

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS FORUM
FRIDAY, 24TH JUNE, 2011**

Present:- David Sylvester (in the Chair); Sarah Graham, Kay Jessop, Lynne Pepper, Jane Fearnley, John Day, Paul Blackwell, Eileen Gilmartin, Roger Burman, David Pridding, Val Broomhead, John Henderson, Susan Brook, Nick Whitaker, Geoff Gillard, Michael Waring, Sylvia Hudson, Sue Warner, Bev Clubley and David Naisbitt.

Also in attendance : Dorothy Smith, Karen Borthwick, Katy Edmondson, Robert Holsey, Clare Burton, Joanne Robertson, Vera Njegic, Sue Shelley and Martin Fittes.

Apologies for absence were received from:- Councillor Havenhand, Steven Clayton and Joyce Thacker.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH MAY, 2011

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 13th May, 2011, be approved as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Item on : Budget for Trade Union Activity – the various comments received in response to the budget reduction would be considered at the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum.

3. FORMALLY CENTRALLY HELD GRANT CONSULTATION

Discussion took place on the submitted report concerning the former centrally retained grants which are now included in the Dedicated Schools Grant allocation for the 2011/2012 financial year. There had been 58 responses received during the consultation process.

Views were expressed about the need to ensure that funding was utilised in the best interests of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities.

The precise number of learning communities in the Rotherham Borough area was also clarified.

The Schools Forum agreed the following actions:-

(1) the choice of Option 4 (as detailed in the submitted report) – the money shall be distributed to individual school budgets;

(2) the funding shall be distributed on a per pupil basis (and not via the learning communities);

(3) there shall be top-slicing of an amount equivalent to 4% to 8% of the money, to be used specifically to fund initiative-led projects, rather than being distributed to individual schools;

(4) the Schools Forum expressed an initial view to remove the School Lunch Grant amount of £350,000 from this budget; however, a final decision would be delayed until after the completion of the consultation exercise about the

school catering service (refer to minute XX below);

(5) details of the diploma funding grant would not be clarified until September 2011, because the number of students who would be studying the diploma would not be known until that time;

(6) the detail of the distribution of the former centrally retained grants, to individual schools, will be considered by the Finance Strategy Group;

(7) the trades unions representatives would be informed of the distribution of funding to schools' budgets;

(8) the various sub-groups were thanked for their work on this issue.

4. DETAILS ON THE ROTHERHAM SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP

Nick Whitaker presented a report about the continuing development of the Rotherham School Improvement Partnership. Key priorities are : improvements in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 performance; improving outcomes for children with special educational needs; and improving staff recruitment and retention in schools. A further meeting of the Partnership was taking place on 5th July 2011.

The progress of the Rotherham School Improvement Partnership will continue to be reported to the Rotherham Schools Forum.

5. SCHOOLS' CONTINGENCY UPDATE - PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY AND REDUNDANCY COSTS

The Schools Forum discussed the following issues:-

(i) Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty - 8 primary schools had applied, of which 6 had been successful in obtaining a contingency sum of money, as a consequence of financial difficulties;

(ii) Redundancy Costs – there had been no payments in the current financial year in respect of redundancy or protection of jobs.

Agreed:- That the up-to-date budget amounts and expenditure for these items be reported to the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum.

6. SCHOOL BALANCES FROM 2010-2011 SCHOOL YEAR

The Schools Forum noted that the school balances remaining at the end of the 2010/2011 financial year showed a reduction of 9% on the amounts for 2009/2010.

Six primary schools were holding amounts in excess of the 8% threshold and would be required to explain the reasons why the balances were being held. Nine primary school and five secondary schools had ended the year with deficit budgets.

Agreed:- (1) That the information be noted.

(2) That the 8% threshold amount for school balances (and the appeals procedure) shall be retained for the current financial year.

7. DSG FUNDING % SPLIT

The School Forum noted the contents of the financial report on services funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2011/2012 and the comparison with the percentage funding split in 2010/2011. Schools Forum members were invited to send any questions to Joanne Robertson, after the meeting.

8. BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICE REPORT

Katy Edmondson presented a report about the Behaviour Support Service. The Schools Forum noted the following salient items:-

: the opening of the Broom Centre (10 places) in premises formerly accommodating the Rowan Centre;

: the Rowan Centre relocating to the Rawmarsh Monkwood Primary School;

: places at the Broom Centre may be 'sold' to other local authorities;

: the need to ensure that pupils receiving behavioural support are able to make progress with their learning;

: the high cost of out-of-school placements.

Agreed:- That the allocation from the Dedicated Schools Grant to the Behaviour Support Service shall remain unchanged for 2011/2012.

9. VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW OF SCHOOL CATERING SERVICE

Clare Burton reported that a random selection of schools had been invited to participate in the value for money and quality review of the School Catering Service, which was taking place during June and July 2011. Schools would be invited to complete a self-assessment document and the views of parents and children would also be obtained. The outcome of this review would be reported to the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum.

The Schools Forum's decision about the School Lunch Grant amount of £350,000 was also awaited (refer to minute 3 above).

10. SEN VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW UPDATE

Karen Borthwick reported on the value for money review taking place in respect of all of the special educational needs services:

- Hearing and Visually Impaired Service
- Autism Communication Team
- Early years ASD Support
- Portage Service
- Support in, and for, all schools which have children with special educational

needs

The review was being undertaken by a sub-group of the Rotherham School Improvement Partnership.

Discussion took place on the need to identify the future strategic management of the special educational needs services. This item would be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum.

11. SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM CONSULTATION

The Schools Forum noted the contents of a consultation document about school funding reform. The consensus was that any system of funding must be both clear and fair.

12. EXTENDED SERVICES UPDATE

Sue Shelley presented a report about the way in which the Extended Schools Service proposals ought to be developed during the period September 2011 to August 2012.

The recommendations contained within the report were approved by the Schools Forum, as follows:-

(1) the funding for the 'Go For It!' subsidy project shall be allocated on the basis of the number of pupils qualifying for free school meals;

(2) individual access to activities is retained and the target group shall be defined by the learning communities to support their priorities;

(3) the priorities and work programme shall be led by the learning community planning group, or equivalent group;

(4) the quality assurance training programme is offered at no cost, to support those who are organising out-of-school activities.

13. SCHOOL FINANCE STEERING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was agreed that the Chairman will send a copy of the terms of reference of the School Finance Steering Group (by electronic mail) to all members of the Schools Forum. This item will be included on the agenda of the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum.

14. DRUG AND ALCOHOL - EDUCATION PROVISION

Consideration was given to a letter received from Simon Perry (Chair of the Young People's Substance Misuse Commissioning Group) requesting the Schools Forum to consider the future funding of drug and alcohol education in Rotherham's primary and secondary schools. It was agreed that consideration of this request be deferred, pending further discussion about the budget setting.

15. SUPPORTING ROMA ETHNIC CHILDREN 0-19 YEARS

Martin Fittes reported on the Council's support for children and young people of Rotherham's Roma community, with reference to:

- safeguarding issues; low school attendance and educational performance; language barriers and mobility issues;
- the difficulties to schools in accommodating Year 10 and Year 11 Roma pupils;
- the closure of the Welcome Centre and the reducing capacity to support the Roma community
- community cohesion.

It was agreed that the Finance Strategy Group be asked to :

(a) consider the use of part of the top-sliced 4% to 8% of the former centrally retained grants, to finance future support for children and young people of the Roma community in Rotherham; and

(b) consider the funding of the post of Education Welfare Officer (P Sabados) as a priority.

16. FINANCE MASTER CLASS FOR THE FORUM

Agreed:- That the Finance Master Class for Schools Forum members shall take place at the rising of the next meeting, to be held on Friday, 7th October, 2011.

17. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- (1) That the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum be held on Friday, 7th October, 2011, at the Rockingham Teachers' Centre, beginning at 8.30 a.m.

(2) That the Finance Master Class shall take place on the same day, at the rising of the above meeting.