

The KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM

(Schools Funding Consultative Group)
meeting held on **Friday 12th June 2009**
1:30pm at the Deighton Centre

Item
2
03.07.09

Present:

Julie Helm	Nursery School Heads (1)
Graham Altoft, Jenny Chamberlain, Carol Crossland, Gill Goodswen, Michelle Lee (vice-chair), Diana Wilson	Primary School Heads (6)
Caroline Thompson	Middle School Heads (1)
Toby Eastaugh, Christine Spencer (Chair), Janet Tolley	High School Heads (4)
	Special School Heads (1)
Jo Bailey-Taylor (NASUWT), Pat Colling (Kirklees Governors Association), Gillian Collins (ATL), Sarah Ellis (pre-School Learning Alliance), Howard Roberts (NUT)	Non-school members (6)
Angela Farmer (Senior Finance Officer (Resources & Support)) Warwick Firmin (School Funding Strategy Manager, R&S); Clerk David Gearing (Financial Delegation Manager, R&S); Minute Clerk Rosemary Gibson (Acting Head of Resources & Support)	Kirklees Children & Young People Service Officers in Support
Kath Benetis (KPH) and Paul Scrimshaw (KPH)	Observers

1. Apologies for Absence

Jackie Eames (KHSH), Philip Gibbins (KSSH) and Chris Sadler (14-19 Partnership)

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May

The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising from meeting 15 May

3.1 Staff Retention in Schools affected by the Schools for the Future proposals [minute 3.1 of the 15 May meeting]

An analysis had been made available of the current commitments against the centrally-retained School Reorganisations budget. However, the information was not circulated to the meeting because it contained some individual salary details. An "anonymised" version will be made available for the next Schools Forum meeting. It was reported that the budget is being used to support schools with additional training needs and additional staff costs. The Middle schools in North Kirklees have received a small initial allocation as they stand to be the first group of schools affected by the SFF proposals. Typically, the funding is used to free up staff (usually a member of the school's Senior Management Team) to attend meetings in connection with the reorganisation and to do the necessary internal planning work towards the changes.

There were concerns expressed around the table that schools affected by the SFF proposals still do not know how they will be supported on a number of fronts. In particular, staff retention issues in those schools proposed for closure continues to be raised as requiring urgent consideration. Given the number of schools involved in the SFF changes and the complexity of the issues, it was questioned whether the current base Reorganisation Budget provision of around £250k would be adequate to meet future needs.

3.2 School Excess Balances

For those schools identified as having an excess balance position at year end 2008-09 the deadline for them to respond with evidence that the excess element is to be committed is Friday 19 June. To date 17 responses from a total of 50 identified schools have been received. The Director is taking an active interest this time and has requested a briefing on the processes followed and the outcomes. The sub-group of the Schools Forum formed to consider the more intractable balance problems will need to be convened in the near future – Angela Farmer will contact the relevant members to arrange a date and time. There was a bit of a debate over how and when to involve the Learning Service in the process, as their knowledge about individual schools might be germane to decisions about whether or not to claw back surplus funds from individual schools. It was agreed that the sub-group's role was to consider the evidence placed in front of them and to then make recommendations about the schools concerned. These recommendations can then be scrutinised by relevant authority officers as a final stage in the process.

4. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2008-09 Issues

The retained DSG budget position at year end 2008-09 detailed last time was confirmed and a summary presentation circulated. There are a number of proposals for Schools Forum to consider which entail drawing a ring around various underspends and rolling the amounts forward to use in 2009-10. This would effectively place the 2008-09 DSG account in overall deficit (although the position cannot be finalised today given that the DCSF are overdue in confirming the final DSG allocation to Kirklees for 2009-10!). It is likely that any uncleared gap will need to be redeemed directly from school budgets. To help schools understand the potential financial impact of this a "ready-reckoner" was circulated which showed the school-by-school effect of spreading a £100,000 deduction in proportion to 2009-10 Age-Weighted Pupil Unit and Planned Place values. If the eventual outcome of the discussions was, say, a £400k deduction from schools then the figures in the final column would need to be multiplied by a factor of 4 to determine the effect for individual schools.

4a. School-specific Contingency

The bottom-line position of the 2008-09 Contingency account shows an underspend of – (£450,800). However, within this, there are three separate sums which should be considered for roll-forward to be committed during financial year 2009-10: -

- **Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 17 (£238,000).** Central Council funding is provided to enable schools to budget for the true Local Government employers' superannuation rate rather than the provisory rate charged via the support staff payroll. In 2008-09 the unallocated balance of FRS17 funds was posted against school contingency. The underspend is linked to the delay in the implementation date of Single Status to 1 June 2009. Provision was originally made for all SS costs to have been dealt with before year end 2008-09. The provision needs to be rolled forward into 2009-10 to cancel out the FRS17 rate difference at individual schools on any Single Status arrears paid out in the new year.
- **SEN/BESD Development Plan (£350,000).** Previously, Schools Forum has been keen to preserve SEN-related underspends within the sphere of SEN wherever possible. The Development Plan was created with ongoing Schools Forum input so the underspend against the plan (held within the contingency account) is reported here for further consideration by Schools Forum. [See below for separate consideration of this sum].
- **Outstanding Single Status implementation for Catering staffs (£133,000).** This sum of money should have been paid out during 2008-09 but with the pushing back of the Single Status implementation date to June 09 the cost, back-dated to October 2007, will not now fall into the accounts until 2009-10. For the school catering staffs the vast majority of the sum relates to the increased length of the paid year as a result of the equalisation of holiday entitlements.

If the above sums are rolled forward to recommit in 2009-10 then the school contingency account becomes, in effect, overspent by a figure of £270,200. An analysis highlighting the main reasons for this underlying position was included with today's agenda papers. 2008-09 proved to be a really exceptional year for the contingency account with added complications due to the financial

effects of the Grylls Middle closure and it being the temporary home for further Single Status support provisions. It was also an exceptional year in terms of the number of KS1 Class Size revisions triggered and in terms of pay-outs to schools for changes to premises (particularly the situation at Headfield Junior where emergency accommodation had to be provided following health and safety concerns with one of their buildings). The usual pressure within the NQT Induction funding stream has contributed to the problem as well.

4b. Broadband Refresh [Clive Williams (Head of Strategic ICT) and Peter Butters (ICT Infrastructure Manager) attended the meeting for this item]

The project to connect all Kirklees schools to the internet via broadband was set up five years ago and the connections have been operating to specification for the last three years. Issues related to the operating systems are considered at the Broadband Management Group, which has head teacher representation and meets on a termly basis. The group oversees the spending of the 25% retained element of the Harnessing Technology Grant. The broadband connectivity contracts largely come up for renewal at the end of 2010. Peter Butters has been doing some work with a group of the original broadband pilot schools (as their contracts come up for renewal first). What is clear is that the marketplace has changed a lot during the last five years – it is now possible to secure a lot more service for the same amount of money. A more radical approach can now be considered to gain substantial improvements in the service to schools.

Schools currently pay an annual fee for ongoing maintenance and support costs. These fees currently stand at £2,800 for primary schools, £3,800 for middle schools and £4,800 for secondary schools. For more or less the same price structure it should be possible to increase the bandwidth capacity of the connections from the current 2Mb to 10Mb for primary and middle schools and from the current 10Mb to 100Mb for secondary schools. The intended contract framework would be flexible enough to permit further enhancements to bandwidth at the end of the initial contract period. The framework also provides for two suppliers to ensure that we are not reliant upon one provider.

The reorganisation of some Kirklees schools under the Schools for the Future programme sparked a few questions. How can certain schools sign up for a five-year contract when they might not be around for the full five-year term? Will the impact of having fewer schools in total be that the remaining schools have to pay higher maintenance and support charges? Will the system be “future-proofed” against new developments and new ways of working? The framework is intended to be sufficiently flexible to take into account any schools closing and the opening of schools at other locations. The plan costs in the effects of a lower number of schools in the authority. A condition of the Schools for the Future programme is that high schools should have at least a 100Mb connection. It is intended that there be a seamless transition for broadband provision into the SFF future. The new arrangements should also cope well with new ways of working, such as supporting those 14-19 students attending more than one provider establishment for portions of the week.

Officers intend to report back to Schools Forum about the framework agreement before taking it to the marketplace.

There are two funding issues to address now to preserve the funding streams to meet the anticipated cost of the upgrade in connectivity and avoid increases to the amounts schools would have to contribute. The first relates to unspent funds of £306k from the 2008-09 Harnessing Technology Grant retained element (which expires 31 August 2009). It is proposed to immediately allocate this funding amongst schools in lieu of 2010-11's devolved grant allocation and then explore ways of effectively charging 2010-11's maintenance and support instalment during 2009-10. This action was agreed by Schools Forum. The second issue relates to unspent 'matched' funding of £435k within the 2008-09 retained DSG. This sum needs to be preserved with the 2008-11 funding stream to match the anticipated cost of the new arrangements. However, an assumption of matched funding from the DSG has not in fact been made for financial year 2010-11.

Agreed: The £435k underspend from 2008-09 should not be rolled forward into 2009-10. Instead, it would be better to continue to commit matched base funding from retained DSG in 2010-11. If the contract price agreed does not require the commitment of the full amount then the excess could be returned to general DSG funding .

4c. Head Teacher Wellbeing

A business case was put forward from the Head Teacher Support Service for retention of the service's £16k underspend from 2008-09. Some of the surplus has been generated by the service being successful in attracting business from head teachers who had not previously used the service. A series of wellbeing events for head teachers was planned to take place during last year but the timescale proved to be impractical to deliver within so the service is now seeking permission to run these events starting in September 2009 instead.

There was a range of opinion expressed around the table about the idea of events for head teachers. This ran from questioning whether such expenditure was morally correct during difficult economic times to others saying how valuable such events are in terms of imparting strategies for coping with stress to under-pressure head teachers. The Head Teacher Support Service is only funded by primary, middle and special schools. The primary and middle Schools Forum reps were, on the whole, very supportive of the proposal. The secondary reps agreed to abide by whatever was decided amongst the other sectors. The issue will be taken back to constituent group meetings and reported back to the 3 July Schools Forum meeting.

4d. SEN/BESD Development Plan

At year end 2008-09 there is an underspend of around £350k showing within the school-specific contingency against the SEN/BESD Development Plan (see 4a above). A summary table identifying the proposed uses of the unspent monies was circulated at the meeting. However, Schools Forum felt that they could not realistically decide anything without a supporting business case paper. This needs to be prepared in time for the next Schools Forum meeting.

4e. KS4 Alternative Provisions / Pupil Retention Grant

A paper from the Pupil Referral Service was circulated late in the meeting putting forward a case for rollover of an underspend in the account in 2008-09. Schools Forum members are asked to read the paper before the next meeting and feedback any comments or questions then.

5. Consultation: Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2009

This item was deferred to the 3 July meeting due to time constraints. Schools Forum members were asked to read through the briefing paper included with today's agenda in advance of the next meeting.

6. Any other business

No other business was raised.

Date and Time of next meeting

Friday 3 July 2009, 9:30am to 11.30am at the Deighton Centre, Huddersfield