

Schools' Members

Michael Follows MBE (Governor, Boston John Fielding Community Special) (Vice Chairman) In the Chair

John Beswick (Governor, Louth Cordeaux), Bill Bush (Headteacher, The Phoenix, Grantham), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, Grantham, The Kings), Anne Grief (Headteacher, Long Sutton Primary), Dominic Loyd (Headteacher Boston Tower Road Primary), Jonathan Maddox (Headteacher, Bourne Grammar School), Jeremy Newnham (Headteacher, Caistor Yarborough), Roger Hale (Headteacher, Caistor Grammar), and, Jennifer Wheeldon (Headteacher, Scothern, Ellison Boulters Primary)

Officials

Children's Directorate – Debbie Barnes (Assistant Director); Resources Directorate - Tony Warnock (Head of Finance); Performance and Governance Directorate – Catherine Wilman (Democratic Services Officer).

Apologies for absence:- Terl Bryant (Governor, Stamford Queen Eleanor), Sharron Close (Headteacher, Gainsborough White's Wood Lane Junior), Tony Gaskell (Governor, Lincoln Manor Leas Infant); Richard Hardesty (Governor, North Cockerington CofE Primary), Simon Hardy (Faith Groups), Nigel Henry (representative of Staff Trade Unions), Julie Marshall (representative of Private, Voluntary and Independent Early Year's Providers of the free entitlement to early years education), Heather Steed (Headteacher, Boston Nursery School), Ian Wilkinson (Headteacher, Deeping St James's Primary)

13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2011

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE THE MEETING ON 29 JUNE 2011

It was noted that item 11: *LCC's Leadership Role in Education* should not have been included on the agenda, and was therefore not for approval but for information only.

In relation to item 11, it was reported that Nigel Henry (Staff Trade Unions Representative) had requested comments to be made on behalf of the NASUWT – Debbie Barnes confirmed that the comments would be more appropriately discussed at the Children's Services Joint Forum with Trade Unions and agreed to refer comments to that forum.

Minute 6, as listed under Action Taken since 29 June 2011, stated that details on the Loans Scheme for Schools had been noted. It was reported that Tony Warnock would circulate the particulars of the scheme.

15. SCHOOL SIXTH FORM ALLOCATIONS

Consideration was given to a report detailing the significant reductions in funding over the following two years which some school sixth forms would face. The reductions were due to changes in the funding rates, the reduction of transitional protection and falling demographics. As a result, all sixth forms would receive less money per learner. The report was for noting.

Keith Batty, Professional School Improvement Adviser for CfBT addressed the Forum and the following points were noted:

- Difficulties were anticipated over the next four years for transitional funding. Transitional funding and entitlement funding had been reduced for sixth forms and further education colleges;
- The funding received by sixth forms was based on the number of students from the previous year. However, as the number of students attending sixth forms was reducing, each provider was competing for a smaller pool of entrants;
- Collaborations between sixth forms were being encouraged and this could include those between academies and local authority schools. The aim of collaborations was to drive up standards through competition.

The following points were noted during discussion:

- Some members of the Forum felt collaboration between sixth form providers would be difficult to operate and other members were happy with the way their sixth forms were currently running. In addition, it was felt that creating competition between establishments would not be a helpful approach to the problem. There was concern that some sixth forms could eventually go out of business;
- The rurality of Lincolnshire was an issue, which placed pressure on the transport budget. Debbie Barnes reported that John Hayes MP, Minister of State ((Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, Business, Innovation and Skills) was to meet with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to discuss the issue. It was noted that John Hayes MP was a Member of Parliament for a constituency within Lincolnshire and was aware that the County was an area of concern for sixth form provision. Details of the discussion with the minister would be brought to an appropriate future meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted;
2. That details of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting with John Hayes MP be brought to a future meeting of the Schools' Forum

16. REVISED SCHOOLS BUDGET 2011/12

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was a ring-fenced grant and could only be used for the purposes outlined in DfE (Department for Education) regulations. A revision to the Schools Budget was necessary each year to reflect firstly, the final DSG announced by the DfE in the summer and secondly, the under or overspending arising on the DSG in the previous financial year.

The DSG was determined by multiplying the number of children recorded in schools during the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) in January 2011 by £4,797 (the per pupil amount Lincolnshire receives as determined by the DfE). Owing to the timing of the schools budget setting for 2011/12, an estimate of pupil numbers in Lincolnshire had to be made before the results of the PLASC were known.

The final DSG for Lincolnshire was £466.679m which was £1.804m more than the Local Authority's estimate. The Local Authority was therefore required by the DfE to discuss the plans for dealing with the estimating error and resultant underspend in 2011/12 with the Schools' Forum.

The underspend on the DSG for 2010/11 was confirmed as £16.974m. This underspend had been achieved through a prudent approach to the management of the DSG in recent years by the Local Authority and the Schools' Forum. This underspending was now at a level where it could be deployed to have real impact. The careful approach had helped to avoid an overspend on Lincolnshire's DSG which would have to be clawed back: a situation some Local Authorities had found themselves in. Details of the underspending were set out in the report.

Tony Warnock took the Forum through the appendices to the report and the following points were noted:

Appendix 1 – Central DSG Budgets 2010/11

- A significant element of the underspending was due to Children's Services continued efforts to maximise use of non – DSG budgets.

Appendix 2 – Schools Contingency 2010/11

- The Local Authority had increased the funds available to schools in this and future financial years by increasing the number of schools that could claim Mandatory Rate Relief from their District Council.
- Some figures included in Appendix 2 had been estimated (for example, free school meals);

Appendix 3 – 2011/12 DSG Commitments

- It was noted that the figures listed in this appendix were in £thousand not £million as stated;
- It was noted that Crowland St Guthlac's School would shortly be closing. A phased closure had been planned to maintain a good standard of education;

Appendix 4 – 2011/12 DSG Developments

- Details of the activities on offer to all schools through the EBacc were detailed in the report. The activities had been designed to bring subjects to life, creating enthusiasm, excitement and engagement of young people;
- Some members of the Forum felt certain activities were a little gimmicky and patronising and some of them were already happening in schools. Members also expressed concern that some activities were not value for money;
- It was felt receiving further details of the programme to scrutinise would not be a valuable use of the Forum's time and that the proposal provided in Appendix 4 could not be supported;
- The views of the Schools' Forum would be reported to Children's Services Director Management Team and the Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Education and their decision confirmed to the Forum;
- A member of the Forum asked why the EBacc had not gone out to tender. In response, Debbie Barnes reported that LCC had a strategic relationship with CfBT and there was provision in the core contract for CfBT to provide Additional school improvement Services – DB also confirmed that the CfBT contract had been extended until 2017;

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report be noted;
2. That the proposals for use of the 2010/11 DSG underspending be supported, with the exclusion of Appendix 4 which is not supported;
3. That the proposal for the use of the 2011/12 underspending arising from the estimating error be supported.

17. THE 2011/12 s.251 BUDGET STATEMENT AND CENTRAL EXPENDITURE LIMIT

Consideration was given to a report which provided information to the Forum regarding the s.251 budget statement for 2011/12 and sought formal, retrospective approval for exceeding the Central Expenditure Limit (CEL).

The s.251 Statement showed that the Central Expenditure Limit (CEL) had been breached. However the prospect of this occurring had been highlighted to the Forum in January 2011. The breach was due to an increase in costs in order to finance broadband and carbon tax but with no increase in the Government's DSG per pupil funding.

It was reported that there were no long term implications arising from the breach.

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report be noted;
2. That retrospective approval for exceeding the Central Expenditure Limit in 2011/12 be given.

18. STREAMLINING OF GRANTS

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update and sought the Forum's comments on the work undertaken so far to respond to the Government's streamlining of grants into the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2011/12.

A working party had been set up to review all aspects of Lincolnshire's schools funding formula. The working party had met on 22 September 2011 and the members were thanked for their support. The working party had looked at, amongst other issues;

- the funding of small schools;
- the funding of deprivation;
- the possible need for additional support for children in earlier years and hence the relative funding between each sector.

The next steps for the streamlining of grants into the DSG were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report be noted;
2. That a further meeting of the working party be arranged.

19. SCHOOL CARRY FORWARDS (2010/11) AND NATIONAL BENCHMARKING (1999/00 – 2009/10)

Schools are permitted to carry forward underspendings from one year to the next, subject to the provisions of Lincolnshire's school carry forward policy, which form part of Lincolnshire's Scheme for Financing Schools. The purpose of the report was to provide information regarding Lincolnshire school carry forwards as at 31 March 2011.

The number of schools in deficit at the end of 2010/11 decreased by 17, from 42 to 25 which included 12 primary schools and 13 secondary schools. DfE advice in the previous year suggested that the Government no longer expected local authorities to claw back 'excess' funds, however Lincolnshire had advised schools they should not retain excess balances unless earmarked for specific capital projects, but stated that the claw back of excess balances was unlikely to be permissible. High level monitoring of all schools' finances would continue however.

It was noted that any school with a significant deficit was visited twice a year by Tony Warnock who monitored their situation. Any underspend a school had when it closed would go into the DSG.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

20. SCHOOLS FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD (SFVS)

On 18 July 2011, the DfE announced the launch of the new SFVS following a consultation to which the Forum had responded. Details of the SFVS were set out in the report which was for noting.

The SFVS had been designed in conjunction with schools to assist them in managing their finances and to give assurance that they had secure financial management in place. Governing bodies had formal responsibility for the financial management of their schools and so the standard was primarily aimed at governors. The new standard was a lighter-touch approach, compared to its predecessor: Financial Management Standard in Schools.

The next steps were to develop plans to ensure schools understood the new SFVS and that it was implemented the way the DfE was expecting.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

21. UPDATE ON THE SPECIAL SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA

A report was presented to the Forum at its meeting on 26 January 2011 outlining the Local Authority's proposals to introduce a new funding formula for special schools in April 2011. Consideration was given to a report which updated the Forum on developments since the introduction.

A full review of each school's population would take place in the autumn term of 2011 to ensure the application of the band descriptors by schools reflected their current population. This review would not include the two hospital special schools in the county as they operated differently from other special schools.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

22. BROADBAND

Debbie Barnes gave a verbal update on negotiations for the County Council to become a contracting member of the new regional Public Sector Network which were taking place. The following points were noted:

- The Local Authority had a statutory obligation to provide access to a broadband network for schools.
- The procurement of the Public Service Network brings together corporate and schools networks to achieve improved value for money;

- In addition to schools, other public services could join the Authority's network which could push the price down;
- Tender bids to find a suitable provider for the network had been received and the result will be announced shortly.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

23. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Schools' Forum Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 4.45pm