

## Report to Schools Forum

### 1. Trade Unions Facilities Time

Schools Forum will recall that the budget for the facilities time for local Trade Union officials continues to be met from DSG. Until the 2011/12 budget for Trade Union facilities time was set, the figure stood at £112,000 per annum. Schools Forum decided that for 2011/12 the budget would be halved, with an allocation of £56,000 per annum being given.

One of the potential negative factors in relation to a reduction in the budget was the issue of access to local Trade Union officials and the difficulties that might occur should the facilities time not be sufficient for this purpose.

Whilst we have managed to maintain sufficient access to Trade Union representatives, there have been a number of individual issues where this has been a problem and there have been an increasing number of occasions where the Trade Unions have involved regional rather than local officials, as a result of the reduction of facilities time.

Whilst the involvement of regional officials has always taken place, the number of cases they have become involved in has increased. This is not particularly an issue in relation to HR, as clearly our advice to schools is always open to challenge by local or regional officials. The issue is where we are trying to resolve staffing problems with pragmatic solutions. In these cases the relationship that we have with Rotherham representatives usually proves very useful. In our experience, regional officials tend to be less inclined to give as much consideration to the needs of Rotherham schools.

In relation to the issues that will be occurring during next year, where our work with local Trade Union officials will be important, there are a number of these. In particular there are proposed changes to performance management and capability processes, where our continued relationship with local representatives will be useful. Equally, in relation to the issue of Academies, the local representatives, whilst disagreeing in principle with Academies, have generally worked with us positively to implement changes.

On the basis of all of the above, I would suggest that any further reductions of the funding for this budget may create significant difficulties and it is on this basis that the recommended budget of £56,000 is maintained.

### 2. Redundancies

The principle, whereby, in cases of redundancy, the costs are picked up by the Local Authority unless there is a good reason where this should not occur, has been maintained by use of the contingency fund.

By using this method to deal with redundancy costs, we have been able to ensure, firstly, that no school has suffered potentially significant liabilities in relation to redundancies and, secondly, we have been clear with schools that only in cases where redundancy is absolutely necessary and where correct procedures have been followed, will the school not be liable for the cost.

The 2010/11 redundancy costs from the contingency fund related to 32 redundancies, including teaching and support staff and totalled a cost of £177k.

The budget for 2011/12 is £157,350

In cases of potential redundancies where a school is able to offer employment but at a lower level of salary, the costs of salary protection are also met from contingency as they are linked to redundancy.

In the last round of redundancies there was at least one school that had a significant number of potential redundancies and salary protections. It is clear that without a central contingency fund to deal with these matters, any school which finds itself in a situation where it needs to make significant reductions may well incur damaging financial liability.

Whilst it is impossible to anticipate with complete accuracy the number of redundancies next year, it is our view that this will not exceed this year's redundancies.

It is recommended that the current system, where a contingency budget is allocated, is continued and kept at last year's level.

Schools Forum may wish to receive information on a more regular basis about potential redundancy situations and likely costs.

The alternative to this approach would be that any redundancy costs, which can be significant, would be picked up by individual schools. Our view is at this stage this would not be the best approach.

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