



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

### *FUNDING GROUP* (Sub-group of Schools Forum)

AGENDA ITEM: 6

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FUNDING GROUP (SUB-GROUP OF SCHOOLS FORUM) HELD ON THURSDAY, 22 MAY 2003 AT ASTON CLINTON SCHOOL, TWITCHELL LANE, ASTON CLINTON, COMMENCING AT 10.00AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.20AM.

#### PRESENT

Tim Andrew (Chairman)	Chesham High School
Mike Barrie	Heritage House School
Derrick Fiske	Bedgrove Junior School
Phill Mitchell	John Colet School
Kieran Salter	Aston Clinton School
Catherine Hinds	Hughenden Infant School, Governor

Officers	Alan Mander	Assistant Head of Finance
	Sue Butt	Democratic Services Officer

#### 1 INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mark Scott, Claytons Combined School.

#### 2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Mr Andrew was proposed and agreed to be the Chairman.

#### 3 UPDATE ON PROGRESS TO DATE

The Chairman opened the meeting and summarised what work had taken place since the information and issues away day on 13 May 2003:

- Contact had been made with Peter Downes and his response was circulated to the sub-group prior to the meeting. The group noted details regarding price per pupil per size of school from a recent unpublished report compiled by Peter Downes. A representative believed this detailed work would provide a good benchmark and framework to begin working from especially in light of the tight

timeline whereby the Forum must make recommendations to the Local Education Authority (LEA) by mid-September.

- Contact had been made with George Phipson and his response was tabled. It was noted that Mr Phipson would not be able to conduct a needs/ activity led funding analysis in the timeframe available but that he would be able to carry out comparisons between Buckinghamshire and similar LEA's. There was some reservations about commissioning George Phipson where he stated that he could not carry out the needs/ activity led funding analysis in the time available.

### **3 COMMISSIONING**

The group discussed the implications of commissioning Peter Downes to carry out the needs/activity-led funding analysis since the group did not want Members to be unsupportive of any report because of a perceived political bias, especially if the report produced less than favourable evidence.

Following discussion regarding the recent Buckinghamshire Primary Assembly meeting, the group considered the rationale behind the 'Five Heads Report' and its suitability for revisiting its basic principles and the resourcing model that was devised. It was agreed the report would be a useful information tool especially where the resourcing model took into account differences between schools, but that other areas not explored by the 'Five Heads Report' would also need investigation, in particular Special Educational Needs (SEN). By revisiting the 'Five Heads Report', it was noted that this would show a consistency in the adoption of principles and a commitment to making best use of a key document. In addition, headteachers would not need to be consulted separately.

It was agreed that if Peter Downes could meet the timeline and his fees fell within budget, he should be commissioned to carry out the following specific tasks to identify the needs/ activity-led funding requirements of Buckinghamshire schools:

- To use the assumptions made in the resourcing model formula of distribution from the 'Five Heads Report' as a basic starting point
- To use 2003 figures to ascertain the cost per pupil for each key stage of education

An officer agreed to oversee the tendering procedures for commissioning Peter Downes. The group agreed that the political background of Peter Downes would not be an issue if the work produced was credible and facts were correctly supported by evidence. Nonetheless, it was agreed that his expertise and previous work in the field would need to be publicised to prevent any assumptions of political bias.

Following discussion of the comparison of Buckinghamshire with other similar LEA's, an officer confirmed that tables of raw figures would be available from the DfES during June. In addition, it was advised that Members would prefer comparisons of Buckinghamshire against other similar local authorities especially those within the South East. It was noted that the task of analysing and drawing out conclusions from these tables of figures would have to be assigned.

The group agreed that by the end of September, the Forum should have a clear understanding of what Buckinghamshire schools need and be in a position to make recommendations of how best any additional resources could be utilised.

#### **4 NEXT STEPS**

The following actions were agreed:

- The Chairman to write to Peter Downes inviting him to carry out a needs/ activity led funding analysis
- Briefing session with Peter Downes w/c 2 June 2003
- Peter Downes to report back work in progress to the sub-group prior to the next meeting of the Forum on 8 July 2003
- Notes from meetings of the sub-group to be circulated to the Forum prior to the meeting in July

#### **5 DATES AND TIMES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

The following meetings were agreed:

- Mr Andrew and Mr Salter to brief Peter Downes w/c 2 June 2003
- Sub-group to convene before next meeting of the Forum on 8 July 2003
- A Forum away-day to be set up in mid September for presentation of findings and discussion of recommendations

**CHAIRMAN**