting.</p> <p>It was <b>AGREED:-</b></p> <p>That Schools Forum support option 1 for the routing and management of diploma funds and that secondary head teachers be requested to bear this in mind when considering the options at their meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2007; the results of their discussions to be reported to 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2007, Schools Forum meeting.</p> <p><b>School Funding</b></p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) would continue to give schools a minimum increase in their per pupil funding each year. The Government was, however, keen to minimise the funding guarantee and the level of the guarantee for the next three years would</p>	<p>George McQueen to Action.</p>
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	<p>incorporate an expectation that schools would make significant improvements in efficiency.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that the Government was taking action to ensure that school revenue balances were used for educating present day pupils. In addition to the recently introduced Balance Control Mechanism, the DCSF is to require Local Authorities to apply a 5% level to all surplus balances of schools. The recovered funding to be re-distributed within the Schools Budget. The Government considered that 5% was the figure that schools would earn in bank interest.</p> <p>Mr. McQueen said that more information would be available at 9<sup>th</sup> October meeting on how the 5% levy would be operated. Schools that had no surplus balance would be unaffected. It was his view that funds committed for Properly Assigned Projects would not be taken into consideration but the Government wished to see a reduction in the money held in balance by schools across the whole country.</p> <p>It was <b>AGREED:-</b></p> <p>To note the contents of the report.</p>	<p>George McQueen to action</p>
<p><b>9. 11.09.07</b></p>	<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <p>The copy of the Forward Plan was submitted.</p> <p>It was <b>AGREED:-</b></p> <p>That the following item be added to the Forward Plan:-</p> <p>Distribution of funds for practical learning (to be considered at 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2007, meeting)</p>	<p>Clerk to action</p> <p>George McQueen to action</p>
	<p><b>The meeting terminated at 6.55 p.m.</b></p>	