

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2008

Present

Primary School Teachers: Ron Lawrence, Sue Meckiff and Isabel Vassallo

Secondary Head Teachers: Kathy Griffiths, Karen Raven and Meryl Davies

Primary Governors: Betsy Johnstone, Nick Webb and Paul Chick

Secondary Governors: Andrew Downes (Chairman), Janet Bell and Ms J Mogridge

Non-School Representatives: David Bridger (Vice-Chairman) and Mrs M Riley

Also present

Councillors Humphrys and Robert Evans

Rob Carling (Head of Children and Young People Finance)

Gill Bratley (Principal Finance Officer)

Helen Long (Democratic Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Janet Bell, Doreen Fellingham, Sue Robertson and Isabel Vasello.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

It was noted that from May 2008 there would be a form to complete for declarations of interests.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11th DECEMBER 2007.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11th December were deferred to be considered at the next meeting.

4. PRESENTATION ON SINGLE STATUS

Two members of the Human Resources department addressed the Forum. They outlined the progress being made with the introduction of Single Status. There were some delays whilst further consultation with unions was undertaken. In addition to this each post had to be job evaluated which was a time consuming process.

They explained that School Governors had to be involved in the process and that a spreadsheet had been prepared for each School in the Borough for Governors which listed the posts and what the changes would mean for each staff member. They had asked Governors to consider the spreadsheet and to feedback any comments.

The Human Resources team were planning a Governors information Session.

Forum Members asked for clarification on "support staff". Officers clarified that this was included caretaking staff. When the road shows had been held for schools they were between 3pm and 6pm but this had caused difficulties for caretaking staff as a number had been unable to attend at this time.

Members then asked about the funding for single status. £250,000 had been included in funding given to Schools in 2005/06. The Children and Young People finance team had made a "broad brush" estimate of £500,000 and it was now therefore suggested that a further £220,000 was needed and this would need to be reviewed for future years. The DSG usage figures shown of £140,000 for each of 2009/10 and 2010/11 may not be needed.

One concern was for teaching assistants who had previously been paid for 52 weeks a year. Under the new system they would only be paid term time which would have a significant detrimental impact. A number of schools had used the workforce re-modelling as an opportunity to change terms and conditions. The Human resources team reported that there were about 78 classroom assistants who would be affected, but this number was only for the schools who bought in the payroll service. There would be others employed in schools which purchased their payroll services elsewhere.

5. THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT ON PROPOSED MFG ADJUSTMENT

The forum considered a report which provided details of the Government's Indicative Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG) settlement for the three year period 2008-09 to 2010-11. The Portfolio Holder had considered the report at his meeting in December 2007 and he would consider a further report at his meeting in February. The proposals contained in the report would form the basis for consultation with the Head Teachers, Governors, and other interested parties.

The Forum considered the proposals in details. The Head of Children and Young People Finance highlighted the areas where the Schools Forum needed to make a decision; how much should go into contingency and how much distributed now in respect of personalised learning.

They noted that all the figures were revised but that the finance team were looking at a calculation formula so the figures may change again.

Personalised Learning

The Government has earmarked £2,098,000 for personalise learning from the DSG. Given the overall funding settlement it will be necessary to fund traditional growth items e.g. the increase in “matrix” payments to schools from this earmarked funding. It was also explained to the Forum that the Director of Children and Young People services is recommending that a significant proportion of this funding is initially placed in the schools contingency to fund specific service improvements relating to attendance, attainment and looked after children. If this were to happen a further full consultation process will take place to with the Schools Forum, Head Teachers and Governors before final recommendations are made to members. It was agreed that £400,000 should be delegated to schools for personalised learning.

Pockets of Deprivation

It was explained that the pockets of deprivation figures were based on tax credit data. Members raised concerns that the data was based on where pupils lived but was distributed to the schools on the basis of the pupils that attended; therefore the funding may not be balanced. However using tax credit data was thought to be at least as good as any other basis available. It was agreed that a circular showing the calculations should be sent to schools as part of the consultation. This would then be agreed provided there were no objections.

Six day Provision

For six day provision it was agreed that this would need to be considered in conjunction with the behaviour service. Consideration was needed for those temporary exclusions that exceeded 6 days.

SEN out of Borough Provision

The Head of Finance would meet with the Special Schools Representative outside of the meeting. He was confident with the figures for 2008/09 but discussion was needed for 2009/120 and 2010/2011.

Early years PVI

A member of the Forum asked for clarification as to why the amount had risen to £200,000 from £40,000. The Head of Finance explained how this figure had been reached. There was a concern that without this funding a number of PVI settings would not be able to continue and then the Borough would struggle to fulfil its statutory obligations.

The settings would have to demonstrate the improvement in service required by new OfSted/government requirements as a result of the funding.

A funding formula would be devised and ready for September/October 2008. Prior to that the funding would be allocated but it would be made clear that once the formula was applied they could receive more funding or it could be reduced.

The Forum agreed by a majority that the recommendation of an allocation of £200,000 should go out for consultation but on the basis that the funding formula would be applied in Autumn 2008 and that the settings demonstrated continuing improvement and invested in staff training.

With the extension of the

Early Years Volume Increases

The element of overspend in the current year would be rolled forward and any under spend in the PVI settings would be incorporated in the Schools Budget.

Planned Maintenance

The Head of Finance explained that Bromley had been granted £3m over 3 years which was not sufficient. The Government had pumped in £8m but this had not gone to those authorities who were on the RSG floor.

CRB checks

This was discussed at the 10 January Governors' meeting but it was mainly the actual checks they discussed rather than how they were funded.

List B

All the items listed in list B (use of the 2007/08 Schools Budget balance still held centrally) were agreed.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was a useful spreadsheet on Teacher Net relating to the Schools Forum; powers and responsibilities which is appended to these minutes for reference.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 25th February 2008 at 4.30pm at the Civic Centre

Chairman

The meeting ended at 6.58 pm