



LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
13 OCTOBER 2010

PRESENT: TERL BRYANT (Chairman)

Schools' Members

Ellenor Beighton (Headteacher, Market Rasen, De Aston), 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), 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), Martyn Taylor (Headteacher, The Thomas Cowley, Donington) and Jennifer Wheeldon (Headteacher, Scothern, Ellison Boulters Primary)

Officials

Children's Services Directorate: Debbie Barnes (Assistant Director) and Tony Warnock (Head of Finance)

Chief Executive's Office – Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer).

Also in attendance: Andy Breckon (CfBT)

Apologies for absence: John Beswick (Governor, Louth Cordeaux), Ian Wiles (Headteacher, St Faith's Primary, Lincoln) and Chris Harris (Director, 14-19 Partnership)

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS – MARTYN TAYLOR AND NIGEL HENRY

The Chairman, on behalf on the Forum, welcomed Mr Martyn Taylor, Headteacher, The Thomas Cowley High School, Donington, and Nigel Henry, representing the Staff Trade Unions as new members on the Forum.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 30 June 2010 be agreed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

17. ACTION TAKEN SINCE THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON 30 JUNE 2010

The Forum received a report on actions taken in response to the discussion at the previous meeting on 30 June 2010.

The following matters were noted:-

- (a) Minute 7- Saving Energy and Money in Our Schools - the project for implementing SMART metering in schools was progressing and the preferred supplier had been appointed following a tendering process.
- (b) Minute 12 – Children’s Trust Arrangements – it was noted that while the government was retracting much of the legalisation relating to Children’s Trusts arrangements the Council continued to support partnership working and at a recent meeting of the CYPSP the revised Strategic Partnership Board (to be known as “CYPSP”) would still exist but that the setting up of further groups would await the outcome of the education White Paper. The Forum agreed that either the Chairman or Vice-Chairmen should attend the Strategic Investment Group under any new CYPSP arrangements.

18. GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL FUNDING 2011/12: INTRODUCING A PUPIL PREMIUM

Tong Warnock presented a report in connection with consultation by the government on school funding for 2011/12 and the introduction of a Pupil Premium. The views of the Forum were sought on the suggested responses to the consultation prepared by officers detailed in the report.

Comments made by the Forum included:-

- (1) If the Pupil Premium was for specific purposes why could it not be ring-fenced by the government?
- (2) Use of free school meals criteria to determine poverty and its relationship with the Pupil Premium.
- (3) The effect of the proposals on the children of HM forces personnel.

Tony Warnock stated that he had received a response from the Society of County Treasurers in connection with the effect of the Pupil Premium on the children of HM service personnel which had stated - 'Whilst the Society recognises that schools with Service children do face unique challenges, it is important to note that the educational attainment of Service children achieve is at least as high as their peers.'

RESOLVED

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the suggested responses to the consultation, detailed in the Appendix, be supported subject to any covering letter by the local authority to the government stating the need for simplicity and transparency in the funding process and the local authority be requested to place their response on the schools' website.

19. DfE CONSULTATION ON THE SCHOOL FINANCE (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2011

Tony Warnock presented a report on the DfE consultation on Schools Finance (England) Regulations 2011 and sought the views of the Forum on the proposed changes.

Comments made by the Forum and officers included:-

- (1) Early years – there was a need to restart work previously done on this area.
- (2) Grants – it was noted that there was still much work required by officers and further guidance was awaited from the DfE. Any letter to the DfE needed to state the importance of transparency. Officers stated that the grant proposals in connection with Academies and special education would be circulated to all schools in the future.
- (3) Exclusions - the Forum had concerns about the suggestions made by officers in the report especially the additional charges to deter schools from excluding pupils with poor behaviour. The Forum stated that schools had no wish to exclude any pupil and requested that the reasons for exclusion should be published together with the publication of information of those schools accepting excluded pupils.

Officers stated that the Admissions Forum would be examining the exclusion of pupils at its meeting 14 October 2010 and the comments of the Schools' Forum would be submitted.

Tony Warnock stated that schools would be notified of the details about the time table for examining grants adding that there was much work to be done. A report would be submitted to the Forum in January 2011 before schools were finally notified in February 2011.

RESOLVED

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the views of the Forum be passed to the local authority as follows:-

- (a) The need for transparency and financial clarity in any new grants system.
- (b) The comments in the report in connection with Early Years are supported.

- (c) The comments in connection with exclusion of pupils in the report are not supported.
- (d) Before the use of any school facility or community area agreement should be sought from the school's governing body in the first instance.
- (e) The consultation response in connection with the effects of the proposals on Academies and special educational needs is circulated to the Forum as soon as it is available.

20. REVISED SCHOOLS' BUDGET 2010/11

Tony Warnock presented a report in connection with the schools' budget for 2010/11 and sought the support of the Forum to the proposed use of the under spending from 2009/10. The disparity between £397.62m and £371.072m in the report was due to the effect of Academies.

Tony Warnock stated that given the economic uncertainty he recommended that it would be prudent not to commit any under spending at the current time and that the matter should be reconsidered at the Forum in January 2011.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the proposals for dealing with the under spending on the 2009/10 DSG and the revision to the 2010/11 DSG be considered at the next meeting of the Forum in January 2011, be supported.

21. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FUNDING REVIEW

Tony Warnock presented a report highlighting the key issues arising from the recent review of special educational needs formula factor which was introduced in April 2010 and sought the Forum's views on the issues and how this should be taken forward.

Further work was required and he would bring a report to the Forum in January 2011. Officers agreed to circulate a copy of the report on Specialist Provision for Special Educational Needs going to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2010, to the Forum.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the conclusions reached by the working group detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be supported and that a further report be submitted to the Forum in January 2011.
- (3) That the Forum place on record its appreciation to all involved in the review.

22. MANAGING CHANGE POLICY AND SCHOOL REDUNDANCIES

Tony Warnock presented a report seeking the support of the Forum for the local authority's proposal to amend the Managing Change Policy.

Comments by the Forum included:

- (1) Any policy should be based on the size of a school.
- (2) Potential turbulence to special schools indicated in the special educational needs funding review.
- (3) Implementation of any new policy in the short term was not welcomed because of falling pupil rolls.
- (4) It needed to be recognised that a minority of schools were not following the current policy and compliance was needed especially in the current difficult economic situation.
- (5) Concern that some schools were under the impression that other schools could not be approached until a teacher was actually made redundant. Officers confirmed that this was not correct and the policy encouraged the Re Deployment officer to get involved as early as possible.

Tony Warnock responded as follows:-

- (1) The local authority could not force a school to employ redeployed staff and could only use incentives.
- (2) The phased approach in connection with SEN funding should help matters in special schools.
- (3) The comments about school size were supported.
- (4) The majority of schools followed the redundancy procedures.
- (5) The transition arrangements needed to be examined in connection with special schools.
- (6) The Re-deployment Officer would be asked to respond to Paul Strong's comments as the policy encouraged the Re Deployment officer to get involved as early as possible.
- (7) The comments made in connection with the Council's ability to control Community schools were technically correct but it had been the local authority's wish to treat all schools as consistently as possible – if the local authority forced Community Schools to adopt one policy where other schools were not made to accept it, then this would not be in keeping with the local authority's strategic principle of treating all schools consistently as possible.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the proposals of the local authority to alter the Management of Change policy arrangements from April 2011 be supported in principle but with reservations.
- (3) That the suggestion made by Stephen Douglas in connection with the charge for year one being 35% and then for subsequent years 50%, be raised by officers in consultations with the local authority's Executive.

23. EFFECTS OF THE ACADEMIES BILL – UPDATE

Debbie Barnes gave a verbal update on the effects of the Academies Bill. She stated that nine schools had converted to Academies, a further ten schools were in the process of changing to Academies and two schools had made further enquires.

Debbie Barnes stated that the local authority was examining its commercial activities with Academies and was planning to consult with Headteachers about an enhanced trading model. The local authority wished to promote freedom and flexibility for all schools.

The Forum raised a number of issues in connection with insurance and pension liabilities for Academies. Officers were working to resolve matters for the local authority but it was for Academies to resolve those matters with regard to how conversion affected them.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

24. SCHOOLS' FORUM (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2010

Steve Blagg presented a report on the implications of the Schools' Forum's (England) Regulations 2010, particularly the effects of the establishment of Academies on the membership of the Forum.

RESOLVED

That the local authority be recommended:-

- (a) to maintain the current number of school members on the School's Forum, currently 23 and
- (b) that the membership of the Forum be amended to reflect that Primary, Secondary and Academies must be broadly proportional represented on the Forum, having regard to the total of number of pupils registered at them.

25. 2010/11 SECTION 25 ON BENCHMARKING INFORMATION

Tony Warnock presented a report in connection with the latest S251 benchmarking data published by the DfE in September 2010.

Comments by the Forum included:-

- (1) Enquiries about Column 81 (Connexions).
- (2) Home to School Transport - when was it last reviewed?
- (3) The reason for the increase in the cost of Statutory Regulatory duties?

Officers responded as follows:-

- (1) They would re-examine column 81 (Connexions).

- (2) Home to School Transport had been subject to a fundamental budget review and would be examined further in the light of the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- (3) The increase in Statutory Regulatory costs was difficult to calculate as local authorities adopted different methods of calculation. However, corporate costs and, in particular, the corporate costs of Academies needed to be considered. Further guidance was awaited from the DfE to ensure that Academies were fairly funded.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

26. SCHOOL CARRY FORWARDS (2009/10) AND NATIONAL BENCHMARKING (1999/00-2008/09)

Tony Warnock presented a report on School Carry Forwards as at 31 March 2010, including benchmarking data on the local authority's school balances and comparison with East Midlands England statistics for all educational sectors over the period 1999/00 to 2008/09.

Tony Warnock stated that he was concerned about the number of secondary schools with significant over spends. The local authority remained committed to robust implementation of the School's Carry Forward policy.

The 2009/10 School Carry Forward report shows that the total number of schools with deficits increased last year for the first time since 2002/03, with the total value of deficits rising by £0.7m. Although the circumstances behind overspends were unique to each school, it was clear from routine Audit reports that some did not have the basic elements of good financial management embedded within the school, as the Standard required. Maintenance of the Standard therefore remains important, not least as it would have a bearing on the number and cost of redundancies that needed to be financed through the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Forum supported the local authority's robust approach to address overspends, emphasising the need for all schools to follow the Financial Management Standards in Schools, noted the legal requirement for schools to have reached the standards by 31 March 2010, noting that 80% of schools had reached the standards.

Tony Warnock stated that ultimate sanction which could be used by a local authority was the removal of financial control of a school's budgets.

The Forum was particularly concerned about the effects of the Comprehensive Spending Review stating that it was important for schools to maintain control of their finances during a period of financial uncertainty.

RESOLVED

That the local authority be informed:-

- (1) the Forum continues to support the robust implementation of the Schools Carry Forward policy and
- (2) encourages the local authority to enforce the Financial Management Standards in schools.

27. WORK PROGRAMME

The Forum considered its Work Programme.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted and updated for each meeting.

28. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates and times of future meeting were noted as follows:-

26 January 2011,
27 April 2011
29 June 2011 (agm)

2pm in Council Chamber, Newland, Lincoln.

29. INFORMATION PACK

Items in the information pack were noted as follows:-

- (1) Financial Management Standard 2009/10 (see minute 26)
- (2) Review of Special School Funding
- (3) CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme

The meeting closed at 5pm