

## THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM

### DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2003

#### PRESENT

Mr A. Abernethy	(Carlisle Secondary)
Mr R. Alston	(Foundation Secondary)
Mr P. Bell	(Community and VC Primary)
Mr A. Bobbett	(Conservative Group – CCC)
Mr S. Bowditch	(Special Schools)
Mr C. Brooksbank	(Foundation Primary)
Mr A. Bryant	(Cumbrian Governors' Council)
Mr P. Chappelhow	(Conservative Group – CCC)
Mr C. Clarke	(South Lakeland Secondary)
Mr I. Davies	(Diocesan Authorities)
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)
Mr T. Hobson	(Eden Secondary)
Mr C. Rafferty	(Allerdale Primary)
Mr R. Rogers	(Eden Primary)
Mr A. Rutter	(Teachers Professional Associations)
Mr P. Shaw	(Allerdale Secondary)
Mrs J. Stocker	(Cabinet Member for Education)
Mr B. Thomas	(The Early Years Partnership)
Mr E. Tumelty	(VA Catholic)
Mr M. Woodburn	(South Lakeland Primary)

#### Officers in attendance :

Mrs V. Ashfield	(Director of Education)
Mr D. Johnston	(Education)
Mr A. Hodge	( Education Finance)

#### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from :

Mr D. Clarke	(Labour Group – CCC)
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Mr I. Davies	(Diocesan Authorities)
Ms V. Hallard	(Cumbrian LSC)
Mrs E Moffat	(Barrow Secondary)
Mr B. Thomas	(The Early Years Partnership)
Mr M. Woodburn	(South Lakeland Primary)

## **2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2003**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003 were agreed.

## **3. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the minutes

## **4. FORUM BUSINESS - CONDUCT.**

As a prelude to the day's business, the Chair expressed some concern regarding attendance to meetings of the Working Groups. These groups are small but, as they are the backbone of the Forum. Good attendance is essential.

In the context of next year's budgets, the impending announcement by the Secretary of State regarding a minimum funding increase for every school might impinge on any major changes to the formula, and also move items out of the delegated budget.

It was also noted that in future, Forum papers would not automatically come from the "Corporate Director". This was simply the way the CCC reports are currently issued and the style has been followed. In future report headings would be more appropriate.

The Forum then considered a report which highlighted the volume of matters which would be discussed in future meetings. In order to facilitate this process, it was suggested that, following the submission of agenda items, the Chair and Vice Chair, after giving detailed consideration to some of these items, would report back to the Forum with any recommendation and supporting information.

A number of assurances were sought from members. Such items would not be those which are considered to be the remit of the Working Groups. Members would be able to hold further discussion and debate on any of the items and recommendations made by the Chair and Vice Chair.

The Forum then agreed that:

***"following the submission of items of business to the chair, that he determines those items that both he and the Vice Chair could give more detailed consideration to and that the chair be then required to report back to the Forum with their recommendation and supporting detail."***

## 5. BUDGET UPDATE

The Forum considered a paper looking at budget issues for 2004-05. A national increase in Education Formula Spending Share of 5.53% is expected, but Cumbria can only expect this amount if the underlying data in the national formula is moving in the same way as that in Cumbria, e.g. if the estimated fall in pupil numbers in Cumbria is in line with the national average. It also unclear whether this 5.53% reflects the originally-planned transfer of Standards Fund grants to the FSS.

Cumbria currently spends £9m more on the schools budget than the government's FSS. We will also be expected to "passport" any increase (in cash terms) to the FSS to our schools budget. LEAs will not be able to increase the centrally-held budget section of the schools budget by a larger percentage than the increase in delegated funds.

A number of budget pressures were identified in the paper. These referred almost exclusively to the central-held budget.

Because of the minimum funding guarantee every school would be able to calculate at least its minimum level of funding by the beginning of January. The Local Government settlement is expected in mid-November. LSC figures are expected mid-December. With the pupil count happening late January, provisional school budgets would be available mid February, but probably no earlier.

The Forum

*noted the position on the budget setting process for 2004/05 and particularly the current uncertainties relating to school funding; and*

*referred discussion of the centrally-held pressures regarding the Specialist Teaching Service to the SEN Working Group, to report back at the next meeting*

## 6. REPORTS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS

The minutes of the Working Groups are attached as an Appendix, although they have yet to be approved.

(i) Social Deprivation

The Group will continue modelling work on the allocation of funding for Social deprivation. It will also look at the different indicators of deprivation.

(ii) School Size

The underlying issue is that with pupil numbers falling across the county, we are likely to be spending more on small schools' protection in future years, at a cost

to all schools. Cumbria already had more small schools than most other authorities. The Group was looking at the viability of small schools but recognised that it was not merely a question of size, but also of location.

There was also some discussion of Federation. This was not necessarily a money-saver, but might be useful in promoting future amalgamation and closure

The Forum recommended that

**The LEA operate a Small Schools Working Together Fund but that there needed to be clarification on how this was targeted and monitored.**

**The LEA and Forum continue to look at options for small schools protection (from 2005-06), taking into account the remarks of the Working Group, particularly regarding falling pupil rolls, minimum guarantee and surplus places.**

(iii) SEN

The Group had considered the issue of Social Inclusion Funding. No secondary member had been able to make it to the meetings and members of the Forum felt that this issue needed further discussion. There was some disquiet among members of CASH regarding its allocation and operation.

The Forum agreed that:

**The issue of Social Inclusion Funding be sent back to the SEN Group for reconsideration and that this Group's membership be strengthened.**

The Group also recommended that,

**From 2004-05, the LEA should allocate only 5/12ths of stated funding for Y2 (Infant schools only), Y6 (Junior and Primary schools) and Y11 Pupils (Secondary and Special schools).**

This was supported by the Forum.

(iv) Contracts

The Group had looked mainly at School Meals, Supply Teaching list and the relationship with CAPITA.

The Group had recommended that the Forum agree that the LEA should commission CAPITA to produce a County-wide Supply List on its behalf. This would be available to all schools. There would be an indirect cost to schools of around £75 each per annum, as the LEA would pay CAPITA on their behalf from a central budget.

**The Forum asked the Working Group to look at the costs involved and some of the issues raised today and to invite representatives from CAPITA to explain more about the possible service, before reporting back at the November meeting.**

Agenda Item 9 (School Meals) was considered at this point in the meeting. Statutory consultation would take place with all schools within the next few weeks. The Forum's view, expressed at the November 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, would be taken into account (along with the results of the consultation) at the Cabinet in December.

Formal consultation had not yet taken place. Officers had been working with schools to look at implementing any changes caused by a formula review and /or delegation in April 2004. The proposed formula would be designed to ensure that all schools would be able to serve a hot meal when asked, within budget. Any savings resulting from a change in the formula would need to be redirected into the Schools Budget, under expected regulations.

The Forum agreed that:

*schools be consulted and the Forum establish a Working Party to consider the principle of delegation to primary and special schools and also the detail of the formula with a report back to the Schools Forum on 19 November. This would be the work of the Contracts Group, but other school representatives would be invited onto the Group.*

(iv) Funding

The Funding Working Group had considered possible changes in the Formula regarding floors and ceilings and other allowable components, but had decided, in view of uncertainties for next year regarding minimum funding guarantees.

The Chair proposed that the format of the Groups be retained for the moment and be reviewed in January. There were no objections to this.

## **7. SCHOOL BUDGET DEFICITS**

The Director spoke on this issue. There is some concern regarding the increase in deficits over the past couple of years. This referred not just to the aggregate net position, but also to a number of individual cases. Although this year was unexpectedly bad, some schools have not acted early enough to deal with the situation. Before this year, there were 5 good years of funding for schools. Should net balances go lower than 0, there would be implications for the County Council.

In dealing with this issue, there might be future changes to the Fair Funding Scheme and to the Formula. A paper outlining the scale of this would be brought to the next meeting.

## **8. ALLOCATION OF FORMER STANDARDS FUND GRANTS**

DfES had originally signalled its intention to discontinue 7 further Standards Fund (SF) Grants from April 2004. However, that decision has been reversed, and there is still a possibility that funding will come to the LEA, outside the FSS, but as a separate grant. The Forum *recommended that funding equivalent to the former grant allocations be distributed as in 2002-03 i.e.*

- (1) Special Education Needs – referred back to SEN Working Group*
- (2) Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco – to be retained to fund the salaries of three employees (as per 2003/04).*
- (3) Study Support – 85% devolved to schools, 15% retained centrally to fund two posts (as per 2003/04).*
- (4) Golden Hellos – to fund identified teacher appointments.*
- (5) Advanced Skills Teachers – 100% devolved to schools with ASTs (as per 2003/04)*
- (6) School Support Grant – 80% devolved to schools based on pupil numbers. Of the remaining 20%, 80% of this is devolved to small schools (less than 200 primary and less than 600 secondary) and the balance retained centrally for allocation to small schools making successful collaborative bids.*
- (7) Teachers Sabbaticals – to support identified teachers.*

## **9. SCHOOL MEALS**

See Item 6 (iv) above.

## **10. NURSERY SCHOOL DELEGATION**

Nursery delegation will take place from April 2004. There was a discussion on the respective advantages of pupil and place-led funding. Place-led was more stable but could also encourage surplus places and would not be consistent with the funding of primary schools.

*Although there was not a lot of strong feeling on this issue, the Forum's view was that Nursery Schools should be funded on a temporary formula for the first year, but that after that they should be considered alongside any general review of small schools.*

There was an assumption that Nursery schools would have a representative on the Forum at some point in the future.

## **11. INFANT CLASS SIZE GRANTS**

The Forum recommended that, as promised, schools should be consulted on whether to introduce a new component aimed at helping schools with budget pressures caused by class size limits in reception and Key Stage 1. The consultation would be similar to that of last year.

## **12. TRADE UNION CONVENOR**

In April the Council agreed protocols and facilities with both UNISON and GMB. Under the agreement, the Council funds 1 full time representative from UNISON and 1 full time representative from GMB to deal with corporate issues. The Council also agreed in principle that where union membership and workload justified it, directorates would be asked to consider funding a full time representative to deal with directorate issues. It was suggested that UNISON's membership/workload level in schools would justify a full time representative.

A number of members expressed concern at this proposal. There was too little information regarding the possible duties of such a post and whether there was enough UNISON membership in schools to justify it.

The Forum asked for more information to be presented to the next meeting

**Agenda Items 13 and 14 were referred to the next meeting**