

CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM – SCHOOLS’ BUDGET WORKING GROUP

Notes of the meeting of the Schools’ Budget Working Group held on Wednesday 13 October 2004 at Newton Rigg, Penrith.

Present: Mr S Bowditch (Special Schools), Ms J Farebrother (Nursery Schools), Mr S Halfpenny (Carlisle Primary), Mr T Hobson (Eden Secondary), Ms J McAllister (LSC), Mrs M Pickthall (LSC), Mr C Rafferty (Allerdale Primary), Mr R Rogers (Eden Primary), Mr A Rutter (Teacher Associations), Mrs J Stocker (Cabinet Member for Education), Mr B Thomas (Cumbria Early Years Partnership), Mr A Hodge (LEA), and Ms N Shiels (LEA).

Apologies: Mr R Alston, Mr C Clarke, Mr D Southward

1. <u>Notes of the Meeting held on 8 July 2004</u>	Action
<p>The notes of the meeting of the Schools Budget Working Group held on 8 July 2004 were agreed as an accurate record.</p>	
<p>2. <u>Matters Arising</u></p> <p>i) Supply List – a list had now been circulated to schools, it was intended that the list would be updated by the end of October.</p> <p>ii) Financial Benchmarking/Modelling – it was reported that the School Size Working Group would be reporting to the School Forum in November regarding modelling work that had been undertaken.</p>	
<p>3. <u>Nursery Schools Formula</u></p> <p>At the last meeting of the Schools’ Budget Working Group a small sub group had been established to propose a funding formula for nursery schools and consider funding options for all nursery classes in mainstream schools, with particular regard towards compatibility with nursery schools and other providers.</p> <p>The working group considered a report which summarised the work that had been undertaken by the sub group to date. The report proposed a new formula for funding nursery schools and nursery classes within maintained infant and primary schools. The proposed formula would ensure that nursery schools were funded on a formula basis, ensure equity of funding between all maintained nursery pupils and enable all except one nursery school to function at a similar staffing level as at present. The Schools Budget Working Group were asked to express a view on the proposal and form a recommendation to the School Forum in November.</p> <p>The proposed increase in AWPU for 3 year olds would cost £780k and unless additional funding could be identified the cost would be to other schools. A paper illustrating those costs was circulated at the meeting.</p> <p>The group discussed the proposals at length and a number of points were made, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Equity – on a number of previous occasions, when discussing changes the School Forum had attempted to maintain equity across the different sectors.- Cost – how would the costs be met. If the cost were to fall to other schools it would be necessary to have a very clear rationale/justification for the changes.- Strategic Schools - the location of nursery schools tended to be historical rather than strategic. A review of nursery provision in Cumbria had been undertaken however a change in Government emphasis away from the closure of nursery schools meant that the review could not proceed. Nursery Schools now also tended	

to be the basis of developing Childrens' Centres.

- **Philosophy** – there was a view that a foundation stage philosophy should to be established and that this was an issue for consideration by local politicians.

Several slightly different proposals were suggested before the Schools Budget Working Group agreed to recommend to the Schools Forum that the proposed formula be implemented for nursery schools and that the same formula should be extended across the whole sector but this would cost £780k which could be met from – options. The group would also recommend that the LEA consider an overall philosophy.

A draft report to the Forum would be prepared and circulated to the Chair and Vice Chair as well as to the Chair of the small sub-group.

AH

The Schools' Budget Working Group also expressed its thanks to the sub-group and to B Thomas in particular for the work that they had undertaken.

4. Trade Union Convenor

It was reported that A Rutter, A Hodge and D Johnston would be meeting with Unison representatives on 14 October 2004. There were emerging GMB issues but it was anticipated that some agreement could be reached. Progress would be reported to the Schools' Forum on 17 November 2004.

5. Capita Contract

As agreed at the meeting of the Schools' Budget Working Group in July 2004 the Chair of the group had been involved in discussions and negotiations regarding the renewal of the Capita contract with Schools. Capita had made initial proposals however it was hope that further feedback from the LEA would be incorporated into a revised proposal for consultation with schools.

Capita had introduced the proposals at their Schools' Conference on 11 October 2004. This was the beginning of the consultation process. In discussing the issue a question was asked as to why have a contract? The LEA felt that it was important to have a contract as it enabled monitoring to be undertaken. Monitoring of the current contract had fallen away but this could be strengthened via the Schools Forum. The group was reminded that it was the decision of the schools themselves as to whether or not to buy in services from Capita or to use an alternative provider. It was also intended that alternative providers would be identified, reviewed and receive a 'Kitemark' as appropriate.

Some of the proposed changes to the contract were highlighted:-

- i) Human Resources Consultancy Services – price increases to reflect changes since initial agreement e.g workforce reform, management of sickness absence, increased litigation and redundancy. Also additional charges to customers who used more than 10% over the maximum days covered by the fixed agreement and the introduction of a 'Premium' service package.
- ii) Payroll – price increases. Had invested heavily in payroll to deliver improved services. Capita had suggested that this service was loosing money, evidence had been requested to support claims. Additional costs for cheque book schools. Discount available if both personnel and payroll services purchased.
- iii) Personnel Administration – small price increase, introduction of 10% cap and 'premium' service.

- iv) Creditor Payments – inflationary increase
- v) Occupational Health – charges for actual use however legislation changes had led to necessary increased use.
- vi) Financial Services – 3.5% increase.
- vii) Service Desk – fee increase. Clarification sought regarding what is received for fee.
- viii) Property Service – No longer part of this agreement. Separate arrangements. Should be improvement on previous arrangement.

ICT services continued to cause wide spread concerns which would be raised with Capita. As part of these negotiations a request would be made for ICT services to be incorporated into the local agreement.

The negotiations would continue and views expressed by the Schools Budget Working Group would be reported back to Capita including the preference for setting a price for the duration of the agreement rather than an inflationary price. There would be further discussion on this issue at the meeting of the Schools Forum on 17 November 2004 and it was anticipated that the agreement would be finalised by Christmas.

AH/RR

6. Any Other Business

There was a query regarding CRB checks that had been undertaken by Ofsted but that were not acceptable to Capita. Further discussion regarding this matter would be undertaken outside the meeting

PJR/NJS
25 October 2004