

# **THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 July 2007**

### **PRESENT**

**Mrs N Bates (Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary)**  
**Mrs J Blacklock (Small Schools)**  
**Mr S Bowditch (Special Schools)**  
**Mr C Brooksbank (South Lakeland Primary)**  
**Mr C Bush (Carlisle Secondary)**  
**Mr P Chappelhow (Cabinet Member, Children's Services – Observer)**  
**Mr C Clarke (South Lakeland Secondary)**  
**Mr G Cook (CCC, Liberal Democrat Group – Observer)**  
**Mrs T Eyre (Copeland Primary)**  
**Mr B Gummatt (Special Schools – Observing)**  
**Mr C Kirkup (Eden Secondary)**  
**Mrs L Moffatt (Barrow Secondary)**  
**Mr D Natrass (Voluntary Aided Primary)**  
**Mr C People (Voluntary Aided Secondary)**  
**Mrs J Richardson (Allerdale Secondary)**  
**Mr R Rogers (Eden Primary)**  
**Mr A Rutter (Teachers' Professional Associations)**  
**Mr G Seward (Foundation Primary)**  
**Mr B Thomas (CE Diocese)**  
**Mr E Tumelty (RC Diocese)**  
**Mrs K Waplinton (Barrow Primary – representing Miss J Marshall)**

### **Officers in attendance:**

**Ms M Swann (Corporate Director – Children's Services)**  
**Mr J Swainston (Head of Service – Schools and Learning, Children's Services)**  
**Mr A Hodge (Children's Services Finance)**  
**Ms A Burdess (Children's Services Finance)**  
**Mrs N Shiels (Children's Services)**

## 1. MEMBERSHIP

The Forum welcomed Mr G Cook, Liberal Democrat Group who would attend meetings as an observer and Mr B Gummett who would replace Mr S Bowditch as the representative of the special schools. Mrs K Waplington, representing Barrow Primary schools as a substitute for Miss J Marshall was also welcomed to the meeting.

The Forum noted that this would be Steven Bowditch's last meeting before he retired as head of James Rennie School. Steven had been a member of the Forum since it was established in January 2003 and had served as a member of the LMS working group prior to that. On behalf of the Forum, the Chair thanked him for all his hard work and the contributions he had made. Bernard Gummett, head of George Hastwell School, would replace Steven on the Forum.

## 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: -

Ms J Farebrother  
Mrs J Mansfield  
Miss J Marshall (represented by Mrs K Waplington)  
Ms M Pickthall  
Mr M Smith

## 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 MAY 2007

Subject to an amendment to minute 8, page 6, Single Status and Equal Pay Claims, the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on 8 May 2007 were agreed as an accurate record.

## 4. MATTERS ARISING

- i) Voluntary Aided Secondary Representative – It was reported that this had been raised with the Diocese.
- ii) Single Status and Equal Pay Claims – At the meeting on 8 May, the Forum had recommended that a contribution of £110 per person interviewed should be made to those schools involved in the process. It was confirmed that any schools that were entitled to the payment would receive notification based on a list of those people to be interviewed. This would be done automatically and schools would not have to request the funding.
- iii) Designated Officer Post – A report that looked at the issue of funding a new post – Local Authority Designated Officer had been presented to the Forum on 8 May 2007.

The Forum had requested that further information about the post and further clarification of the role be provided when it became available. The additional information was circulated. This emphasised that the role would be key in ensuring that allegations were dealt with appropriately. The appointment

would focus on areas that had been problematic for schools in dealing with allegations.

There were continued concerns about the potential for unfounded allegations to be made against teachers. It was intended that the new process would ensure that investigations took place and that there would be additional safeguarding.

**The Forum noted that additional information that had been provided.**

There were no other matters arising from the minutes.

## **5. WORKING GROUP MINUTES**

There were three Schools' Forum Working Groups, all of which had met since the previous meeting of the Forum on 8 May 2007.

- i) Contracts Working Group – The group had met on 14 June 2007 and a verbal summary was given.

Issues discussed had included: -

- Supply List – CRB costs for supply teachers had been discussed. Work was ongoing.
- Building Issues – Building Link/Liasion Officers – information had been issued to schools detailing school responsibilities. This was felt to be helpful although it may have been more so had clients been more involved in the production of the document.
- Capital Survey with Schools – In preparation for new contract with schools. This had been positive in identifying areas that could be incorporated into the contract. The next stage would be for the group to discuss the contract for schools and hopefully endorse it.

- ii) School Budgets Working Group: The group had met on 11 June 2007 and again on 27 June 2007. Currently, the main area of work for the group related to the School Funding Formula Review. An item later on the agenda covered this.

On 11 June 2007 it had been noted that strategic schools had been discussed. It was pointed out that the issue of strategic provision was an area for political debate and not an issue for the Schools Forum.

The Forum then received the notes of the working group meeting held on 11 June 2007.

- iii) SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group: The group had met on 18 June 2007 and had been updated on the work relating to the review of funding for social deprivation and personalised learning. There was a consensus that the current method of allocating social deprivation funding via FSM disadvantaged certain areas. As a result, there had broad agreement to move to one of the alternative methods of allocation, or a combination of FSM and one of the alternatives.

The group were keen to ensure that the most deprived schools were safeguarded but at the same time recognised the need to move to a more sophisticated method of allocation.

Work relating to provision mapping was ongoing and there would be a further meeting with David Henderson in the next week.

The Forum received the notes of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on 18 June 2007.

## **6. SCHOOL BUDGETS – ADDITIONAL PUPILS**

Since 2006-07, schools had been funded for the following financial year based on the number of pupils on roll in January. For nursery-aged pupils, account was taken of trends showing increases to the nursery class in the spring term.

This method of funding meant that there was no subsequent budget adjustment for either a drop or an increase in pupil numbers in-year.

The main principle of the new funding system was that schools were now funded retrospectively for pupils. There was no question of schools not eventually receiving funding – however in some exceptional cases, the timing meant that schools may suffer short-term financial difficulties which were so severe that this impacted on the longer term.

During 2006, the Forum considered putting in place a mechanism that would allocate additional funding when an increase reached a certain trigger point. This was rejected, although the LA agreed to look at individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis. In March 2007, the Forum agreed to make available additional funding to 8 schools, totalling £144k.

A number of schools had now submitted requests for additional funding. The Forum were asked to consider the case made by each school and express any views on whether to allocate some or all of the additional funding.

There were a number of concerns relating to surplus and deficit budgets as well as issues relating to the standard admission numbers. The Forum felt that further information about some of the requests should be provided before any decisions could be taken.

### **The Forum recommended that: -**

- i) requests for additional funding from Our lady and St Patrick's and Ghyllside Schools should not be approved.**
- ii) further information relating to the requests for additional funding from Old Hutton, Storth Primary, Lanercost and Wreay Schools should be presented to the next meeting of the Schools Forum on 2 October 2007.**
- iii) the protocol/system for making such adjustments should be revisited in future**
- iv) the Admissions Forum be requested to look at admission numbers in the autumn term to identify any schools that were exceeding their standard admission number.**

## **7. SCHOOLS BUDGET 2007-08**

A paper was circulated that set out details of school balances. It was reported that the overall level of school balances held was increasing. At the same time, deficits were reducing. Schools were required to report on the intended use of balances and national changes were anticipated, a further update would be provided to the Forum during the autumn.

The Forum noted the government intention to introduce a levy on schools balances. This intention had been outlined as part of an earlier consultation and it was understood that LAs and schools had made strong representations against this. As nationally, the surpluses were viewed as quite considerable it was expected that the levy would still be introduced.

There were concerns about the level of balances that were being held. It was appreciated that many schools had detailed plans for the use of their surpluses eg. contributions to capital projects or other planned projects. However, it was important to note that the allocations that schools received were intended to benefit those children currently in the school.

It was also noted that the 'creative' use of surplus balances had been discussed at an earlier meeting of the Forum. This was still an area that was worthy of further investigation.

Taking account of the concerns that had been expressed, **the Forum accepted the paper, for information.**

## **8. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA REVIEW**

A report that summarised the work undertaken on the formula review was circulated. The report summarised the progress that had been made to date.

There had been a number of reasons why it had been felt timely to review the formula for funding schools. The current formula had been introduced in 1988/89 and had been based on trying to replicate the actual costs in schools at that time. Since then the formula had been amended on a number of occasions to take account of changes that had been implemented eg. infant class size funding, funding for NQTs, etc. These changes had been made on an adhoc basis and there had never been a fundamental review.

Also, the 2001 Ofsted report had advised the LA that 'in order to improve the targeting of resources to need' it should, review the funding formula to ensure that it provided adequately and fairly for spending needs in schools and particularly for small primary schools, schools with significant numbers of surplus places, repairs and maintenance and under 5s and management support services.

In 2004 a fundamental review of the formula was begun, in 2006 the work was refocused and this had formed the basis of the work that had been undertaken to date. In September 2006 the Forum had agreed a number of principles that formed that basis of the review.

The initial work had looked at building up a minimum level of funding for each school using a class-based model. This work was felt to have been useful and would provide a point of reference for the new review.

The new review had looked at an activity based costing approach that had attempted to define the maximum costs of a school and its groups of children. A number of different models had been discussed during this process, with each being further refined through discussion and workshops. The work had now reached a point where there was some consensus about the factors that would be used in the model. This model was also based on a series of rationale that could be more easily justified and as well being more transparent.

This process had also included looking at what happened in other LAs, and especially those authorities that had been following a similar type of process over the last few years. Comparative work with a number of other LAs had been requested and undertaken.

Alongside the work being undertaken on the ABC model, an additional project had looked at a non-ABC model. This had been known as the 'XYZ' model and had concentrated on refining the non-AWPU elements of the formula and then reallocating the money available for AWPU using national ratios. This model had not been discussed at the same length as the ABC model and it would be fair to say that the XYZ model would be more of a tidying process that would not take into account any of the work that had been undertaken on activity based costing. The School Budgets Group were now coming to the conclusion that this model was more difficult to justify.

In parallel with the work of the School Budgets Working Group, the Social Deprivation, SEN, Access and Inclusion Working Group had been looking separately at funding for social deprivation. Currently that was allocated to schools based on an amount per eligible free school meals (FSM). The group had reviewed the use of FSM as an indicator of FSM and had looked at alternative methods of allocation including IMD and IDACI. As a result of this work, The SEN Group had recommended to the Forum that they consider consulting with schools as to whether the LA should continue to use FSM, use an alternative method, use a mixture of methods and incorporate a threshold into any allocation.

As well as this work, the SEN group had also looked at the funding of SEN in Cumbria but had concluded that there was no great desire to move away from the current pupil-led formula.

In addition to the work that had been outlined, there were also national funding proposals to take into consideration.

The Forum now needed to determine how to move forward and progress this work. It was noted that if the timescales were delayed there was the possibility that there may not be a formula in place for April 2008.

All those that had been involved in the work to date were thanked for their hard work and contribution to the process, these included members of the School Budgets and SEN Working Groups, school finance officers and LA officers.

In discussing the report, there were concerns about potential movement between sectors – winners and losers. Issues relating to timescales were also an important factor. There were only a few meetings of the working groups and the Forum already scheduled in diaries and there was still some discussion to be had. It was suggested that the work could continue over the summer months and holiday period if necessary. A number of dates would be circulated to the members of the School Budgets Working Group and school finance officers. Individuals could attend as convenient. This should also allow for further scrutiny of the model.

Some other LAs 'ring fenced' funding within sectors. Forum members were asked their view about applying this type of 'ring fence' to the model. There would still be a more transparent formula that was easier to defend but for an initial period at least, there would be no movement between sectors.

The school organisation was noted as a significant factor, as was the need for a political debate to take place regarding the potential need for strategic provision. Whilst this debate was outside the remit of the Schools Forum it needed to take account of the financial scene.

In order to make progress, the Forum agreed that the work should continue over the summer months but that an additional meeting of the Forum was needed before the next scheduled meeting on 2 October 2007. This additional meeting would be a single item meeting with a specific brief to discuss the school funding formula review work and how to take it forward and move to consultation with schools. A date of 20 September 2007 was agreed for the additional meeting of the Forum.

**The Schools Forum noted the progress that had been made to date on the school funding formula review and requested that work continue to: -**

- **develop the ABC model;**
- **look at models that would, at least initially, ensure no movement of funding between the sectors;**
- **look at transitional funding and the impact of the minimum funding guarantee;**
- **consider the changes in national funding that were being proposed by central government.**

## **9. DATES OF MEETINGS 2008**

**The following dates for the Schools Forum and working group meetings during 2008 were agreed: -**

### **Schools Forum Meetings**

**Tuesday, 29 January 2008, 9.30am, Caldbeck Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus**

**Wednesday, 12 March 2008, 9.30am, Caldbeck Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus**

**Wednesday, 7 May 2008, 9.30am, Caldbeck Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus**

**Wednesday, 2 July 2008**, 9.30am, Caldbeck Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Tuesday, 30 September 2008**, 9.30am, Caldbeck Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Tuesday, 25 November 2008**, 9.30am, Caldbeck Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

### **School Budgets Working Group**

**Tuesday, 15 January 2008**, 9.30am, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Monday, 25 February 2008**, 9.30am, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Tuesday, 15 April 2008**, 9.30am, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Monday, 9 June 2008**, 9.30am, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Tuesday, 9 September 2008**, 9.30am, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Monday, 20 October 2008**, 9.30am, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

### **SEN, Access and Inclusion, Social Deprivation Working Group**

**Tuesday, 15 January 2008**, 1.00pm, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Monday, 25 February 2008**, 1.00pm, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Tuesday, 15 April 2008**, 1.00pm, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Monday, 9 June 2008**, 1.00pm, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Tuesday, 9 September 2008**, 1.00pm, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

**Monday, 20 October 2008**, 1.00pm, Eamont Room, University of Cumbria – Penrith Campus

### **Contracts Group**

**Wednesday, 9 January 2008**

**Wednesday, 20 February 2008**

**Wednesday, 23 April 2008**

**Wednesday, 18 June 2008**

**Tuesday, 16 September 2008**

**Tuesday, 4 November 2008**

All meetings of the Contracts Group would begin at 1.00pm and will be held at The Capita Building, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting if the Schools Forum would be held on Thursday , 20 September 2007 at Newton Rigg, Penrith. The meeting would begin at 9.30am.

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- i) It was reported that this would be the last meeting for Clive Peale who had represented Voluntary Aided Secondary School and Jane Blacklock who had represented small Schools. Both members were thanked for the contributions that each had made to the work of the Forum and its working groups.
- ii) A short update regarding work towards avoiding compulsory redundancy in schools was circulated for information.
- iii) A specific issue relating to additional recruitment and retention awards being paid to staff in schools currently involved in the school organisation process was raised. The point was noted and LA officers would investigate.

PR/NJS  
August 2007