

THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10th JANUARY 2003

PRESENT

Mr A. Abernethy	(Carlisle Secondary)
Mr R. Alston	(Foundation Secondary)
Mr P. Bell	(Community and VC Primary)
Mr S. Bowditch	(Special Schools)
Mr C. Brooksbank	(Foundation Primary)
Mr A. Bryant	(Cumbrian Governors' Council)
Mr P.G.Chappelhow	(Conservative Group – CCC)
Mr C. Clarke	(South Lakeland Secondary)
Mr D. Clarke	(Labour Group – CCC)
Mrs R. Denby	(Small Primary Schools)
Mr J. Douglas	(V.A. C of E)
Mrs T.Eyre	(Copeland Primary)
Ms S. Gaston-Parry	(Copeland Secondary)
Mr S. Halfpenny	(Carlisle Primary)
Ms V. Hallard	(Cumbrian LSC)
Mr T. Hobson	(Eden Secondary)
Mr M.Hrynkow	(Barrow Primary)
Mr D. Kinsella	(Diocesan Authorities)
Mrs E. Moffatt	(Barrow Secondary)
Mr C. Rafferty	(Allerdale Primary)
Mr R. Rogers	(Eden Primary)
Mr A. Rutter	(Teachers Professional Associations)
Mrs M. Saunders	(Community and VC Secondary)
Mr P. Shaw	(Allerdale Secondary)
Mrs J. Stocker	(Cabinet Member for Education)
Mr R. Whittaker	(VA Catholic)
Mr M. Woodburn	(South Lakeland Primary)

Officers in attendance :

Mr J. Nellist	(Director of Education)
Mr D. Johnston	(Education)
Mr A. Hodge	(Education)
Mr M. Scott	(Education)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Director of Education welcomed members to the first meeting of the Schools Forum

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Nominations were invited from members for the position of Chair. Three were submitted , S .Halfpenny , R Alston and A Rutter. On being put to the vote the result was :

R . Alston	-	9
S . Halfpenny	-	7
A . Rutter	-	6

A.Rutter having received the fewest votes did not proceed to the next ballot, the result of which was :

R . Alston	-	13
S . Halfpenny	-	9

R. Alston was therefore declared Chair of the Cumbria Schools Forum.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM

The Forum considered a report describing the process for appointment and election of members with details of the member duly elected.

Nominations for substitutes to attend meetings of the Forum should be forwarded to Anton Hodge and preferably be agreed by member constituencies. In the event of a member of the Forum resigning within the three year term, nominations for a replacement should be sought from the relevant constituency.

The report was noted.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Forum considered a report which set out the draft terms of reference for the Forum.

Following discussion it was agreed that :

- a) the actual costs of supply cover would be reimbursed
- b) wherever possible members of the Forum would be informed in advance if a quorum could not be reached as a result of apologies for absence received.
- c) An e-mail database will be produced centrally for Forum members.

The report was approved subject to the changes outlined above.

6. FORUM / EDUCATION BUDGET

The Director of Education provided the Forum with a contextual background of the overall Education Budget focussing on a number of key issues.

- a) The Standard Spending Assessment will be replaced in 2003/04 with the Formula Spending Share (FFS) divided into two elements : the Schools Budget (approx 85%) and the LEA Budget (approx 15%)
- b) The Budget settlement for the County Council is 1.2 % below the Shire County Average .The settlement for Education is more generous than the County Council settlement – a 7.5 % increase compared to 4.6 % for the County Council. It is envisaged that the 7.5 % increase for Education will be passported to the Schools Budget. The budget paper will be considered by Cabinet on 14th January 2003 – papers will be circulated to the Forum after the Cabinet meeting.
- c) A number of Standards Fund grants will be incorporated into delegated school budget shares. These include Infant Class Size, School Improvement , School Inclusion , Performance Management , NQT Induction.

Given the tight timetable for the creation of the Schools Forum and the deadline for submitting amendments to the Fair Funding scheme to the Secretary of State the initial task of the group is to meet the requirements of legislation. It is envisaged that future meetings of the Forum will be more proactive in debating proposed financial changes before consultation takes place. Meetings of the Forum will be scheduled at appropriate times in the yearly budget cycle.

The Forum considered a paper setting out details of the draft annual budget for the Forum (£16,000). It was confirmed that the funding for this would come from the non-delegated element of the Schools Budget.

The Forum budget was approved. It was also agreed that meetings of the Schools Forum should circulate around the County.

7. INFANT CLASS SIZE

The Forum considered a report on the Infant Class Size grant. The grant is currently targeted at schools to enable them to maintain infant classes of not more than 30 pupils. As from September 2003 all funding must be delegated to schools through the Fair Funding formula. The paper outlined a number of options for delegating the money and took into account the views of the LMS Working Party and the result of consultation with schools.

It was recognised that no one option could fully address the need of all schools in meeting the class size requirements. From the schools who responded in the consultation exercise Option 5 was preferred and this delegated an additional amount per KS1 pupil via AWPU across all schools.

After some discussion the Forum agreed to recommend Option 5.

8. CHANGES TO THE SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

A draft copy of Cumbria's Scheme for Financing Schools for 2003/04 was presented. This incorporated a number of proposed amendments to the existing scheme, mainly as a result of DFES revised regulations.

After agreeing the following amendments , the draft scheme was approved.

Appendix A – Schedule of Schools :

James Rennie	- age range should be 3 – 19
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Penrith	- age range should be 11 – 18

During the discussion the following points were noted.

2.12 Central Funds and Earmarking – the issue of late notification of Standard Fund budgets was raised which was creating difficulties with financial planning.

4.2 Surplus Balances - after April 2004 it will be possible for the scheme to be amended to provide for clawback of surplus balances in excess of 5%

11.11 Child Protection - in some instances the costs incurred can impose pressure on school budgets.

11.12 School Meals - the LEA is currently developing a policy.

9. SCHOOL MEALS

The Forum considered a report on the delegation of school meals. Following extensive consultation a proposal to defer delegation until April 2004 has been recommended by Cabinet. This will enable the LEA to develop a policy by Autumn 2003.

The Forum agreed to note the report and revisit the issue at a future meeting.

10. FUNDING FORMULAE FOR SPECIFIC GRANTS

The Forum considered a report on funding formulae for specific grants. In previous years the Standards Fund Working Party have met to discuss formulae etc relating to specific grants. In 2003/04 it was proposed that existing formulae be used in the majority of cases. The main exceptions being :

SF 206A Study Support – to increase the age range of pupils from Year 3 to Year 11 to Year 1 to Year 11

Small Schools Fund - it had been suggested that a small school be defined as less than 100 pupils (Primary) and 400 pupils (Secondary). After some debate it was agreed that the DFES benchmark of 200 pupils (Primary) and 600 pupils (Secondary) continue to be used to define a “small school”

For 2003/04 the DFES have advised the LEA that five grants will be paid through delegated budgets rather than individual Standards Fund categories. DFES contributions and LEA contributions will be transferred to schools on a pound for pound basis.

The proposals recommended in the report were approved.

11. EARLY YEARS

The Forum considered a report on changes to Early Years funding effective from September 2004. From this date the LEA will be required to provide places for 3 year olds from the beginning of the term after their third birthday. This will require a termly count to be introduced in order to collect relevant pupil data and thereby enable funding to be allocated.

The proposal recommended in the report was approved.

12. FAIR FUNDING SCHEME AMENDMENTS

The Forum considered a report on two minor amendments to the Fair Funding Scheme. Schools and other interested parties have been consulted on the proposals and the results were outlined in the report.

Nursery Funding – Mainstream Schools

In maintained schools funding for Nursery children is currently provided on the basis of five half day sessions per week. In some instances where parents opt for split provision between the public and private sector pupils may not be in schools for the five sessions.

It was agreed that schools should be funded only for the enrolled sessions of nursery aged pupils.

14 –16 Year Old Pupils attending both School and College

An amendment to DFES regulations now enables LEA's to fund pupils on a differential basis where they attend both School and College.

After some discussion it was agreed not to amend the scheme and to continue to fund all 14-16 year old pupils at a flat rate.

13. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LMS WORKING GROUP

Some discussion took place regarding the relationship between the Schools Forum and the LMS Working Group. The main conclusions from the discussion were :

- The link between the LMS Working Group and the Schools Forum needs to be retained. It was suggested that a report from the LMS Working Group should appear as a standing item on the Schools Forum agenda.
- The existing format and nature of the dialogue that takes place in the LMS group was valued by schools and members of the County Council.
- The development of links between the Schools Forum and other existing officer/member groups be explored and reviewed at a future meeting of the Forum.
- The Chairman of the Schools Forum would hold discussions with relevant officers regarding the development of the Schools Forum and the establishment of links with other groups.

14. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The procedure for placing items on future agendas was discussed. It was agreed that members of the Forum could consult with their constituents regarding proposed agenda items and submit details to the Clerk of the Schools Forum. A pre-agenda meeting involving the Chairman would be established.

It was decided to hold a further meeting towards the end of the Spring Term to discuss the following issues ;

- feedback on the budget process
- standing orders
- relationship with the LMS group
- development of the Schools Forum
- term of appointment for the Chair of the Forum.

Minutes of each meeting will be circulated to Forum members and schools via e-mail and a set posted on the Schools Forum web-site.