

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY, 27TH JUNE, 2014**

Present:- P. Blackwell (Dinnington) (in the Chair).

Learning Community Representatives: - P. DiLasio (Wales), D. Pridding (Swinton), D. Butler (St. Bernard's), D. Humphries (Aston), K. Sherburn (Wingfield), S. Armstrong (Wath), A. Abel (Oakwood), L. Pepper (Clifton).

Stakeholder Representatives: - P. Bloor (PRUs), S. Brook (Teaching Trade Unions), A. Richards (Secondary Governors), D. Ashmore (Teaching School), S. Hustler (Secondary Business Managers), M. Badger (Unison/Support Staff Trade Unions), M. Hague and P. Gerrard (Early Years), J. Fearnley (Junior Schools), P. Sayles (RCAT).

Officers in attendance: - J. Robertson (Financial Services), V. Njegic (Financial Services), K. Borthwick (School Effectiveness Service), D. Smith (School and Lifelong Learning), H. Etheridge (Committee Services), P. Marshall (Teaching School), C. Earl (Audit and Asset Management).

Apologies had been received from: - R. Burman (Winterhill), Cllr A. Rushforth (Cabinet Member), S. Mallinder (Primary Governors), J. Gray (Early Years – PVI), G. Gillard (Sheffield Diocese), B. Clubley (Thrybergh), S. Booth (Financial Services) and John Henderson (Brinsworth).

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Mr. A. Richards, Secondary Governor Representative, declared an interest in item 9 (Learners' First Partnership) as a Director of that company.

16. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11TH APRIL, 2014.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum held on 11th April, 2014, were considered.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record.

17. STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATIVES TO THE ROTTERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM, 2014-2015.

The Rotherham Schools' Forum noted the current membership status of the Forum for the 2014/2015 financial year. A number of vacancies remained.

The Chairperson of the Rotherham Schools' Forum explained that work would be undertaken to ensure that Rotherham's balance of academy and

non-academy schools were represented on the Forum. As more schools became academies the balance would need to be reassessed to ensure that representation from both sectors on the Forum reflected the Rotherham picture.

Resolved: - (1) That the learning communities and stakeholder representatives of the Rotherham Schools' Forum for the 2014/2015 financial year be noted.

(2) That work be undertaken to fill the vacancies that remained.

(3) That work be undertaken to ensure that the balance of academy and non-academy schools represented on the Rotherham Schools' Forum reflects the balance of the sectors in Rotherham.

18. THE ROTHERHAM MISSION: -

Paul Blackwell, Chair of the Rotherham Schools' Forum, referred to the Rotherham Mission's four guiding principles: -

- All students making at least good progress;
- No underperforming cohorts;
- All teachers delivering at least good learning;
- All schools moving to at least the next level of successful performance.

The role of the Rotherham Schools' Forum was school improvement. The four Rotherham Mission principles should be referred to as a guide in all of the Forum's decision making.

19. SEND REVIEW UPDATE.

Dorothy Smith, Director of Schools and Lifelong Learning (Children and Young People's Services Directorate) provided an update on the work taking place in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) given the new legislation. An SEND Plan had been drafted and it was intended that it would go through a process of consultation and discussion before being finalised. Included in the Plan were the 2015/2016 funding reforms in relation to learners in schools and colleges aged 0 – 25 who had SEND. It was proposed that a working group of the Rotherham Schools' Forum and allied partners/experts from the Borough, be established to look into the matters in greater depth.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the SEND Plan be circulated to the full Rotherham Schools' Forum membership.

(3) That the membership of the working group be agreed at agenda item 17 (Establishment of a sub-group).

20. PRIMARY SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNITS.

Resolved: - That, following the request of the Head of Service, this item be deferred.

21. LEARNERS FIRST PARTNERSHIP.

The Chairperson of the Rotherham Schools' Forum welcomed Colin Earl, Director of Asset Management, Phil Marshal and David Ashmore.

David Ashmore referred to the submitted report that outlined the financial statements for the year ending 31st August, 2013.

An unqualified audit opinion was that the statements gave a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting frameworks. The Auditor did not have any significant reservations in respect of the matters contained within.

All expenditure was in accordance with the seven budget headings as detailed in a report to Rotherham Schools' Forum on 5th October, 2012: - Key Stage Two, Key Stage Four, SEN, initial Teacher Training, Leadership Programme, Targeted Professional Development and Infrastructure.

All operating surpluses and funds unallocated from the 2013/2014 budget would be reinvested in school improvement activities in 2014/2015. This included providing the leadership and CPD offer (the levy) free of any additional charges to Rotherham school budgets for 2014/2015.

Parkins Accountants had made a number of recommendations to the Directors of Learners' First in respect of internal control system procedures. These were being implemented by the Directors.

Copies of the statements were available on the website and had been filed with Companies House.

As at the date of the meeting, an expected virement of funds had not been received by Learners First Partnership. It was noted that the funds had been vired from the Local Authority to Wickersley School and Sports College.

Discussion ensued and a member of the Rotherham Schools' Forum requested that further impact information on the impact of Learners First Partnership on Rotherham Schools.

The Director for Audit and Asset Management referred to the previous meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum where an interim report had been given (Minute No. 8 of the meeting held on 11th April, 2014). The Internal Audit report had found nothing untoward or irregular, and this had

been echoed by an external audit. A number of recommendations would be submitted to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services regarding record keeping and monitoring and reporting arrangements to the Rotherham Schools' Forum, and reporting downward to individual schools who the money belonged to, and expectations for DSG funding commitments. Potential conflicts of interest occurred and measures needed to be put in place to ensure that monitoring arrangements were independent.

Phil Marshall provided an overview about the set-up of Learners First and interim impact reports.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the Learners First Partnership impact report be presented to the October meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum.

22. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS SERVICE AND LEARNERS FIRST LTD STRATEGIC PLAN, 2014-2015.

This item was covered under items 9 (Learners First Partnership) and 11 (School Ofsted ratings - the picture in Rotherham - a summary).

23. SCHOOL OFSTED RATINGS - THE PICTURE IN ROTHERHAM - A SUMMARY.

Karen Borthwick, Head of the School Effectiveness Service (Schools and Lifelong Learning, Children and Young People's Services Directorate) gave a presentation that outlined Ofsted inspections of local authority arrangements for school improvement. There were important messages and implications for Schools' Forums resulting from the new framework to inspect local authorities' arrangements for school improvement.

- Across the Country, there had been 75 visitations comprising: -
 - 22 inspections of ex-provision;
 - 52 school inspections;
 - One adult learning provision inspection.
 - A thorough/wide-range of provision was inspected.

Rotherham picture. Key issues: -

- Requires Improvement judgement in Primary Schools;
- Number of Outstanding in all phases;
- Inconsistencies within the Inspection Teams;
- Ensuring the Rotherham Mission was embedded;
- Ensuring that all schools met the aspiration of being good or outstanding by 2016/2017.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the Rotherham Schools' Forum support the commitment for all Schools to be Good or Outstanding by 2016/2017.

24. REVIEW OF OVERALL SCHOOL BALANCES, 2013-2014.

The Principal Schools Finance Officer (Financial Services, Resources Directorate) presented the report that outlined the overall school balances as at the end of the financial year, 2013-2014.

Overall, under-spends against budget had reduced by 26% from £8.881millions to £6.573millions. Balances across primary (-16%), secondary (-39%) and special (-62%) schools had dropped, whilst balances at early excellence centres (+36%) had risen. The report also included Pupil referral units as these now operated their own delegated budgets. Twelve schools remained above the threshold set for their sector (Secondary - 5% of budget unused / Primary - 8% unused), compared to 20 as at the end of 2012/2013 and nine schools were reporting a deficit position. Overall, deficit balances had risen from £357k to £537k.

Rotherham had the second lowest average balance per school out of ten statistical neighbours.

One of the reasons why the number had dropped was due to a reduction in maintained schools carry-forward levels and the increased number of academy conversions.

The Department for Education had emphasised in the past that revenue funding should be spent on today's children and schools should not retain excessive amounts without clear plans for their future use.

Reasons for under-spends had been explored with twelve of the Schools. Eleven pro-formas had been returned. A finance sub-group of the Rotherham Schools' Forum would meet to consider the returns.

Discussion ensued and the following points were raised: -

- Was there a link between the type of school and surplus balances?;
- Was it expected that the level of surpluses would reduce further?;
- The limited circumstances where Schools' Forums could claw back surplus balances.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) The a Finance Sub-Committee of the Rotherham Schools' Forum consider the returns of the twelve schools who had a surplus balance above the thresholds set for their sector.

25. PROPOSED TOTAL SCHOOLS' BUDGET, 2014/2015.

The Schools and CYPS Finance Manager (Financial Services, Resources Directorate) presented the submitted report that outlined that proposed Total Schools' Budget for the 2014/2015 financial year. The report gave details of the proposed Total Schools Budget for 2014/2015 based on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement received from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) settlement.

The total DSG and EFA funding allocation for 2014/2015 was £217,151,400 including the adjustments: -

Additions: -

- Additional Early Education Funding to fund 2 Year old places for children from lower income households - £4,090,822;
- Additional Funding for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) - £58,000;
- Additional funding resulting from the DfE review of High needs places - £263,982;
- Additional funding resulting from an increased take up of 3/4 year old places - £264,149;
- Education Funding Agency Grant – Post 16 Special Schools - £644,667.

Deductions: -

- Carbon Reduction commitment energy schemes due to the ending of the schemes - £248,621;
- EFA (Education Funding Agency) Deduction in respect of funding now paid directly to providers by EFA - £1,062,414.

After adjusting for the 2013/2014 Total Schools Budget carry forward of £829 under-spend. (based on the unaudited outturn report), the Total Estimated Funding available for the Total Schools Budget for 2014/15 is £217,152,229.

Use of Under-spends: -

Decisions regarding central budget allocations from the Schools' Block were confirmed by the Rotherham Schools' Forum in the January and March meetings. The £829 net under-spend carry forward is as a result of a net under-spend on the Schools' Block of £863,444, a net under-spend of £485,217 on the Early Years' Block and a net over-spend of £1,347,832 on the High Needs' Block.

The following matters had been considered and are proposed adjustments to the draft budget set as follows: -

Schools' Block Underspend (Total £863,444)

- £401,560 allocated to schools in respect of Learners First Partnership Ltd work undertaken;
- £461,884 to be allocated to the rates budget based on projected valuation estimates.

Early Years' Block Underspend (Total £485,217)

- Transfer to High Needs' Block.

Additional Early Years' Block Funding £264,149

- Transfer to High Needs' Block.

Discussion ensued and the following items were highlighted: -

- Identification of eligible families, estimation of funding and take-up of 2 year old places;
- Transferring funds from one Block into another;
- Under-spend on the Schools' Block relating to money that had not been vired;
- City Learning Centres;
- Time of reducing resources and cuts to early years provision – impact on children and families and Ofsted outcomes;
- Termination of Employment costs.

Resolved: - That the budget for 2014/2015, as set out in Appendix A, be approved.

26. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FINANCE SCHEME.

Consideration of the report submitted that outlined the consultation that was due to take place on changes to the Fair Funding Scheme for Maintained Schools.

The changes that were being consulted on related to the submission of budget plans relating to in-year deficits and the management of school bank accounts.

The consultation would be submitted to all Schools, and would be on the agendas of the Headteachers' meetings and the Rotherham Schools' Forum Sub-Committee meetings. Following receipt of the consultation responses, the item would return to the full Rotherham Schools' Forum meeting.

Resolved: - (1) That the consultation document be noted.

(2) That the item return after full stakeholder consultation takes place across the Borough.

27. TRAINING FOR ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM MEMBERS.

A training session for members of the Rotherham Schools' Forum was suggested. Topics should cover, but not be limited to: -

- Schools' Forums – form and function;
- Links to School Inspection criteria;
- Schools Funding Formula.

Resolved: - That a training session be arranged for members of the Rotherham Schools' Forum.

28. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPING SLA/PROTOCOL BETWEEN THE LOCAL AUTHORITY/SCHOOLS/TEACHING TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES.

The Schools and Human Resources Manager could not attend this meeting but was able to report that the informal protocol that had developed between Schools, Trade Unions and the Local Authority was working well. Rotherham issues were being solved within Rotherham.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the Schools and Human Resources Manager attend a future meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum and provide an update on how the protocol is progressing.

29. ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUB-GROUP: -

The Rotherham Schools' Forum was aware that there were three Sub-Committees/ Working Groups where membership of a representative from the Forum / from the wider stakeholder group was required: -

- SEND Working Group – Carol Johnson (Aughton Early Years Centre) and a strategic finance expert.
- Learners' First Commissioning – Pepe DiLasio (Wales Learning Community), Paul Martin (NLG), a School Effectiveness Service representative, Jane Fearnley, Lynne Pepper, John Barton.
- Rotherham Schools' Forum Finance Sub-Committee – Paul Blackwell (RSF Chairperson/Dinnington Learning Community Representative), Sue Hustler (Secondary School Business Managers' Representative) and David Ashmore/Michael Waring (Learners' First).

30. COLLEAGUES RETIRING AT THE END OF TERM.

All noted that this would be the last meeting of David Butler (Saint

Bernard's Learning Community), Bev Clubley (Thrybergh Learning Community), David Pridding (Swinton Learning Community) and Margaret Hague (Early Years Representative) last meeting before they retired from their posts.

All in attendance thanked them for their contribution to the Rotherham Schools' Forum and all of Rotherham's young people, and wished them all the best for the future.

31. MEETING DATES FOR 2014-2015.

Resolved: - (1) That the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum take place on Friday 3rd October, 2014, to start at 8.30 a.m. in the Rockingham Professional Development Centre.

(2) That future meetings of the Rotherham Schools' Forum for the 2014/2015 financial year take place on: -

- 28th November, 2014;
- 30th January, 2015 – may change based on DfE deadlines?;
- 6th March, 2015;
- 24th April, 2015;
- 26th June, 2015.

All dates are a Friday and all meetings start at 8.30 a.m. at the Rockingham Professional Development Centre.