

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS FORUM
FRIDAY, 7TH OCTOBER, 2011**

Present:- David Silvester (in the Chair)

Primary Schools : Jane Fearney, Angela Heald, John Henderson, Donna Humphries, Lynne Pepper and Sue Warner.

Secondary Schools : Paul Blackwell, Roger Burman, David Butler, Bev Clubley, John Day, David Pridding and Stuart Wilson.

Early Years : Margaret Hague.

Extra Representation : Steve Clayton and Nick Whitaker.

Non-School : Councillor Amy Rushforth, Sue Brook, Karen Borthwick and Geoff Gillard.

Also in attendance:- Joyce Thacker, Dorothy Smith, Susan Gray, Katy Edmondson, Philip Marshall, Joanne Robertson, Vera Njelic, Sue Shelley and Martin Fittes.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. G. Jackson, Mrs. A. Burtoft and Mrs. V. Broomhead.

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2011

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 24th June, 2011, be approved as a correct record.

19. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

20. CENTRALLY RETAINED GRANT - SLOVAK/ROMA COMMUNITY

Martin Fittes submitted a report concerning a proposal to fund either 2, 3 or 4 Community Development Workers to support the Clifton Learning Community and especially the Slovak/Roma community (where pupils do not have English as a first language). It was suggested that funding could be provided according to the needs of the Learning Community and/or individual schools, using a "Rotherham pupil premium" formula.

Discussion took place on:-

: the funding for and line management of Mr P Sabados (Education Welfare Officer);

: the need for the Community Development Workers to assist in ensuring that pupils' attendance at school improves.

Agreed:- That the appropriate funding, depending upon the number of pupils concerned, be transferred from the Centrally Retained Grant to schools as quickly as possible.

21. VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS - PROGRESS REPORT

Philip Marshall presented a report containing a brief update on how the findings from the value for money review of special educational needs are being addressed.

The value for money review exercise was undertaken by a selection of Head Teachers, Senior Managers and the School Effectiveness Service with support from the Commissioning Team on behalf of the Rotherham School Improvement Partnership. The purpose of the review was mainly to scrutinise the Dedicated Schools Grant funding allocated to the centrally managed services for children and young people with special educational needs, and to ensure that it is being used efficiently and is value for money.

The services reviewed included:-

- Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired Services
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Autism Communication Team and the Portage Service
- Special Educational Needs Pupils, Extra District and Special Educational Needs Assessment Services
- Complex Needs, Primary General and Secondary Special Educational Needs

The importance of raising the attainment levels of pupils with educational needs was emphasised.

The Schools Forum noted the progress already undertaken and asked that a further report be presented at the next meeting.

22. BROOM CENTRE FUNDING

Consideration was given to a report presented by Katy Edmondson concerning the Behaviour Support Service. The report stated that this Service has been allocated a budget of £701,325 for 2011/12 from the centrally retained part of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The proposal is that from April 2012 £50,000 of this budget is re-directed to meet some of the outstanding budget requirement for the new Broom Centre. This is enabled owing to a full service restructure of the Behaviour Support Service and reduced costs of this team. This will then become part of the Broom Centre's base budget.

It was noted that in the next academic year (2012/13), only £36,000 will be needed from the EO8 budget which could be reduced further if Rotherham was to sell places to nearby authorities.

Agreed:- That the sum of £50,000 be allocated to the Broom Centre from April 2012, as detailed in the submitted report.

23. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT - FINAL ALLOCATION

Joanne Robertson presented a report containing the forecast out-turn position for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) Funding for schools for 2011/12. The current

position, including the deficit carry forward from 2010/11 is an under-spend of £806,000, including an agreed carry forward of £214,000 into the 2012/13 financial year for the continuation of Extended Schools Subsidy.

Agreed:- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

(2) That the Schools Forum approves the necessary budget amendments, as now reported, for the 2011/2012 financial year.

24. DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT SPEND

Joanne Robertson presented a report (per the item above) containing the current spending position for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Agreed:- That the contents of the report be noted.

25. SCHOOLS CONTINGENCY - REDUNDANCY COSTS

The Schools Forum discussed a report prepared by Paul Fitzpatrick concerning the costs of redundancy. The report stated that 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.

The use this method to deal with redundancy costs ensures (i) that no school has suffered potentially significant liabilities in relation to redundancies; and (ii) it is clear to 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 2010/2011 redundancy costs from the contingency fund related to 32 redundancies, including teaching and support staff and the total cost was £177,000. The budget for 2011/2012 is £157,350

Agreed:- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

(2) That the current system whereby a contingency budget is allocated, shall be continued and maintained at the same amount as for the 2010/2011 financial year.

(3) That Paul Fitzpatrick be asked to attend a meeting of the Schools Forum, early in 2012 and present a detailed, progress report about this issue.

26. TRADE UNION BUDGET REVIEW

The Schools Forum discussed a report prepared by Paul Fitzpatrick concerning the budget for the facilities time for local Trade Union officials. The proposal is that funding continues to be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant. Until the 2011/12 budget for Trade Union facilities time was set, the allocation was £112,000 per annum. The Schools Forum previously decided that for 2011/12 the budget would be halved, with an allocation of £56,000 per annum being made.

Discussion took place on the letters of support received from some head teachers, for the Trade Union facilities time and on the facilities time made available to other trades unions.

Agreed:- (1) That the current allocation of £56,000 be maintained for Trade Union facilities time during the current, 2011/2012, financial year.

(2) That Paul Fitzpatrick be asked to attend a meeting of the Schools Forum, early in 2012 and present a detailed, progress report about Trade Union facilities time.

27. SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM - SECOND CONSULTATION

Joanne Robertson presented a report stating that on 19th July, 2011, the Secretary of State for Education had launched the second part of a consultation on the reform of the school funding system. It followed the Department for Education's earlier consultation (April 2011) on the principles of school funding reform. The consultation period lasts for twelve weeks, ending on Tuesday 11th October 2011.

The consultation document sets out proposals for the mechanics of a new funding system, the contents of a new national formula and future funding arrangements for the Pupil Premium, early years provision and High Cost Pupils. It also clarifies the responsibilities of local authorities, schools and Academies in relation to central services. The Department for Education is consulting on whether these reforms should be implemented from 2013/2014 or wait until a later spending period.

This item will be debated further during the Finance master-class, to be held at the rising of this meeting of the Schools Forum.

28. SCHOOLS FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD

Consideration of this matter was deferred until the next meeting.

29. EXTENDED SERVICES BUDGET REVIEW

Sue Shelley presented a report about the Extended Services budget which previously consisted of two grants:- (i) Extended Services Sustainability and (ii) the Extended Services Disadvantage Subsidy. The allocation of these previously separate grants has been committed to the continuation of Extended Services for the academic year 2011/2012.

The allocation for 2011/2012 is:

- Extended Services Disadvantage Subsidy (Go For It!) £893,600
- Extended Services Sustainability £593,945

The report included an analysis of the budget for the period September 2011 to August 2012.

Agreed:- That the report be received and its contents noted.

30. REMOVAL OF SCHOOLS FORUM BUDGET - TRANSFER TO RSIP

Consideration of this matter was deferred until the next meeting.

31. YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER GRID FOR LEARNING - CONTRACT DISCUSSIONS

Susan Gray presented a report about the Yorkshire and Humber Grid for Learning Foundation Ltd (YHGfL), a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee which is owned by twelve local authorities in the region.

John Moore (Chief Executive of the YHGfL) was welcomed to the meeting. Mr. Moore explained the benefits of the YHGfL services available to schools, including access to the National Education Network and the video conferencing service. A case study document was distributed to Schools Forum members.

The YHGfL was created in such a way that any services taken by member authorities do not have to be procured – the 'Teckal exemption' means that the YHGfL is, in effect, a traded service of each authority. This saves each authority money and effort in obtaining services, rather than having to procure them individually from other providers. As the YHGfL is owned by the local authorities, it also means that there is less risk than using commercial providers and, because of the not-for-profit basis, there is the need only to cover costs so YHGfL is normally more cost-effective than alternative providers.

The YHGfL services are broadly: (i) Consultancy, (ii) Network and technical services, (iii) Staff development and (iv) Education and related services.

The report stated that a new grid was installed in April 2011 which provides high-bandwidth and high-reliability connectivity around the region. The funding for YHGfL this has historically come from the Broadband for Schools Capital Grant and more recently the Harnessing Technology Grant (25% centrally held).

Discussion took place on the costs and benefits of maintaining the current three years' contract with the Yorkshire and Humber Grid for Learning. The service appeared to be under-utilised and Schools Forum members felt that there should be more information provided to schools about the services available.

Agreed: (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the current level of funding shall continue for the remaining two years of the current contract with the Yorkshire and Humber Grid for Learning.

(3) That a due process of monitoring and review be undertaken during the final twelve months of the current contract with YHGfL, to inform the decision as to whether a further contract should be negotiated; this item will therefore continue to be debated at meetings of the Schools Forum.

32. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Rotherham Schools Forum requested that a report be submitted to the

next meeting about the current tendering process for the school meals catering service.

33. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum be held on Friday, 9th December, 2011, at the Rockingham Teachers' Centre, beginning at 8.30 a.m.