

THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2003

PRESENT

Mr R. Alston (Foundation Secondary)
Mr C. Birnie (Eden Secondary representing Mr T. Hobson)
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 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 (Cumbria LSC)
Mr M. Hrynkow (Barrow Primary)
Ms E. Moffatt (Barrow Secondary)
Mr C. Rafferty (Allerdale Primary)
Mr R. Rodgers (Eden Primary)
Mr A. Rutter (Teachers' Professional Associations)
Mr P. Shaw (Allerdale Secondary)
Mr W. Smith (Labour Group – CCC representing Mr D. Clarke)
Mr E. Tumelty (V.A. Catholic)
Mr M. Yearsley (Allerdale Secondary)
Mr M. Woodburn (South Lakeland Primary)

Mrs J Stocker (Cabinet Member - Observer) joined the meeting 1.15 pm

Officers in attendance:

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr A. Abernethy (Carlisle Secondary)
Mr D. Clarke (Labour Group – CCC)
Mr I. Davies (Diocesan Authorities)
Mrs R. Denby (Small Primary Schools)
Mr T. Hobson (Eden Secondary)
Mr B. Thomas (The Early Years Partnership)

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2003

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2003 were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the minutes. It was however requested that the pages be numbered in the future.

4. EDUCATION FUNDING 2004/05 – LATEST INFORMATION

There was a presentation to the Forum by David Johnston, Education and Anton Hodge, Education Finance. The presentation gave members of the Forum an overview of the budget process for the County Council as a whole. It then went on to look in more detail at the Education Budget and how that was split into two blocks – Schools and LEA.

All figures quoted were provisional because the announcement from Government regarding the expected level of expenditure and allocations had not yet been received. It was in fact expected later that day.

In order to progress the budget process, certain assumptions had been made about the allocations but Forum members were asked to treat all figures with caution.

The presentation was well received and was useful in setting the context for the discussions that would take place during the course of the day.

5. SCHOOL BALANCES – ESTIMATED 31 MARCH 2004

The Forum received a report which gave details of actual school balances for the last three years together with the estimated position as at 31 March 2004. This report had been requested at the last meeting of the Forum (minute 7 of meeting held on 14 October refers). The report illustrated how the number of schools with sizeable surplus balances had reduced. It was significant that the number of schools with deficit budgets had not really changed. Also highlighted was a change regarding Standards Fund (SF) allocations. Up until 31 March 2001

allocations had to be spent by schools by the end of the financial year, i.e. there was no carry forward of unspent allocation. From 2002, however, schools were allowed to spend the allocations over a 17 month period. The Secretary of state had also given approval to schools utilising £1m of their formula capital allocation in 2003/04 to meet revenue expenditure. This was reflected in the estimated balances at 31 March 2004.

During the debate it emerged that there were a number of concerns regarding capital formula. It appeared that some schools were receiving capital allocations that they were unable to utilise while other schools were in need of additional allocations. The Director agreed that this was an area that should be considered further and was also one that would need to be consulted upon. The Chair suggested that this was a capital issue, not just an issue about capital formula.

The Forum noted the report and recommended that one of the Working Groups consider in more detail issues relating to:

- Capital – to analyse and if appropriate propose changes that could be consulted on.
- Surpluses/Deficits and consider possible changes to the formula.
- Longer term budget planning – three year budget cycles.

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 Working Group

Social Inclusion

There were some concerns regarding the process by which funding “followed” a permanently excluded child. Officers agreed to consider how to improve the process.

The Forum agreed that: -

- (a) For the next year, the current arrangements for allocating the Pupil Retention Grant (equivalent funding) would be retained and that the principle of the “funding following the child” be maintained. The continuation of the current arrangements would ensure that resources were available to schools admitting previously excluded pupils, or were available to ensure alternative provision was available.
- (b) In the longer term (2005/06), to re-examine the arrangements and explore alternative arrangements for

allocating the totality of resources for children with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.

Social Deprivation

The group had looked at a number of models used for the allocation of social deprivation funding. They had noted with interest the effect of the different funding models on various schools but had decided not to recommend a change in the current formula for 2004/05. The group were to look at further modelling based on post code data at their next meeting in February.

(ii) Special Education Needs Sub Group

Specialist Teaching Staff

Would be dealt with at item 9 on the agenda.

Social Inclusion

The SEN Sub-Group were concerned that they were replicating some of the work of the Social Deprivation Group. However, with regard to funding for the Pupil Retention element, both groups had agreed that the principal of the funding “following the child” should continue. Further consideration would be given to examining alternative ways of making the allocations and a report would be submitted to the Social Deprivation Group for consideration.

Funding of Statements

The group had discussed the practice of increasing the value of statements by the average cost increases e.g. inflation, pay awards etc. In some prior years this had resulted in statement values increasing at a higher rate than AWPU's but this trend had been reversed in recent years. The group had agreed that for the coming year statements would be increased to cover additional costs but that the matter would be examined further during the coming year. Research would be undertaken and the group would be advised about the practice used by other LEAs in funding special schools.

Post 16 SEN Funding

There were concerns regarding the current methodology used by the LSC for allocating SEN funding to sixth forms. The group invited the Chair to write to the LSC expressing these concerns.

It was agreed that the Chair, in consultation with officers, would, on behalf of the Forum, formally write to LSC (nationally) expressing concerns over the present methodology adopted by LSC for Post 16 SEN Funding.

(iii) Contracts Working Group

Supply List

The group had considered a report which looked at the possibility of maintaining an LEA supply list. Schools needed to be able to comply with legal requirements regarding CRB and medical checks. It was in this context that the Working Group had considered the re-establishment of an LEA supply list. In order to minimise the cost of the list the group proposed that individual teachers should pay for their own CRB and medical checks.

The provision of an LEA supply list had been one of the items that schools had recently been consulted upon. The Forum noted that the consultation exercise had not supported the provision of an LEA supply list. The Forum agreed that:

- The LEA should negotiate with CAPITA to issue a supply list for schools in Cumbria and selected members of the Forum would be involved in the negotiations.
- The Forum would recommend to schools that they use the supply list or would otherwise be aware of the legal conditions surrounding the employment of teachers.

School Meals

The group had considered the principle of delegation of the school meals budget to primary and special schools and the detail of the formula. School meals had also been one of the items included in the recent consultation questionnaire. The Forum had a long debate during which concern was expressed about the size of the proposed reduction in budget and the short timescale for implementation. It was also noted that this issue had not been supported by the consultation exercise. The Director explained that she had recently written to all schools to clarify the situation with regard to the proposed delegation and to outline the steps that were being taken to help schools through the process. She went on to explain that the savings achieved in the first year would be reduced due to contributions towards potential redundancy costs incurred by Cumbria Contract Services. However, in future years there should be substantial savings available for educational investment.

This issue was to be further considered by Cabinet on 2 December and it was requested that the views of the Forum, as set out in the notes of the Contracts Working Group held on 17 November 2003 be made available to members of Cabinet.

The Forum then agreed to support the principle of delegation but expressed concern regarding the size of the proposed budget reduction, possible turbulence and the timescale.

7. SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS – PROPOSED CHANGES

The Forum's views were sought regarding proposed changes to Cumbria's scheme of delegation with particular regard to delegation to nursery schools and funding to meet the cost of a trade union convenor.

Legislation required that Nursery Schools received delegated budgets under the terms of an approved scheme for funding schools and it was proposed that the current scheme applicable to primary, secondary and special schools be extended to include nursery schools.

Employers are legally obliged to release employees (with pay) for trade union duties. Unison had proposed that a full time convenor be funded by the Education Service in order to enhance the service for school based staff. The cost of this would be approximately £25,000 per annum and would be met from within the Schools Budget. The Forum expressed concern that the cost of the convenor would reduce funding available to schools and also that such an appointment would not be consistent with the current practice of support granted to teacher unions and associations.

The Forum agreed that: -

- (a) Cumbria's existing scheme of delegation should apply to Nursery Schools and
- (b) Support to non-teacher unions should be on the same basis as that to teacher unions and associations i.e. that union representatives should be accorded reasonable time off with pay while undertaking trade union duties and that employing schools should be reimbursed from central funds additional costs incurred.

8. FORMULA FOR FUNDING SCHOOLS – PROPOSED CHANGES

The Forum considered options for changing the formula for funding schools for the following: -

Special Educational Needs Funding

The Forum recommended that from 2004-05 the LEA would allocate 5/12ths of the stated value through the formula for year 2 pupils (infant schools) year 6 and year 11 pupils. The balance would be allocated and transferred to schools in September when the destination of pupils was known.

Infant Class Size Funding

Schools had been consulted on five different options for infant class size funding (the current basis plus four alternatives). The consultation exercise had favoured the status quo. There was some debate before it was proposed that the status quo, Option 1, be maintained. When put to the vote, the proposal fell. A second proposal, Option 5 was then moved. This was felt to be a more favourable option which gave all infant schools some money whilst also targeting class size issues. After being put to the vote, the Forum recommended that: -

50% of total funding (from infant class size grant) to be allocated to schools on the basis of ghost pupils, up to 15, i.e. schools with 31 pupils has 14 'ghost pupils'. Only schools with more than 30 infant pupils to receive this part of the funding. Remaining 50% to be allocated on actual infant pupil numbers.

Nursery Schools

All schools had been consulted on whether a formula for nursery schools should be based on places or pupils. Again five options had been proposed and illustrations of the amount of funding that might be received under each option were provided. The focus of the debate was that the method of the funding should be equitable.

However the Forum recommended that the preferred option should be Option 5 but moving toward Option 2 in future. Option 5 provides that schools would be funded on a pupil led formula but with transitional arrangements for one year resulting in their total budget allocation being equivalent to their current level of funding. Option 2 is the pupil led formula that currently applies to all infant and primary schools.

9. OTHER FUNDING ISSUES

The Forum considered a report that drew attention to two issues which if agreed would have implications for the Schools Budget.

Schools Budget/Catering

If a decision was taken to delegate responsibility for catering to primary and special schools it was estimated that there could be a revenue 'saving' of approximately £1.8m per annum, £500k would be required in the first year to fund expected redundancies and the remainder would be used to re-equip school kitchens. Expenditure on redundancies would not count as being part of the schools budget but would have to be met from within the LEA budget funding block.

The Chair reminded the Forum of their earlier decision to support the principle of delegation and it was agreed that: -

The Forum support an application by the LEA requesting the Secretary of State's approval for the non-passporting of £500k of funding increase into the School's

Budget for 2004-05. This would enable the LEA to meet the cost of the additional catering service redundancies from within the LEA block.

Specialist Teaching Service

A report was presented to the Forum drawing attention to the excess demands faced by the Specialist Teaching Service and proposed the appointment of 3 additional teachers at a cost of £125k. If agreed, this sum would fall as a charge within the non-delegated part of the Schools Budget. The report had previously been considered by the Education Directorate Business Management Board, who had recommended their support of the proposal to the Forum. The SEN Working Group had made no recommendation.

The Forum while accepting that there were pressures on the service felt that it required further detail before it was able to support the request for additional resources. The SEN Sub-Group would meet in January 2004 to consider the matter further before making recommendations to the full Forum on 19 January 2004.

10. CHAIR/VICE CHAIR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chair presented a report which set out the recommendations of the Chair and Vice Chair in respect of two possible changes to the scheme of delegation.

The Forum supported the recommendation that there be no change to the scheme of delegation for: -

- a. The costs incurred by schools for supply and other costs incurred arising from attending child protection meetings. These costs to continue to be met from school delegated budgets and the Special Education Sub Group consider the matter further with a view to subsequent changes.
- b. The costs incurred from paying death gratuities to dependents of employees (other than teachers and fire fighters) who die either in service or within one year of retirement and that these costs continue to be met from within school delegated budgets.

11. ARRANGEMENTS FOR INSURANCE

The Forum noted the arrangements that the Authority had in place for the insurance of school assets and liabilities.

12. SCHOOLS USING PREMISES OWNED/OCCUPIED BY THIRD PARTIES

A report was presented which proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation which would enable the LEA to recover costs it incurred, in securing from third

parties, the provision of premises and services that were used by schools on activities for which funding had been delegated.

The Forum recommended that: -

The LEA seek an amendment to either the current scheme or formula in order that all schools using premises owned/occupied by third parties could either be recharged the costs incurred by the LEA in securing these premises or alternatively that the formula allocation could be so amended as to reflect the cost of the free use of premises.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dates of future meetings were agreed as follows:-

Full Forum – 19 January 2004

SEN Working Group – 12 January 2004

Full Forum – 25 February 2004 (Provisional dependent on level of business)

A calendar of dates, including working groups would be produced for consideration at the meeting of the Forum on 19 January. At the meeting in January it was also proposed that the Forum review the way in which it worked, including the sub-groups that had been established and how the Forum consulted with schools and constituents.

The meeting ended at 2.20 pm.

PR/NS

24 November 2003