

THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
9 NOVEMBER 2005

PRESENT

Mr A Abernethy (Carlisle Secondary)
Mr R T Alston (Foundation Secondary)
Mrs N Bates (Advisory Group on Governance – Observer)
Mrs J Blacklock (Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools)
Mr S Bowditch (Special Schools)
Mr A Bryant (Cumbria Governors Council – Observer)
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 M Hyrnkow (Barrow Primary)
Canon D Jenkins (Diocesan Authorities)
Mr P Kent (Advisory Group on Governance – Observer)
Mr C Kirkup (Eden Secondary – representing Mr T Hobson)
Mr K Little (CCC – Labour Group)
Mr R Long (Advisory Group on Governance – Observer)
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 N Sutton (Foundation Primary – representing Mr C Brooksbank)
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:

Mr A Hodge (Education Finance)
Mr D Johnston (Education)
Mr H Slater (Education)
Mrs N Shiels (Education)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Mrs E Barraclough
Mr C Brooksbank (represented by Mr N Sutton)

Mr P Chapplehow
Ms S Gaston-Parry
Mr S Halfpenny
Mr T Hobson (represented by Mr C Kirkup)
Ms M Swann

2. **MEMBERSHIP**

It was noted that Mr M Squires, headteacher at Langdale CE School and small schools representative had resigned his position on the Forum.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2005**

The minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on 13 September 2005 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

Trade Union Convenor – It was reported that the head of Equality and HR was undertaking a review of funding with all trade unions. When completed, the outcome of the review would be reported back to the Forum.

5. **WORKING GROUP MINUTES**

The Schools Budgets Working Group had met on 13 September, 30 September, 11 October and 1 November to continue their work on the review of the formula. A report summarising all the work that had been undertaken by the group would be presented, by the Chair of the group, as a main item later in the agenda.

The Forum therefore, noted the minutes of the meetings of the Schools' Budget Working Group.

6. **SCHOOL MEALS – STANDARDS FUND GRANT**

At the last meeting of the Schools' Forum a report had been presented that provided details of the Standards Fund school meals grants and gave options as to how they might be managed and the service developed. The Forum had recommended that the targeted meals grant be retained and that a further detailed strategy and plan should be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum. A further report that proposed how the LEA might use the central government grant of approximately £0.3m pa for the next three years to improve the school meals service was, therefore, presented.

In discussing the report, the main comments related to the adequacy of the kitchen refurbishment programme and the likely content of the nutritional standards regulations that would be published in September 2006.

Following some discussion and having noted the views that had been expressed, **the Schools' Forum recommended that the report, and the basis on which the grant would be spent (paragraph 3.2 of the report) be noted.**

7. PERFORMANCE RELATED PAY GRANTS

At a meeting of the Schools' Budgets Working Group held on 30 September 2005 the group had recommended that the preferred method of allocation for Performance Related Pay for 2006/07 should be AWPU based subject to there being some transitional arrangements in place. There had also been some concerns about the method of distribution to the special schools.

It was reported that further research was desirable in order to determine an equitable allocation of the grant over all schools and the results of this work would be provided to the Forum at its meeting in January.

8. REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA

The Chair of the Schools' Budgets Working Group presented a report on the work that had been undertaken by the group to review the formula for funding schools.

Background

The Forum, while considering the operation of the current formula had resolved that a fundamental review should be undertaken. The reasons for the review included difficulties over determining a formula for nursery schools, the impact of government initiatives such as Workforce Reform, the perceived inequity of different AWPU values for the different key stages and a failure of the current formula to demonstrate that resulting funding allocations were evidence based and linked to desired outputs. The group had met on a number of occasions over recent months to arrive at the position of making a recommendation to the Schools' Forum. Initially, the group had agreed that the review should be based on a number of broad objectives that would underpin any recommendation for a revised formula. Then, in order to make a recommendation to the Schools' Forum, they had taken a proposal and re-worked and re-modelled it to reflect the discussions that they had had. The discussions that took place in the Working Group were fully documented in the notes of each meeting. The result was now presented to the Forum for their consideration.

Proposal by Schools' Budgets Working Group

The Forum were asked to consider the work that had been undertaken by the group and:

- Receive the proposed reviewed formula as set out in appendix 5 of the report and recommend that schools be consulted on the amendments.
- Recommend that the Working Group keep under continuous review the factors (Areas for further review) as set out in appendix 3 to the reports.
- Recommend that special schools continue to be funded in accordance with the existing formula until 31 March 2008.

Discussion

The Chair of the Forum explained that he felt that members should consider whether they wanted a different model than the one currently in place. If they did, was the proposed model appropriate?

There was extensive discussion about the work that had been undertaken which, on the whole, was felt to have been a valuable exercise. However, there were many concerns about moving towards a revised formula without having a proper understanding of the

proposals and how they differed from the current formula. The main points that were expressed included:

- Did the formula need to change?
- Timescale – there was a relatively short length of time for school Forum members to report back to their constituents on what was a very complex issue. The time of year (run up to Christmas) was also not helpful to the process.
- Complexity of proposals – a full understanding was required in order to explain the proposed changes to constituents/colleagues/governors.
- Importance, and need for proper consultation.
- Potential shift of resources between sectors.
- Sectors not fully represented during discussions at Working Group meetings.
- Class size issues, secondary schools not made up of individual classes.
- Curriculum issues – secondary school specialisms, broadening primary curriculum.
- Principle – were proposals from the Working Group better than the current scheme?
- There would be a new School Forum in January 2006.
- Workforce Reform – there would be implications for certain sectors.

Members of the Working Group assured the Forum that they had been aware that some sectors had not always been fully represented during their discussions but the group had tried to ensure that there was some form of equity to the process. It was also emphasised that that the model was an alternative method to generate a budget, schools would still need to determine how the budget was spent. The proposals were challenging and a shift of understanding was required.

There was, a general view that the work that had been done should not be disregarded. The work was seen as valuable and was appreciated by those members of the Schools' Forum that had not been involved as part of the Working Group. However, having spent a great deal of time working through the process, the members of the Budget group had a clear understanding of the proposed changes. The Forum as a whole felt that they needed a similar level of understanding to enable them to properly explain to, and represent their constituents as well as make an informed decision.

Decision

It was therefore agreed that there should be an additional meeting of the School Forum on Monday, 12 December 2005 at 4.30pm. The likely venue would be Newton Rigg, Penrith but this would be confirmed. The main agenda item would be to receive a presentation by officers on the work that had been undertaken by the Working Group and inform the Forum of the basis of the proposed formula.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other items of business.

PR/NJS

1 December 2005