



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## SCHOOLS FORUM

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### AGENDA ITEM: 2

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON MONDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2003 IN MAIN HALL 1, COACH HOUSE, GREEN PARK TRAINING CENTRE, COMMENCING AT 9.30AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.45PM.**

#### PRESENT

Headteachers	Tim Andrew Mike Barrie Derrick Fiske Tim Heaton Bob Milne Sue Tanner Shela Rowan Kieran Salter Linda Melton	Chesham High School (Chairman) Heritage House School Bedgrove Junior School Grendon Underwood School Tylers Green Middle School Chalfonts Community College Oak Green School Aston Clinton School The Wye Valley School
Governors	Catherine Hinds Dominique Moat Richard Morris Jenny Wainwright Brian Smith Mark Scott Ted Brown Brian Smith Martin Ball	Hughenden Infant School Wingrave Church of England Combined School Sir William Ramsay School The Misbourne School John Colet School Claytons Combined School Sir William Borlase Grammar School John Colet School Hamilton Primary School
Representatives	Michael Moore Janet Riddington Colin Roberts	Catholic Diocese of Northampton NUT NASUWT
Observer	Sarah Rusby Andy Croft	Learning and Skills Council Learning and Skills Council
Officers	Jane Brown Sue Butt	Accountancy Manager, Schools Democratic Services Officer

#### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Denis Morse, Alfriston School; Christine Wilding, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and Alan Mander, Assistant Head of Finance.

The Forum welcomed Sue Tanner, Headteacher at Chalfonts Community College, who replaces Phillip Mitchell following his retirement in September.

The Forum also noted with regret the resignation of Tim Andrew as Chairman of the Forum where his election to Vice Presidency of the Secondary Headteachers Association (SHA) this year and President in 2004/05 was placing greater demands on his time. The Forum was asked to consider nominations for the next meeting when the new Chairman would be elected.

## **2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2003, copies of which had been previously circulated, were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

### **6 Funding Special Education Needs in Buckinghamshire**

The addition of the following minute:

It was confirmed that Independent School Fees had been raised by 18% in the last year and that once a child was placed in that sector it was difficult to persuade parents that it was no longer the cost-effective placement.

The amendment of the word 'they' to read 'the LEA':

The Forum noted that the challenge the LEA 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 addition of the following agreed action by the Strategic Manager for Children and Young People:

A comparison of SEN numbers against all pupils to gain a better understanding of overall pupil population changes and percentage changes.

### **8 Any Other Business - Payment for Health Checks for School Staff**

The addition of the following agreed action by the Strategic Manager for Schools:

The Strategic Manager for Schools accepted the concerns of the Forum and agreed to discuss the issue with relevant officers.

## **3 MATTERS ARISING**

### **Payment for Health Checks for School Staff**

It was reported that the Strategic Manager for Schools had investigated the concerns of the Forum and that the decision had now been reversed and schools would be reimbursed any costs incurred for payment of health checks for new staff. The Forum welcomed this decision but noted that although payments for health checks would be met by the LEA in the current financial year, no decision had yet been taken as to future years.

The Forum requested and the Accountancy Manager AGREED to provide the following information at the meeting of the Forum in January:

- Details of how and when the delegation of the responsibility of Human Resources to fund health checks took place.
- Details of items which had been delegated to schools in recent years

## **4 REPORT FROM PETER DOWNES**

The Forum noted and received the report from Peter Downes that was produced following his presentation of findings on 7 October 2003. The Forum AGREED with the recommendations outlined at the end of the report.

The Forum AGREED that it would be useful to organise an Information Day and invite Elected Members to help them develop a better understanding of Schools Funding issues. It was AGREED that the new Chairman would look into this next year.

## **5 UPDATE FROM THE CONSULTATION GROUP**

The Forum received the minutes from the Consultation Group and noted the recommendations made by the sub-group for endorsement by the Forum.

**The Forum unanimously endorsed the three recommendations put forward by the Consultation Group. These were:**

### **Additional Funding Principle**

**If there was flexibility in headroom, to allocate an above minimum guarantee to all schools within the county and distribute the remaining amount to those schools/sectors identified as in most need.**

### **Newly Qualified Teachers**

**Use the number of NQTs in each school, (fte) in September 2003. This number would be multiplied by £3,365 (£3000 [2002/03] Standards Fund allocation 1.095\* 1.025).**

### **Ethnic Minority/ Low Achievement**

**Given that the Secretary of State is stipulating minimum increases per pupil in funding in 2004/05, neither the LEA nor the Group believed this was the time to be redistributing existing funds. The stated intention of the Secretary of State is for stability in 2004/05, compared to 2003/04. The Group felt that consideration could be given to the introduction of such a factor in future years, if it was felt to be desirable. It was noted that lower prior attainment for all pupils was taken into account in the present formula.**

A copy of the draft Financing of Maintained Schools Consultation document sent to members of the Consultation Group for comments was circulated to the Forum where it was noted that the sub-group had not been consulted on all the issues listed. The Forum AGREED to consider and make recommendations on the issues that had not been consulted on with the Consultation Group where the document had to be sent to schools within a few days.

- Standards Fund 2004/05  
The Forum recommended that an additional paragraph be inserted to explain that schools would continue to receive a guaranteed set amount as in previous years.  
**The Forum unanimously AGREED to support Option A.**
- Nursery Schools – Fair Funding Scheme 2004/05  
**The Forum unanimously AGREED to support Option A.**
- Special Education Needs: departments in mainstream schools  
**Following discussion, the Forum was of the agreement that there was insufficient information to make an informed recommendation.**
- Split Site Allowances – Primary Schools  
The Forum recommended that a review of the ‘at least 0.5miles apart’ formula used as eligibility criteria for receiving split site allowance should be reviewed next year where concern was expressed for those split site schools that fell under the 0.5miles but incurred additional costs.  
**The Forum unanimously AGREED to support Option A.**

The Forum AGREED that an additional paragraph should be added to the Introduction statement on the Consultation document to encourage and welcome feedback from schools on the recommendations endorsed by the Forum.

In addition, the Forum AGREED that it would be helpful for the new Chairman to write an update article on the work of the Schools Forum for inclusion in the next edition of the Schools Management Briefing.

The Forum discussed the need for delegated decision making powers of the sub-groups and AGREED the following additional paragraph to be inserted into the Constitution under Paragraph 8:

**Any formal recommendations made to the Council shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members present at a meeting of the Forum and not by any sub-groups.**

The Forum recommended and it was AGREED that officers would draft a set of Terms of Reference for the Consultation Group to define the tasks it is to carry out.

## **6 UPDATE FROM FUNDING GROUP**

Kieran Salter gave a verbal update to the Forum of the work of the Funding Group to date. It was noted that the group had taken as its starting point the original Five Heads report and had updated the assumptions and calculations contained in the report for changes in costs during the intervening period. It had not been possible in the time available to deal with the potential costs of new or future expectations of practise in schools.

It was accepted that substantial additional funding streams had come into play since the report was originally written which had had the effect of closing the perceived gap between schools' needs and actual levels of funding, however the general conclusion of the group was that all sectors remain under-funded, but in proportional terms Key Stage 2 was more so than other sectors.

The Forum noted that a report including recommendations would be tabled at the next meeting in December.

The Forum noted that Mike Barrie was keen to develop a similar report to that of the Five Heads on Special Education Services/Needs.

## **7 SCHOOLS BUDGETS 2004/05**

The Accountancy Manager, Jane Brown, presented a report on Schools Budgets 2004/05 on behalf of the Assistant Head of Finance and circulated a copy of the Summary of Provisional Minimum Guarantee Calculations 2004/05.

### **Minimum Funding Guarantee 2004/05**

The Forum noted that it was important not to lose sight of the aim towards a local formula where historic funding anomalies continue to arise.

### **Learning and Skills Council – Post-16 Funding**

Representatives from the Learning and Skills Council confirmed that the final set of information would be distributed to schools with sixth forms in December.

The Forum requested the LEA to look into the provision of post-16 funding for SEN pupils where funding was passed from the LSC directly to the LEA. The Accountancy Manager

AGREED to provide a report to the January meeting of the Forum detailing how post-16 funding for SEN pupils is deemed to be distributed.

### **Standards Fund**

The Accountancy Manager AGREED to circulate a copy of the circular on Standards Fund at the next meeting of the Forum in December.

### **Targeted Transitional Fund**

The Forum noted and discussed the report from Kieran Salter on the Confed Conference and considered the proposals put forward. The Forum were unhappy about the grant and the perverse incentives it could trigger but were of the opinion that the funding should not be turned away. The Forum unanimously endorsed the proposals put forward and AGREED additional recommendations. These were:

**The Forum recommends that the LEA applies for the full amount of transitional grant available to the Authority both in 2004/05 and in 2005/06 and in so doing lists the schools it intends to support.**

**The Forum accepts that those schools that have a significant deficit budget should be eligible for support from Transitional Funding Grant and that therefore the grant is equitably distributed amongst all these schools.**

**The Forum requested and the Accountancy Manager AGREED that the LEA identify and define what would be meant by 'a significant deficit budget' and how it would be 'equitably distributed'.**

**The Forum requests that the LEA set up procedures to ensure that those schools in a receipt of School Specific Targeted Grant have a support and monitoring package to make sure sound financial planning systems are in place thus resulting in effective use of the grant in assisting to solve the problem.**

**The Accountancy Manager confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Schools would be considering the establishment of a small dedicated team, to work with schools with deficit budgets to develop recovery plans and put in place the monitoring and support package.**

**The Forum recommends to the LEA that any school which does not wish to accept the support and monitoring should be required to solve their deficit budget through other means.**

### **Financial Management**

The Forum commented upon the usefulness to headteachers and governors of comparative financial information and the Accountancy Manager AGREED to ensure that schools were made aware of how such information could be obtained.

requested and the Accountancy Manager AGREED to look into the reinstatement of comparative budget monitoring details of schools for headteachers and governors to consult where it was felt that this information was useful.

### **Teachers' Pay**

The Forum requested that the LEA lobby government on behalf of the Forum on their decision not to review fringe allowances in Buckinghamshire in 2005 where it was felt that the cost of living in the County needs to be continually reviewed.

### **Provisional Revenue Support Grant Settlement 2004/05**

It was noted that more information on the allocation would be available at the next meeting of the Forum in December but that it was expected that the headroom would be a significant amount.

## **8 ANY OTHER BUSINES**

### **Report to Schools Forum of a meeting held with George Phipson**

The Forum noted the funding issues outlined in the report produced by Kieran Salter following a meeting he had with George Phipson (NAHT Consultant), copies of which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Forum requested and the Accountancy Manager AGREED to provide further details on the issues raised in the report. The Forum were however asked to consider the issues raised in the report in conjunction with the Strategic Manager for Schools letter of 12 May 2003 to DfES and copied to all schools.

### **Time Commitments of Members of the Forum**

The Chairman acknowledged the concerns of the increased time commitments required to attend meetings where it was initially thought the Forum would only meet 3 or 4 times a year. It was noted that this was unfortunately unavoidable where the Committee was a new statutory body that had a large amount of work to get through and advise on. Forum members were also reminded that an expense claim system had been set up to reimburse for attendance at meetings.

## **9 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Tuesday 2 December 2003 at 1.30pm, Coach House, Main Hall 1, Green Park Training Centre
- Tuesday 13 January 2004 at 1.30pm, Mezzanine 2, County Hall Aylesbury

**CHAIRMAN**