



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

SCHOOLS FORUM

AGENDA ITEM: 3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2003 IN THE IRELAND ROOM, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 3.00PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.30PM.

PRESENT

Headteachers	Tim Andrew Mike Barrie Derrick Fiske Tim Heaton Bob Milne Phil Mitchell Bill Richards Shela Rowan Kieran Salter Linda Melton	Chesham High School (Chairman) Heritage House School Bedgrove Junior School Grendon Underwood School Tylers Green Middle School John Colet School Sir William Ramsay School Oak Green School Aston Clinton School The Wye Valley School
Governors	Martin Ball Ted Brown Ian Scoones Paddy McNeish Dominique Moat Richard Morris Dennis Morse Keith Wilkinson Jenny Wainwright Mark Scott	Hamilton Primary School Sir William Borlase's Grammar School Newtown Infant School (for Catherine Hinds) Buckingham Upper School Wingrave Church of England Combined School Sir William Ramsay School Alfriston School The Misbourne School Claytons Combined School
Representatives	Michael Moore Janet Riddington Colin Roberts Christine Wilding	Catholic Diocese of Northampton NUT NASUWT Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
Observer	Sarah Rusby	Learning and Skills Council

Officers	Sue Imbriano Alan Mander Jane Brown Len Brazier Sue Butt	Strategic Manager Schools Assistant Head of Finance Accountancy Manager Education Officer, Special Education Services Democratic Services Officer
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1 WELCOME/ INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed Christine Wilding to the Forum as the representative for Early Years, Development and Childcare Partnership.

The Forum also welcomed Len Brazier , Education Officer, Special Education Services

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Leslie Stephen, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education, Mr Ian Bryant, Wendover Church of England Junior School, Mr Brian Smith who was replaced by Mr Keith Wilkinson for this meeting only and Mrs Catherine Hinds who was replaced by Dr Ian Scoones, Newtown Infant School, for this meeting only.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2003 were agreed as a correct record.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Final 2003/04 School Budget Outcome

It was noted that the £3.9m funds not yet distributed to schools would be allocated to schools' budgets as and when expenditure took place.

5 WORKING PRACTICES AND THE CONSTITUTION

Constitution

Members reviewed the final version of the Constitution and noted the sidelined amendments to section 7, Sub Groups and section 12, Expenses.

Members discussed and agreed the following additional amendments:

- Paragraph 4.4 "In respect of the representatives in 4.3 (g **and h**) above two representatives shall be from Upper Schools, one from a Grammar School and one shall be from either an Upper or Grammar School in accordance with the electoral process laid down by Buckinghamshire County Council."

PROPOSED

Ms Dominique Moat proposed and Mr Kieran Salter seconded that the Constitution for the Buckinghamshire Schools Forum be formally agreed and adopted.

RESOLVED

The Forum agreed to the proposal by 24 votes for and 0 against.

Rates of Allowances

Members received a report from Sue Butt, Democratic Services Officer, on the proposed rates of allowances and procedures for claiming expenses for members of the Forum.

A member questioned the car allowance rates where they were concerned that anything over 40pence per mile incurred a tax liability from the Inland Revenue. In response, it was confirmed that the rates adopted by the Forum would be in line with Buckinghamshire County Council rates of allowances and as such could therefore not be altered.

It was noted that a daily rate for teaching supply cover had not been included on the claim form where costs vary across different schools. Teachers were therefore asked to note the actual cost incurred to the school through their attendance at a meeting of the Schools Forum for reimbursement purposes.

PROPOSED

Mr Kieran Salter proposed and Mr Mark Scott seconded that the report on rates of allowances for members of the Buckinghamshire Schools Forum be formally agreed and adopted as part of the Constitution.

RESOLVED

The Forum agreed to the proposal by 24 votes for and 0 against.

6 THE FUNDING GROUP (SUB-GROUP)

The Chairman of The Funding Group gave a verbal update on the work of the group to date and members received a copy of the minutes of the first meeting of the sub-group, which had previously been circulated.

On agreement of The Funding Group, the Chairman and another member of the sub-group met with Mr Peter Downes on Monday 30 June 2003 to discuss the possibility of carrying out a needs/ activity led funding analysis of Buckinghamshire schools.

A background on the work of Peter Downes was given and members noted that he was one of the key figures nationally in the development of Local Management of Schools, has written books on the subject and was head of one of the first schools in the country to have a delegated budget. It was also noted that he had served on many national working parties looking at school and local authority funding issues, was now a primary school governor and has written on the funding of primary schools as well as secondary. Mr Downes was also now a County Councillor in Cambridgeshire.

The Chairman assured members that the political background of Mr Downes should not be cause for concern where his experience and expertise in the field would enable the Forum to receive excellent advice on funding issues.

Members noted that Mr Downes would be able to carry out the following work to enable the Forum to advise the LEA in the autumn on how funds should be distributed and how much funding different types of schools require:

- Identification of base line funding of primary and secondary schools
- Comparison of Buckinghamshire against other similar LEA's

The cost to the Forum for carrying out the work would be £2000 plus expenses including a presentation of the findings by Mr Downes to the Forum for discussion in September/ October.

It was noted that a provisional date for the presentation and discussion of findings had been set for Tuesday 7 October 2003.

A number of members welcomed and endorsed the opportunity of commissioning Mr Downes as a highly regarded and independent person to carry out the work required.

The Forum AGREED that Mr Downes be formally commissioned to carry out the work and that the presentation and discussion of findings would take place on Tuesday 7 October 2003.

A venue for the day would be sought.

7 UPDATE ON FINANCIAL SITUATION

The Assistant Head of Finance, Alan Mander, presented an update report on the financial situation 2003/04 and 2004/05. Members noted that since the publication of the report there were now only 5 financial plans not yet received.

Clarification was sought on how the number of deficit budgets in Buckinghamshire compared with other similar LEA's and in response it was noted that the number was not unusual.

It was noted that a deficit budget for the current year was defined as the financial situation of the school as at 1 April 2004 - taken as the final position of the school budget at the end of the financial year.

Where figures on funding from the Learning Skills and Council could look skewed, it was confirmed that this was due to the funding methodology and associated time delay which had now been adjusted to reflect real time.

8 ITEMS TO CONSULT WITH SCHOOLS IN THE AUTUMN TERM

The Forum received a report from Alan Mander, Assistant Head of Finance, which outlined the items the Forum would need to consult with schools in the autumn term.

1. Possible changes to premises factors

Following discussion on possible changes to premises factors, it was agreed not to consult with schools again this year as they were recently consulted on this issue last year.

2. Newly Qualified Teachers

Members expressed concern about the current method of funding for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and discussed possible alternatives. Following discussion it was agreed that schools should be consulted on this issue in the autumn term to ensure funding is received at the most appropriate time.

3. Nursery schools and Fair Funding

It was noted that a decision as to whether these schools would be funded on base numbers or by number of pupils would need to be made.

4. Ethnic minority/ prior attainment

Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Lifelong Learning Committee were currently looking into significant areas of underachievement and that this information would be made available to the Forum. Funding through METAS and how this affects ethnic minorities and prior lower attainment would also need to be considered.

5. Local bank accounts

The Forum noted the County Council's current work towards the implementation of SAP/SAPPHIRE system and how this may impact on schools local bank accounts.

6. SEN Departments

It was noted that funding for SEN departments within schools would be a key consultation exercise the Forum will need to carry out.

It was noted that issues of consultation would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Forum in September by which time information from DfES on schools funding should be available.

9 SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS WITHIN SCHOOLS FSS

The Forum received a report from the Assistant Head of Finance, Alan Mander, regarding special education needs (SEN) within the schools formula spending share (FSS).

It was reported that the county council are funding SEN at the governments required level at £32.7m (where £32.4m is the central government figure). However members expressed concern about the amount that is spent on out of county placements and whether SEN funding is being utilised in the most appropriate way.

Members noted that comparative figures from other local authorities on out of county expenditure on SEN would now not be available from the DfES as previously thought.

Following the discussion it was agreed that the Forum should consider the following issues:

- How the county spends/ allocates funding
- How the county's expenditure on SEN funding compares to other similar LEAs

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A member asked for clarification on how parents and teachers could raise questions and issues through their representative onto meetings of the Forum. It was reported that the Bucks County Council website and Schools Extranet holds a membership list and also provides details for contacting a member or raising questions. Members also noted that as an open meeting, members of the public could also attend meetings of the Forum. In addition the Chairman agreed to write a short article for inclusion in the next edition of Management Briefing.

The Chairman thanked Mr Phil Mitchell for his contribution to the Forum and the Strategic Manager for Schools also extended thanks on behalf of the LEA.

11 DATES AND TIMES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The following meetings were noted:

- 23 September 2003 at 3.00 pm in the Ireland Room, County Hall, Aylesbury
- 7 October 2003 9.30am-4.30pm in Seminar Room 2, Green Park Training Centre, Aston Clinton

CHAIRMAN