



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

SCHOOLS FORUM

AGENDA ITEM: 2

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 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 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 Sir William Ramsay School Oak Green School Aston Clinton School The Wye Valley School
Governors	Catherine Hinds Dominique Moat Alexandra Dart Dennis Morse Jenny Wainwright Brian Smith	Hughenden Infant School Wingrave Church of England Combined School Great Marlow School (for Richard Morris) Alfriston School The Misbourne School John Colet School
Representatives	Michael Moore Janet Riddington Colin Roberts	Catholic Diocese of Northampton NUT NASUWT
Observer	Sarah Rusby	Learning and Skills Council
Officers	Sue Imbriano John Beckerleg Alan Mander Len Brazier Sue Butt	Strategic Manager Schools Strategic Manager for Children and Young People Assistant Head of Finance Education Officer, Special Education Services Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Martin Ball, Hamilton Primary School; Ted Brown, Sir William Borlase's Grammar School; Mark Scott, Claytons Combined School; Christine Wilding, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership; Ian Bryant, Wendover CE Junior School and Richard Morris who was replaced by Alexandra Dart, Great Marlow School, for this meeting only.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2003, copies of which had been previously circulated, were agreed as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORK OF PETER DOWNES

The Chairman of the Funding Group, Tim Andrew, gave a verbal update on the work Mr Peter Downes had been commissioned to carry out on behalf of the Forum. The Chairman and another member of the sub-group met with Mr Downes on Thursday 18 September 2003 to review work and progress to date in preparation for his presentation of findings to the Forum at Green Park on Tuesday 7 October 2003. It was reported that Mr Downes was progressing well and had also met with the Assistant Head of Finance, Alan Mander, to obtain further data.

The Assistant Head of Finance reported that he had received a full set of comparative data from the DfES earlier that morning and that this would also be made available to Mr Downes. The Strategic Manager for Schools advised the Forum to air caution when comparing Buckinghamshire against other similar LEA's as like for like, as there were often inherent regional differences.

The Chairman envisaged that Mr Downes would take the morning of Tuesday 7 October to present his report and findings on the comparable statistical neighbour to Buckinghamshire, identified as Cambridgeshire, and the identification of a base line funding model per pupil, for discussion and consideration by the Forum in the afternoon session. It was confirmed that Mr Downes would not be providing a copy of his report before the meeting, as he was keen to hear and incorporate the views of the Forum into the report before completion.

5 SCHOOL FUNDING 2003/04 TO 2005/06

The Assistant Head of Finance, Alan Mander, updated the Forum on the current financial issues affecting the current financial year and future financial years of schools' funding.

It was noted that further information and analysis of the comparative data received earlier that morning from the DfES would be provided to the Forum at the next meeting. Members of the Forum were directed to the DfES website address if they wished to view the data: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/leagateway/section52>

The Forum requested a copy of the letter the Assistant Head of Finance sent to the DfES in August 2003 in response to the issues raised by Stephen Bishop regarding Schools Funding 2004/05. It was noted that the letter was not a County Council considered response but the personal and professional views of the Assistant Head of Finance. A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 1.

The Forum requested that they be consulted on all future correspondence where possible.

The Assistant Head of Finance envisaged that the Forum would need to consider the following issues over the coming months:

- The Secretary of State would be likely to look to Schools' Forums for advice and guidance on how best the percentage increase per pupil could be modelled.
- That the announcement of the percentage increase per pupil was not likely to occur before the level of the Teachers Pay Award is announced.

The representative from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) confirmed that guidance on LSC schools funding arrangements for 2003/04 and 2004/05 was now available on the website at:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/FundingLearning/Schoolsandsixthforms/Schoolsixthformsfundingguidance200304.htm>

The information on LSC allocations would be made available in November and two adjustments would be made to simplify the system. The DfES had guaranteed increased rates of funding for the LSC for the next financial year. The Forum noted that the LSC was currently consulting with schools on funding arrangements to make further refinements to the system for 2004/05. Members noted the additional dates for Sixth Form consultation events and were asked to contact andy.croft@lsc.gov.uk if they wished to attend.

- 22nd October Metropole Hilton Hotel, Birmingham
- 12th November Renaissance Hotel, Manchester
- 19th November Millennium Conference Centre Kensington, London

6 FUNDING SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

The Forum received and noted a report from John Beckerleg, Strategic Manager for Children and Young People, which provided further information on how money was allocated and spent in Buckinghamshire to meet pupils' special education needs.

It was noted that if a child was placed in an out-county placement then tuition fees would be funded by the providing authority but the County Council (as the home authority) would fund any additional resources required by the child. For Independent School places, it was noted that the County was responsible for all provision costs.

It was clarified that the County was currently not in a position to be able to provide extra provision for other authorities children.

The Forum noted that the challenge they faced was a balancing act of being able to provide for SEN pupils, where SEN needs were increasing, from a fixed budget that also had to provide for pupils in mainstream schooling under a needs led method of funding. The Forum were reminded that they should also consider the quality of provision for pupils with SEN as well as the cost as the complex needs of children with SEN must also be met.

The Forum requested further information and data on the following for discussion at the next meeting:

Statements of Pupils with SEN

- Clarification of the slight increase in the number of statements each year, where an increase of only 1 could be identified in Table 1

Unit Costs of Different Placements

- A breakdown of the three figures that make up the SSA funding for pupils in mainstream school
- Confirmation of whether the figure on Out-County Placements includes those pupils at independent schools

SEN Spending

- Information on trends of spending on SEN by the County Council in relation to other similar LEAs to illustrate comparable figures for overall pupil population.

7 ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSULTATION REVIEW GROUP

The Forum were reminded of the various items presented to them by the Assistant Head of Finance, Alan Mander, at the last meeting that they would need to consult with schools in the Autumn term. These items were as follows:

- Possible changes to premises factors
- Newly Qualified Teachers
- Nursery schools and Fair Funding
- Ethnic minority/ prior attainment
- Local bank accounts
- SEN Departments

In addition, the Forum would also be required to look at contracts, as set out in paragraph 10.3 of the Schools Forum Constitution.

The Chairman suggested and it was AGREED that two sub-groups be established with delegated powers to look at the following :

- 1. Contracts**
- 2. Consultation with schools – small scale issues**

It was AGREED that the Chairman would draw up suggested membership with a balance of representatives for both sub-groups for agreement at the next meeting of the Forum.

It was also noted that the Forum would need to ensure all communication with schools was in plain English for ease of understanding.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINES

Payment for Health Checks for School Staff

Concern was raised about the introduction of charging to schools for health checks for new staff where the charges had been applied retrospectively after schools had set their annual budget and where no additional monies had been assigned to schools to cover these costs. The Forum expressed concern about these additional costs and that no prior consultation was carried out.

The Forum AGREED and supported the concerns raised and requested that they be consulted on such issues in the future.

School Admissions Consultation

It was noted that the current consultation and proposed changes to school admissions arrangements would be likely to effect appeals and impact directly upon the number of appeals schools may be required to fund through the independent panel process operated by the LEA.

It was AGREED that the Forum should keep a close eye on the impact the admissions arrangements would be likely to have on the number of appeals in relation to schools funding.

Inclusion Policy

It was confirmed that the Inclusion Policy was currently under review and that a consultation document would shortly be sent to schools for comment and feedback. It was noted that underlying strategies within the inclusion policy and any subsequent changes would impact upon funding arrangements and as result should be looked at by the Forum.

OfSTED Inspection

It was reported that the County Council would be subject to an OfSTED inspection in February 2004. Although the precise focus of the inspection was not yet known the LEA confirmed that they would involve and consult with the Forum on any relevant issues.

9 DATES AND TIMES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Next meeting:

- Tuesday 7 October 2003 9.30am-4.30pm in Seminar Room 2, Green Park Training Centre, Aston Clinton

Provisional dates for future meetings were agreed as follows:

- Tuesday 18 November 2003 at 1.30pm
- Tuesday 2 December 2003 at 1.30pm
- Tuesday 13 January at 1.30pm

CHAIRMAN