



REPORT REFERENCE:- **2.0**
LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
26 JANUARY 2011

PRESENT: TERL BRYANT (CHAIRMAN)

Schools' Members

Ellenor Beighton (Headteacher, Market Rasen, De Aston), John Beswick (Governor, Cordeaux, Louth), Tim Bright (Headteacher, Bourne Westfield Primary), Bill Bush (Headteacher, Grantham, The Phoenix Special), Martin Connor (Headteacher, North Hykeham North Kesteven School), Stephen Douglas (Headteacher, Cranwell Primary), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, Grantham, The Kings), Michael Follows MBE (Governor, Boston John Fielding Community Special), Anne Grief (Headteacher, Long Sutton Primary), Roger Hale (Headteacher, Caistor Grammar), Sarah Jelley (Governor, Nettleham Primary), Simon Hardy (Faith Groups), Jonathan Maddox (Headteacher, Bourne Grammar), Julie Marshall (Private, Voluntary and Independent Early Years Providers of the free entitlement to early years education), Jeremy Newnham (Headteacher, Caistor Yarborough), Nigel Henry (Staff Trade Unions), John Poucher (Governor, Boston R C Primary), Malcolm Shore (Headteacher, Grantham St Anne's C of E Primary), Heather Steed (Headteacher, Boston Nursery), Paul Strong (Headteacher, Welton William Farr C of E Comprehensive) and Jennifer Wheeldon (Headteacher, Scothern, Ellison Boulters Primary)

Officials

Adults and Children's Directorate - Debbie Barnes (Assistant Director), Tony Warnock (Financial Adviser) and Mark Popplewell (Assistant Financial Adviser);
 CfBT - Paul Snook (Principal School Improvement Adviser);
 Chief Executive's Office – Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Martyn Taylor (Headteacher, Thomas Cowley, Donnington) and Peter Duxbury (Executive Director of Adults and Childrens)

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 13 October 2010 be agreed as a correct and signed by the Chairman subject to the deletion of "ed" in "reported", in minute 20.

31. SAVING ENERGY AND MONEY IN OUR SCHOOLS (minute 17(b), Schools' Forum 13 October 2010)

It was agreed that Doug Robinson should be asked to provide a progress report on saving energy in schools for the next meeting of the Forum. Anne Grief agreed to circulate information to the Forum in connection with energy saving at her school.

32. ACTION TAKEN SINCE THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2010

The Forum received a report on actions taken in response to the discussion at the previous meeting on the Forum on 13 October 2010. NOTED

33. REVIEW AND RECONFIGURATION OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND MAINSTREAM UNIT PROVISION

The Forum received a joint report from Paul Snook and Tony Warnock on the outcome of the working group's review of funding arrangements and reconfiguration of special schools and mainstream unit provision.

Comments made by the Forum:-

1. The working group had worked very well and was representative of all special schools.
2. It had not been a cost cutting exercise.
3. There were risks, e.g. Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty schools could lose £0.900m in funding and this could affect the quality of service provided. This could lead to appeal tribunals and poor publicity for the Council.
4. All special school Headteachers had been consulted on the proposals.
5. If the proposals prevented children from being transported for long distances and periods across the county then the proposals would be beneficial.
6. The proposals were not specific about the effects on other budgets.
7. "Ghost" places reserved for children.

Paul Snook responded:-

1. Explained the history of the development of "ghost" places and how they were being taken out of the formula.
2. Funding for the proposals was contained within the special schools budget.
3. Children with complex needs would not be placed in generic schools and BESD schools would continue.
4. The loss of funding to extended provision budget would be used to support the provision of services before and after school in BESD schools. It had been difficult to know if the funding for extended provision had been used to support the core curriculum in the past as staff had dual roles.
5. The local authority recognised that the proposals were challenging adding that schools needed to examine their management and infrastructure.
6. A parent could appeal if they considered that the local authority was not making provision for their child.

The Chairman reminded the Forum that the restructuring had come about following a review of carry forwards in special schools and the Forum had agreed that this

should be examined because they considered the carry forwards too big and he was satisfied that the work done by the working group had been carried out fairly.

The Forum noted that it might be necessary to go to the Secretary of State in connection with issues relating to the Minimum Funding Guarantee.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the introduction of the new special schools formula (with transitional arrangements) as set out in the report, with effect from 1 April 2011, be supported.

34. EARLY YEARS FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FROM 2011/12

The Forum received a report from Mark Popplewell on progress on implementing the new funding arrangements for early year's provision in the maintained and non maintained settings from 2011/12.

Comments made by the Forum:-

1. They welcomed the buffer for nurseries of one year. Nurseries were located in areas of deprivation and spaces had been provided for deprived children.
2. Funding was based on three headcounts instead of the January headcount and this presented problems.
3. An enquiry about the top slicing of £0.670m per annum of deprivation money and whether this was top sliced from the DSG.
4. With regard to PVI the head count was based on numbers on seats but not sure how deprivation was worked out.
5. There were issues of quality of provision in small schools.
6. Issues in connection with schools taking four year old children with special needs and the funding thereof. SEN assessments were prepared for these children if necessary.

Officers responded:-

1. They explained the position in connection with the funding of nurseries.
2. The funding formula would be based on actual participation in each term throughout the financial year, therefore maintained setting would need to forward plan using anticipated numbers or scenario planning to determine likely nursery funding.
3. Lincolnshire had a commitment to sustaining the current level of funding from the DSG for early years provision through the EYSFF. The total losses in funding when compared to the previous funding approach would be recycled through the deprivation factor, therefore no additional top slice would be taken.
4. The deprivation factor would be based on the government's deprivation measure: IDACI. The IDACI data used the postcode data for each child to determine an overall deprivation rating for each setting. The financial years deprivation funding would be based on January census data and those settings that scored 65% and above would receive deprivation funding.

5. PVI's could charge parents for places over and above the 15 hours free entitlement and it would be the responsibility of the governing body to set this rate.
6. Those schools that admitted nursery age children into their reception class would be required to set up a pre-school under school governance (subject to approval by the Birth to Five Service) to ensure a more formal approach was established.
7. There would be the same funding arrangements for the maintained settings/academies with charging left to the decision of the governing body/academy trust for additional places above the free
8. The proposals were a two year offer to be maintained to 2013 when it would become statutory.

RESOLVED

That the report and transition arrangements on implementing Early Years funding from 2011/12 be noted.

35. SEN FUNDING FORMULA REVIEW (minute 21, Forum, 13 October 2010)

The Forum received a progress report from Tony Warnock on issues raised from the review of the new SEN formula factor in September 2010 and at the last meeting of the Forum. Officers had now considered the issues and were making recommendations for addressing them from April 2011.

Comments made by the Forum:-

1. A lot of grey areas in connection with medical statements e.g. autistic children.
2. The education impact on children following the change in funding.
3. SEN in nursery classes were hard to measure.
4. The training provided to help identify children with SEN before they entered statutory education and the training needed for Nursery Nurses.

Officers commented:-

1. Gary Nixon would be asked to provide a reply on training requirements.
2. The identified special needs of early years children in primary schools was low and the local authority wished to avoid creating a formula that was too bureaucratic.
3. Checks and balances had been put in place and an examination of the impact of the new formula and reducing staffing levels would be carried out in conjunction with Gary Nixon next year.
4. All schools had received protection this year and adjustments were made to calculate what schools would have been receiving under the old system.
5. A detailed review had been undertaken in connection with medical statements and there were inconsistencies which Gary Nixon was examining.
6. The issues in connection with autistic children were difficult and needed to be resolved.

RESOLVED

That the report and recommendations in the report be supported and that officers respond to the enquiries raised by the Forum.

36. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STANDARD IN SCHOOLS (FMSIS)

The Forum received a report from Tony Warnock on the current position and proposals for taking the matter forward for Financial Management Standard in Schools, following the announcement by the Secretary of State that FMSIS would cease with immediate effect.

Comments by the Forum included:-

1. A reiteration of the views made by the Forum on 13 October 2010 that the Forum “supported the local authority’s robust approach to address overspends, emphasising the need for all schools to follow the FMSIS.
2. The Chairman of the Forum should be asked to write to those schools who had not met FMSIS.
3. Many hours spent implementing and abiding by the current arrangements for FMSIS and questioned the need to implement alternative arrangements.
4. Were there any similarities amongst those schools that had implemented FMSIS?
5. How many schools had achieved FMSIS?
6. FMSIS was achievable with officer help.
7. The FMSIS procedures in place were bureaucratic but thorough.
8. Why had those schools which had not reached the FMSIS standard not been punished?
9. What was the position in connection with Academies?
10. What was the position in connection with the auditors if the FMSIS was not met?
11. Would arrangements be made to train staff on the new arrangements?
12. The financial climate for schools would deteriorate and it was important for schools to get their finances in order.
13. Any letter to schools should only go to schools who had not got FMSIS.
14. Why was the £60k needed for audit?

Officers responded:-

1. The demands made on Academies to meet financial standards were more stringent than the maintained sector.
2. Meeting the standard of FMSIS was a legal requirement and a local authority could withdraw financial delegation to a school although there was a huge potential burden for the local authority having to manage the school.
3. Schools had expressed their appreciation for the help provided by audit and the £60k was for maintained schools only.
4. There had been some resistance from schools in the early days following the introduction of FMSIS.
5. Some schools had achieved FMSIS first time but then had subsequently failed to maintain essential practices.
6. It was possible to publish information on those schools not meeting the standard.

7. There was constant monitoring of schools and if need be the local authority wrote to schools. However, it was those schools who did not reply that caused concern.
8. Should a school overspend then it was charged 2% above the base rate.
9. The local authority had not failed in its duty in connection with FMSIS.
10. Audit did not routinely sign off each school's accounts each year.
11. Comprehensive training was provided to schools.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the local authority's proposal for continuing to utilise £0.060m of the DSG to assist schools in maintaining good financial management practices be supported.
- (c) That the Chairman, on behalf of the Forum, write to the 20% of schools who had not met FMSIS to remind them of their duty to keep their finances in order and write to the remaining 80% of schools to thank them for meeting the FMSIS.
- (d) That officers provide a list of those schools who had not met FMSIS to the next meeting of the Forum.

37. ACADEMIES UPDATE

The Forum received a verbal update from officers on the latest situation in connection with Academies. Precise details of the schools which had converted to Academies would be presented to the next meeting of the Forum. A number of schools had converted to Academies with the main interest coming from the secondary sector. Details were provided of the review of S251 statements, which would be ready by March 2011. To ensure that costs were being properly coded to Academies, in the light of the financial settlement and the reductions proposed by the local authority, the DfE appeared minded to reduce the LACSEG to Academies by 10% next year, to recognise that support services provided by the local authority would be reduced from 1 April 2011.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

38. RESPONSES FROM SCHOOLS TO THE BUDGET 2011/12 (NON DSG BUDGET)

The Forum received a report and presentation from Debbie Barnes on how Children's Services intended to meet the budget reductions as part of the government's spending review with the emphasis on protecting front line services and statutory duties relating to public protection and proposed staff reductions.

Comments by the Forum:-

1. Were benchmarks in place to protect services detailed in the report?
2. What benchmarks were in place for those children who were just below the qualifying level for deprivation?
3. Was there a strategic plan to examine class sizes?

4. Academies and the policy on home to school transport.

Officers responded:-

1. The local authority had been chosen to pilot a community budget in connection with high risk families and this would attract additional funding to the local authority.
2. The work done by parent support advisers would be integrated into a family support work role.
3. A report on the capital programme and how it was spent would be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.
4. While there were no “ghost places” the comments made previously about special schools were correct. There was an issue with infant class sizes and a future debate on the rationalisation of class sizes might be of interest.
5. More details of the effects on staffing structures had now been issued.

Debbie Barnes stated that the budget exercise had been very useful because it had identified areas for rationalisation, integration and partnership. Schools had been invited to comment on the proposals.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That further information be supplied to the Forum on the funding of “ghost” places.

39. SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS 2011/12

The Forum received a report from Tony Warnock seeking the views of the Forum on school funding arrangements for 2011/12.

Comments made by the Forum:-

1. Comparison of funding for grammar schools showed dramatic differences between grammar schools but this view was challenged because of other factors such as a grammar school acting as a “hub” to distribute money to other schools.
2. Headroom should be used to reduce turbulence especially those schools with 6th Forms as this would help to reduce uncertainty.
3. Headroom should be used reduce the cost of redundancies. Another comment was that headroom should not be used for this purpose.
4. For the pupil premium, the DfE might change this to include all pupils that were eligible for free school meals in the last three years.
5. Need for prudence in the present financial climate.
6. Provision of broadband and possible fragmentation of service.

Officers responded that provision of broadband was a major issue and a report on this subject would be brought to the next meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED (NOTE:- the Forum became inquorate during this report but continued discussion and consideration thereon as no specific decisions were being made)

- (a) That the report and comments made by the Forum be noted.
- (b) That consideration of underspends from 2009/10 and any in 2010/11, together with use of headroom funds, be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.
- (c) That a report on the provision of broadband be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.

40. WORK PROGRAMME

The Forum received its work programme.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be updated and submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.

41. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates and times of future meetings were noted as follows:-

27 April 2011

29 June 2011 (agm)

(All meetings start at 2.00pm at the County Offices, Lincoln.

42. INFORMATION PACK

The following items had been included in the information pack:-

1. CYPSP Minutes – 8 December 2010
2. Scheme for financing schools
3. ICT Provision Minutes – 17 November 2010 (Mike Follows MBE stated the local authority was embarking on a crucial stage of ICT development and therefore this required a strengthening of the ICT Provision Group . All members were asked to give consideration as whether they would wish to become involved and to let know either Mike Follows MBE or Steve Blagg).
4. Local Government Settlement and Children's Services

Members of the Forum were asked to carefully read the minutes of the ICT Provision of 17 November 2010 as they contained information on the procurement of new hardware.

The meeting closed at 6.15pm