

**THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**  
**13 SEPTEMBER 2005**

**PRESENT**

**Mr A Abernethy (Carlisle Secondary)**  
**Mr R T Alston (Foundation Secondary)**  
**Mrs E Barraclough (CCC – Liberal Democrat Group)**  
**Mrs N Bates (Advisory Group on Governance – Observer)**  
**Mrs J Blacklock (Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools)**  
**Mr S Bowditch (Special Schools)**  
**Mr A Brant (Cumbria Governors Council – Observer)**  
**Mr C Brooksbank (Foundation Primary)**  
**Mr P G Chappelhow (CCC – Conservative Group)**  
**Mr C Clarke (South Lakeland Secondary)**  
**Mr A Dickenson (Barrow Secondary)**  
**Mr J Douglas (VA Cof E)**  
**Mrs T Eyre (Copeland Primary)**  
**Mrs J Farebrother (Nursery Schools)**  
**Mr P Kent (Advisory Group on Governance – Observer)**  
**Mr K Little (CCC – Labour Group)**  
**Mr C Rafferty (Allerdale Primary)**  
**Mr R Rogers (Eden Primary)**  
**Mr A Rutter (Teachers' Professional Associations)**  
**Mr G Seward (Advisory Group on Governance – Observer)**  
**Mr M Smith (Copeland Secondary)**  
**Mr B Thomas (CEYDCP)**  
**Mr E Tumelty (VA Catholic)**  
**Mr M Woodburn (South Lakeland Primary)**  
**Mr M Yearsley (Community and VC Controlled Secondary)**

**Officers in attendance:**

<b>Mr A Hodge</b>	<b>(Education Finance)</b>
<b>Mr D Johnston</b>	<b>(Education)</b>
<b>Mr H Slater</b>	<b>(Education)</b>
<b>Mr G Wilson</b>	<b>(Education)</b>
<b>Mrs N Shiels</b>	<b>(Education)</b>

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Ms S Gaston-Parry (represented by Mr M Smith)  
Mr S Halfpenny  
Mr T Hobson  
Canon D Jenkins

Mr M Squires

2. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2005**

The minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on 29 June 2005 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. **WORKING GROUP MINUTES**

The Schools' Budgets Working Group and the Contracts Monitoring Group had met since the last meeting of the Schools Forum on 29 June 2005. The Schools' Forum were also asked to receive the notes of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group meeting held on 24 June 2005 which had not been available on 29 June 2005.

SEN, School Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group – The SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group had met on 24 June 2005 and had received a presentation regarding the use of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. The group had also had a lengthy discussion regarding the Special Schools review. In general, however, it was reported that the work of the group was very much ongoing. The Schools' Forum noted the minutes of the meeting of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on 24 June 2005.

Schools' Budgets Working Group – The Schools' Budgets Working Group had met on 29 June 2005 to continue the initial work on the review of the formula. A further meeting had been scheduled for 19 July 2005 to continue the work. This meeting had not, however, taken place.

The next meeting of the Budget Working Group had been held immediately before the Schools' Forum (13 September) and the Chair gave a brief report of the meeting. The main business had been to receive a progress report on the research work to create a model of the minimum budget required in order for all schools to provide statutory education in accordance with the Council's policies. The model was based on a number of assumptions and the group had been asked to agree each of the assumptions or make suggestions that could alter the assumptions. It was pointed out that changes to one or more of the criteria could have a knock on effect to others. The process of working through the assumptions had been slow and had stimulated extensive discussions. Members of the group felt that they needed a very clear understanding of the process especially as they would be reporting back to colleagues within their constituencies. In order to continue the process a further meeting of the Schools' Budgets Working Group was scheduled for 28 September 2005. The meeting would begin at 9.30am, venue to be confirmed.

(Post meeting note: Schools' Budget Working Group meeting rescheduled from 28 September to 9.30am on 30 September 2005).

The Schools' Forum then noted the minutes of the Budget Working Group held on 29 June 2005.

Contract Monitoring Group – The first meeting of the group had been held on 11 July and had looked at Capita services. Capita had given a presentation which had been viewed something of a sales exercise although it had included some useful information. Prior to

the meeting schools had been invited to submit comments that were presented to Capita at the meeting. Those schools that had submitted comments had now received written replies. A number of other actions had been agreed at the meeting. It was confirmed that a reminder had been sent to Capita, in order to ensure that the agreed actions were followed through.

The Schools' Forum then noted the minutes of the meeting of the Contract Monitoring Group held on 11 July 2005.

## **5. SCHOOL FUNDING FROM APRIL 2006**

The Schools' Forum received a presentation that set out the new arrangements for school funding from April 2006 which included dedicated schools grant, multi-year budgets, specific grants, forum issues and the role of the LEA. A summary of the changes is attached as an appendix.

## **6. FORUM MEMBERSHIP AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS FROM JANUARY 2006**

At the last meeting of the Schools' Forum the size and membership of the new Forum, which would come into effect from January 2006, had been considered. A number of other comments had been made about elections and the role of Forum members. Since the meeting, draft amended Regulations for Forums had been received from the DfES. A further report that incorporated the comments made at the last meeting as well as the proposed changes detailed in the draft amended regulations was presented to the Forum together with a number of recommendations that they were asked to consider.

- **Membership** – The new Schools' Forum would have twenty-one school members, each representing a specific constituency. In order to improve governor representation on the Forum it had been agreed that a number of the constituencies should be represented by governors (not headteachers that were governors). There would be a number of non-school members and the Forum was asked to consider the organisations that should be represented.

**The Forum recommended that there should be five non-school members representing Teaching Associations, Non-Teaching Staff Associations, C of E Diocese and the RC Diocese. The Children's Services Directorate was still developing and the situation relating to extended schools was changing so it was agreed that the fifth non-school place should remain unfilled to allow an appropriate representative to step in at a later date.**

Observer representatives would include a representative of the Cumbrian Governors Council as well as the LSC and each of the three main political groups of the County Council.

- **Headteacher/Governor Representation** – At the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on 29 June it had been agreed that the school members would consist of 7 primary head teachers (based on the six districts in Cumbria plus one small school representative) and 3 primary governors (representing school types – community and voluntary controlled, foundation and aided); 6 secondary headteachers (based on the six districts in Cumbria) and 3 secondary governors (representing school types - community and voluntary controlled, foundation and aided); 1 special school representative (head or governor) and 1 nursery school representative (head or governor). There was some concern about

how these constituencies had been determined, in particular with regard to the future representation of aided schools. Both the primary and secondary aided constituencies would be represented by governors. It was suggested that this should perhaps be one governor and one headteacher as there were particular issues relating to the aided sector that would need to be properly represented. The concern was noted but the Chair explained that the decision had been agreed by the members of the Forum that had attended the previous meeting and therefore it should stand.

- **Elections** – The Forum discussed rolling elections further and felt that the introduction of rolling elections should help to maintain some stability in the membership of the Forum. In order to introduce this there would, initially, be different periods of office ranging from two to four years but once embedded, all members would serve for a period of three years. Appendix B contained an alphabetical list of constituencies that would be used to determine which members would be re-elected after two years, three years, and so on.

**The Schools' Forum therefore agreed that rolling elections, as described in the report, should be introduced.**

- **Nomination and Voting Procedures – Nomination and voting procedures for the Schools' Forum, Autumn Term 2005, as set out in the report, were agreed.** Nomination letters would be sent out to every school from 19 September and would need to be returned by 31 October 2005. Where more than one nomination was received from a constituency, ballot papers would be issued to the relevant constituents with a closing date by which they should be returned.
- **Canvassing Statement** – In order to assist any election process, **it was agreed that a canvassing statement should be completed in respect of the nominations.** This statement would then be sent to all schools in the relevant constituency prior to any election.
- **Respective Roles of the LEA and of School Members** – It was **agreed that provision to deal with persistent non-attendance at School Forum meetings should be incorporated into the list of respective roles.** Failure of a school member to attend three successive meetings of the Schools Forum would result in their dismissal from the Forum. Substitute representatives could attend in place of an absent member but they must be from the same constituency.

## **7. SCHOOL MEALS – STANDARDS FUND GRANTS**

A report was presented that gave details of the Standards Fund school meals grants and gave options as to how they might be managed and the service developed. The Forum were asked for their views on utilisation of the school meals grants, in particular whether or not the targeted meals grant should be devolved to schools. The suggested options for the targeted grant (£289,000) were to either wholly/partly devolve to schools or to retain the grant centrally.

If the grant was partly devolved, then schools would be expected to submit a plan showing how they proposed to improve their school meals provision to ensure that Government targets were met by September 2008.

Alternatively, the grant could be retained and centrally managed with a detailed strategy and plan being presented to the next meeting of the Schools' Forum.

Following some debate, **the Schools' Forum recommended that the targeted meals grant be retained with a further detailed strategy and plan to be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum on 9 November.**

## **8. TRADE UNION CONVENOR**

The GMB union had requested that the Council fund a full-time convenor for their union. The cost of this would be shared between Education and Social Services Directorates so in the case of Education, the cost (approximately £12,000 per annum) would fall as a charge to the Schools Budget. Some concern was expressed regarding the request from GMB and the Forum felt that they needed more information to enable them to make a decision.

**It was, therefore, agreed that the decision be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum on 9 November. A further report would be presented to that meeting which would set out what was classed as a union duty and the scale and scope of such activities across the Council. The report should also include details of all Council funding used to contribute towards the expenditure on facilities for Trade Unions insofar as this related to the Schools Budget.**

## **9. PATERNITY LEAVE**

A report that sought the views of the Schools Forum as to whether or not consultation should be undertaken with the view of changing the current scheme for funding schools to include provision for the reimbursement to school budgets of the cost of absent teachers on paternity leave was presented. The present scheme for funding schools made provision for the full cost of maternity cover for absent teachers to be reimbursed from centrally retained funds to schools. The cost of extending this reimbursement to include paternity leave would fall as a charge to the centrally retained part of the Schools Budget.

Following a short discussion, **the Forum agreed to maintain the status quo.**

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **i) DfES Seminar – 19 September 2005**

Alan Rutter, Norma Bates, Philip Chappelhow and Anton Hodge would be attending a seminar in Manchester on 19 September. The purpose of the seminar would be to look at the funding changes and changes for Schools' Forums that would be introduced in 2006. There were still two places available for any member who wished to attend.

### **ii) School Organisation Issues**

A paper setting out a strategy for dealing with schools organisation issues in the future had been circulated via the school portal. There had also been some media coverage and a number of schools had raised concerns about how this would be progressed. The Chair assured the Forum that the strategic process would involve local level discussions and extensive consultations with all relevant partners.

## School Funding from 2006-07

### Notes on the proposal details

#### **DSG – the new Dedicated Schools Grant**

National DSG totals to increase by 6% each year for 06-07 and 07-08, with a minimum 5% per pupil increase for each LA.

Baseline will be adjusted to reflect

- the transfer of Teachers' Pay Grant into DSG,
- the transfer out of DSG of an amount equivalent to the current level of matched funding for the new School Development Grant

Distribution to LAs will work as follows:

- baseline of 2005-06 Schools Budget
- minimum increase of 5% per pupil
- remainder of funds distributed according to criteria

These criteria are the subject of consultation, which takes as a basis the concern from LEAs which are spending in excess of SFSS at the moment. The original paper proposed that such authorities would receive the minimum increase in funding per pupil each year for a number of years as their allocation of DSG converged towards the formula allocations (based on SFSS).

LAs will be able to use central Schools Budget funds to support ECM<sup>1</sup>, where there are clear benefits for schools and pupils and where the Forum agrees.

LAs can top up the DSG. Any additional funding will not be subject to the CEL<sup>2</sup>.

Sparsity data used will be from the 2001 census (rather than 1991).

Actual pupil numbers before the beginning of the funding period will be used – from the January immediately before the FY begins to finalise the allocation for that financial year. The data lag will therefore be 2/3rds of an academic year on average.

Allocations of DSG will not be finalised until the FY has begun – but LAs will be able to make accurate predictions of the size of the DSG soon after the January count.

There will also be a minimum cash increase to the DSG.

LAs will be able to add resources to the 2007-08 Schools Budget once 2006-07 has begun, but cannot reduce or remove resources.

---

<sup>1</sup> Every Child Matters

<sup>2</sup> Central Expenditure Limit

## **Multi-Year Budgets and School Funding**

By March 2006, schools will receive budgets for 2006-07 and 2007-08. In early 2008, schools will receive budgets for 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

LAs will fund schools using a single count date of the January before the start of each financial year. There will be no redetermination (clawback, etc), but we could have specific formula factors enabling funding to go to schools with high pupil mobility or which are expanding schools.

The formula and central-delegated split will be decided on for the whole multi-year period.

School budgets will be updated annually to reflect changes in pupil numbers and other data updating (where specified in advance in the local formula). Variations in this and the central-delegated split within the multi-year period can only be in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the Forum.

Academic Year budgets will not be introduced for 2006-7 and 2007-08, but perhaps after that. The plan to introduce Academic Year accounting has now been shelved.

The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) will be set at a level to cover average cost pressures. It will need to be updated once revised pupil numbers are known.

Some formula factors do not lend themselves to being planned beyond one year (eg rates, SEN). There will no requirement to provide info on these allocations beyond 2006-07, so long as schools understand how these excluded items will be funded and treated in 07-08.

LAs will be required to set unit costs for each formula factor for the two-year period

Total ISB will have to be allocated at the start of the year. Any budget redeterminations (or statements not yet delegated) will have to be funded from the school specific contingency within the centrally-held Schools Budget. There will need to be an adjustment to the CEL for this.

LAs, in consultation with School Forums, will decide how to mainstream the Teachers' Pay Grants. If it is decided to add to the ISB, the MFG will take account of this.

## **Specific Grants**

A number of Standards Fund grants will be combined into an expanded School Development Grant (SDG). In 2006-07 and 2007-08 each school will receive the same amount of SDG as received in the 2005-06 constituent grants, plus a per pupil increase in line with the MFG each year.

Matched funding by the LEA will transfer from the DSG to specific grants.

Some grants will remain separate.

School Standards Grant will remain separate from SDG in 2006-07 and 2007-08. It will be distributed via a flat rate per school plus a per pupil amount, with transitional arrangements to ensure that no school loses out. Extra resources have been included in this to support extended schools.

The baseline for the specific grant in 2006-07 will be the allocations offered to each LA in 2005-06, not the amount they finally accepted.

SSG and SDG planned to combine in 2008-09.

LAs will be able to retain the same cash amount as in 2005-06 – i.e. real terms decrease.

New Children's Services Grant from 2006-07, merging SF Vulnerable Children Grant and SF Education Health Partnerships with grants supporting the development of adoption support services and fostering services.

## **Forum Issues**

New decision-making powers:

- to agree minor changes to the operation of the MFG, where the outcome would be anomalous and where not more than 20% of schools are affected;
- to agree to the level of School Specific Contingency at the start of each year;
- to agree arrangements for combining elements of the central Schools Budget with other LA and agency budgets to create a combined children's services budget where there is a clear benefit for schools and pupils in doing so;
- to agree an increase in the CEL, in exceptional circumstances;
- to agree an increase in centrally-retained expenditure once a multi-year funding period has begun, in exceptional circumstances;
- to agree a change to the formula once a multi-year funding period has begun, in exceptional circumstances;

The Forum will not be able to initiate proposals for these decision-making powers.

LAs will also have to consult Forum on how the new arrangements should be implemented (especially on whether data other than pupil numbers should be updated after budgets are first set and how Teachers' Pay Grant should be mainstreamed within school budgets).

Changes to constitution and proceedings:

- the right of elected members and officers of an LEA to be members of the Forum will be removed. Instead they will have observer status.
- each Forum to have a voting procedure
- Chair must be a full member of the Forum
- Each representative group will now be responsible for the method by which they nominate their representatives; each group will have a free choice over how they nominate their representatives: this may be by formal election but need not be so. The LA will be required to define the representative groups of school members on the Forum

Consultation process lasts until 7<sup>th</sup> October

Good Practice Guide to be published early autumn.

## **Role of the Local Authority and Resource Management**

LAs will concentrate on their strategic and quality assurance roles in Education. In school funding, this means ensuring that schools will make full use of the opportunity which stable, predictable, longer-term funding will provide to align strategic financial planning with their school improvement planning and manage their resources more efficiently and effectively.

- challenging schools over poor financial and HR management and accumulation of excessive balances
- extended services

There will be a Supporting Schools' Financial Management programme beginning in October 2005.

The Financial Management Standards will become compulsory for secondary schools by the end of 2006-07. LEA will have to report on this as part of S52 Outturn.