

## CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM – SCHOOLS’ BUDGET WORKING GROUP

### Notes of the meeting of the Schools’ Budget Working Group held on Tuesday, 1 November 2005 at Rheged Discovery Centre, Penrith

**Present:** Mr S Bowditch (Special Schools), Ms J Farebrother (Nursery Schools), Mr T Hobson (Eden Secondary), Mr C Rafferty (Allerdale Primary), Mr R Rogers (Eden Primary and Chair of Group), Mr A Rutter (Teachers’ Professional Associations), Mr B Thomas (CEYDCP), Mr A Hodge (LEA), Mr D Johnston (LEA), Mr H Slater (LEA) and Mrs N Shiels (LEA).

**Apologies:** Mr R Alston, Mrs E Barraclough, Mr P Chappelhow, Mr C Clarke, Mr S Halfpenny, Canon D Jenkins, Mr K Little, Ms M Pickthall

#### 1. Schools Budget Review

#### Action

Introduction – The Chair welcomed Terry Hobson, who had been unable to attend some of the previous meetings of the group.

Following the last meeting of the group, some members of the group had written to HS or DJ seeking some points of clarification. As this was such an important issue, the Chair felt that it would have been helpful, to keep him updated, if he had been copied into this correspondence.

Purpose of Meeting – This was the final meeting of the group prior to the full Schools’ Forum meeting on 9 November 2005. It was important that the group reach final agreement on the exact recommendation that they would present to the Forum, as well as how this would be presented.

Progress to Date – A report was presented that updated the group on the progress that had been made on the School Budget Review. The report asked the group to consider the outcome of the remodelling work that had been undertaken to date and after discussing and agreeing any proposed amendments, make a recommendation to the Schools’ Forum. It was also recommended that the Budget Working Group would continue the budget review process with regard to possible changes that may be implemented from April 2008.

The group had a long discussion during which many points were made. These included:

- **Why Review?** – For some time concerns had been expressed about the current scheme and schools had often requested that the formula be reviewed in an attempt to come up with something better. There had also been concerns about nursery funding and the implementation of workforce reform so it had seemed timely to look at the formula.  
As a result of this exercise, a set of principles had been produced that were more robust and secure than what was currently in place. From this a model spend per class could be built up which would produce a formula for allocating the money to the schools. The schools themselves would determine how the money was spent. The process was now simple and clear and, whilst it had produced some results that had not been expected, it was possible to explain why the formula generated a certain level of funding for a particular sector.
- **Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)** – The effects of any changes would not be felt for the first two years due to the cushioning effect of the MFG. The actual level of MFG was not yet known but an increase of approximately 4% per pupil was anticipated. It was suggested that appendix 4 should be amended

to include figures for 2006/07 and 2007/08. These figures would be approximate based on assumed inflation, MFG, etc. Pupil numbers for the current year would be used and it would be assumed that there would be no movement in grants.

- Special Schools – Ongoing concerns had been expressed by the special schools representative about the effect of the review on the five special schools. It had, therefore, been agreed that the special schools would remain under review until 2008.
- Nursery Schools – This area also needed some further discussion. Appendix 3 of the report identified a list of areas for further review by 2008. The list included the foundation stage as a whole as one of the items.
- School Organistaion Forum – As this new Forum developed changes may be identified that the Schools' Forum would need to consider. Other unknowns were the recent White Paper and how that would develop, other government policies, etc. It was impossible to anticipate all that could change or be introduced between now and 2008.
- Workforce Reform – The effect of the delivery of Workforce Reform had been taken into account when working up the model.
- Primary/Secondary Split – The model moved funding from secondary to primary. Under the current scheme, secondary schools were funded at a slightly higher level than FSS but in the model they were funded at a slightly lower level than FSS. One of the main reasons for the shift was to allow primary schools adequate funding to implement the Workforce Reform legislation.
- Minimum Subject Range – To determine whether it was appropriate to define an appropriate education to which a pupil should have access to equip them properly for the life ahead of them.
- Clarity/Transparency – Was this, or was this not, clearer or fairer than what was in place currently? This exercise had been about providing fairer funding for schools that would give them local autonomy and enable local choice.
- Staffing Levels – The staffing levels had been based on knowledge while trying to remain even handed and affordable, staying close to FSS but also recognising that there were differences between the sectors. The demographics of staffing levels within schools were also a factor that the schools themselves needed to recognise.
- Cumbria Context – The proposed model established principles upon which the model spend had been based but Cumbria's unique context should also be considered.

Conclusion – This was the first step in a process of total review of schooling in Cumbria, and funding of schools. The group had tried to have an open and transparent rationale which was as close to equity as they felt they could achieve. The process had been based on sound logic and would provide a lump sum budget to schools. It was then up to the schools to manage how the budget was spent.

Schools' Forum : 9 November 2005 – The Chair of the Schools' Budget Working Group would present a report to the Schools' Forum based upon the discussions that the group had had.

The report would highlight that this proposal would be the basis of the budget for the period April 2006 – March 2008. It would, however, clearly point out that that this would be subject to the government's minimum funding guarantee.

The report itself would be based on that which had been considered at this meeting of the Schools' Budget Working Group but with some re-working of the cover paper and the appendices:

- i) additional flowchart type diagram to be added illustrating model spend > formula > MFG > budget > school spend
- ii) appendix 1 – amendment to point 14, page 2
- iii) appendix 2
- iv) appendix 3 – re-work as agreed at meeting
- v) appendix 4 – spreadsheet – to include column relating to MFG and figures for 2006/07 and 2007/08
- vi) include schedule showing the construction of the formula

DJ/AH/HS would be present at the meeting to answer any specific queries of technical issues.

AH had met with Bursars and felt that the concerns that they had expressed relating to the average teacher salaries had now been addressed and worked into the model.

The proposals were still subject to full consultation with all schools.

The Chair asked that if any member of the group had any thoughts or comments that they felt would be helpful to him in his delivery of these proposals to the Forum, could they forward them to him via e-mail.

Finally, the Chair thanked everyone for the work that had been undertaken to this stage.