

MEETING:-SCHOOLS' FORUM

DATE OF MEETING:-9 FEBRUARY 2010

Report Reference:- **2.1**

**EXTRACT OF MINUTE OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22 January 2010**

39. ADDITIONAL NEEDS: NEXT STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

The Chairman agreed to consider this item as urgent business in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, due to a request for pre-decision scrutiny on a decision scheduled to be made by the Executive at its meeting on 2 February 2010.

NOTE – Councillor C J Underwood-Frost declared a personal interest in this item as his family had personal experience of issues relating to additional needs.

NOTE – Councillor A P Williams declared a personal interest in this item as he had personal experience of issues relating to additional needs.

A report by the Assistant Director of Children's Services was considered, which updated the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the outcomes of recent consultation with stakeholders and proposed further action in relation to the following: -

- the adoption of the principles for the delivery of additional needs services as outlined in the report that was considered by the Council's Executive on 6 October 2009 entitled 'Additional Needs – Direction of Travel';
- the delegation of funding for the majority of Special Educational Needs statements to mainstream schools.

The principles proposed that would drive the future educational provision for children with Additional Needs were noted, as follows: -

- i) inclusion;
- ii) localisation;
- iii) personalisation;
- iv) effective resources.

It was reported that these principles were widely endorsed by Head Teachers, officers and staff working within Children's Services, however, stakeholder responses indicated concerns at the way in which the principles would translate

into practice. A representative Stakeholder's Group was therefore established to steer the 'direction of travel', using the principles as a guiding framework.

The work of the Stakeholder's Group focussed on the delegation of funds for statements to mainstream schools and had also considered related matters including the need to monitor the use made by schools of delegated funding and the role of Special Educational Needs support services. The most significant of these areas had been that of the delegation of funding for statements, in terms of its potential ability to enable more responsive and faster access to services for children and young people with decision making at local level. This approach was consistent with the four principles, as outlined above. Specific details relating to the funding and statements of Special Educational Needs were outlined as part of the report.

Councillors were informed that, after significant discussion and examination of data, a working group of the Stakeholder's Group reached a consensus proposing that the following key factors be used to distribute funding in relation to Bands 1 – 5: -

- the numbers of pupils claiming a free school meal;
- a school-based measure of income deprivation, based on each pupil's home postcode;
- relative prior attainment of pupils using: -
 - Early Years Foundation Stage, and;
 - Key Stage One Teacher Assessments for Primary Schools;
 - Key Stage Two Test results for Secondary Schools.

Prior attainment measures would focus on pupils not achieving the expected levels of attainment in the core subjects of English and Maths. Lincolnshire had prioritised the need to improve performance of the primary sector, which had not historically met targets, and this approach would contribute to the objective through targeting resources at attainment levels.

In 2010/2011 it was proposed that transitional arrangements would apply whereby schools that may lose or gain funds were protected within a defined upper and lower limit. This transitional protection would last for the year and schools would be informed what new budget share they would move to after this time.

A focus on accountability and monitoring was identified as being particularly important to parents and to the strategic management of Special Educational Needs by Local Authorities. The Local Authority would monitor the use made by schools of delegated Special Educational Needs funds and the related outcomes for pupils. This would be undertaken by the application of Lincolnshire's strategy

for school improvement procedures. Details of what this would include were outlined as part of the report.

It was reported that, if supported by this Scrutiny Committee, approved by the Executive and successfully implemented by schools, these actions would result in a reduction in bureaucracy at school level. It would also ensure that children and young people with Special Education Needs could attend their local schools with appropriately resourced and personalised educational programmes with quicker access to additional support services.

The Chairman of the Lincolnshire Parent Carer Council, following a request to speak, was invited by the Chairman to address the Committee and share her concerns. These included issues around the assessment process, Special Schools, parental confidence, delegated funds, transferability of assessments and existing Statements. Officers answered questions relating to the points raised and thanked the Parent Carer Council and other parents for their valuable contributions to the consultation exercise.

Discussion ensued, during which the following points were made by Members of the Committee: -

- one of the biggest flaws in the system was the fact that the funding was not ring-fenced, however, if the funding was ring-fenced it would mean less flexibility for the schools. Performance measures would be introduced and funding monitored to ensure that schools used the funding allocated to them for Special Educational Needs in relation to the purposes it was intended for;
- when children or young people migrated from county to county, a concern was expressed that their support could be affected depending on whether the respective authorities operated different systems in relation to Special Educational Needs. It was noted that Lincolnshire's proposed system was already in place in the majority of authorities in the country and lessons had been learned from their methods of good practice. It was also reported that every child or young person in the country had a unique number centrally, meaning that information could be passed from authority to authority detailing a number of things including performance and any Special Educational Needs;
- concerns were expressed relating to the involvement of Academies in the Council's proposals. It was reported that Academies would be entitled to the same funding formula as mainstream schools and the Council worked very well with Academies in Lincolnshire. Each Academy also had a County Councillor appointed onto their respective Boards;
- in terms of budgetary issues, the Schools' Forum would be consulted prior to the budget for schools being set. The Local Authority had an obligation to inform schools of their respective budgets by the end of March 2010;

RESOLVED

That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee endorses the proposals to: -

- (i) approve the principles for the delivery of additional needs services as outlined in the report considered by the Executive on 6 October 2009 entitled 'Additional Needs – Direction of Travel' and recommends that the Executive supports the adoption of these principles in the future development and progression of the Additional Needs Strategy;
- (ii) to further delegate funds, by formula, to mainstream schools for statements for Bands 1 – 5.