

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**WORCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM (WSF)**

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2007  
Lake View Room, County Hall

The meeting started at 2.05 pm

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

WSF Members:

Peter Garner	-	Walkwood Middle (Chair)
Sarah Beadsworth	-	Governor, Wyre Forest
Richard Beckett	-	Governor, Malvern Hills (Vice Chair)
June Longmuir	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Bernard Roberts	-	Prince Henry's High School
Richard Aust	-	Chadsgrove Special School
David Hargreaves	-	Governor, Redditch
Prue Winton	-	Governor, Tenbury
Sean Devlin	-	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Terry Holland	-	Blackminster Middle School
Naomi Christelow	-	Evesham Nursery School
Cherril Illingworth	-	Oakhill First School
Frank Howard	-	Governor, Bromsgrove

Local Authority (LA) Officers:

Colin Weeden	-	Children's Services
Andy McHale	-	Children's Services
Chris Stowell	-	Children's Services (for agenda item 5)

Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Member:

Liz Eyre	-	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
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**1. APOLOGIES**

David Braham	-	Bengeworth First School
Malcolm Richards	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Julie Farr	-	Church of England Board of Education
Paul Crosher	-	Union Representative
Flora Wright	-	Governor, Wyre Forest
Liz Quinn	-	Stourport High School
Trish Mallinson	-	Children's Services

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (26<sup>th</sup> April 2007)**

Agreed.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

#### **3.1 Charges for LA Services**

(a) Andy advised on the proposed review of Service Level Agreements (SLA's) and requested if any Forum members would wish to be part of the work. Frank Howard agreed to be involved.

(b) Colin advised that in response to the last LA OFSTED in 2004 the LA had provided information on outsourcing and alternative providers including other LA's. The small level of other service providers was noted.

#### **3.2 Other**

(a) Under 7.3(c) it was noted that the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) had confirmed the transfer of any funding for academies would be via the recoupment method.

(b) Under 7.4(b) the Forum commented on the difference between the WSF and the LA on the issue for a proposed levy on surplus balances. The Forum recognised the current scheme provisions but raised concerns on potential policy direction. It was noted that it is the LA who agree policy but the Schools Forum must be consulted. Andy advised that the DCSF had approved this levy provision in the consultation but it was noted the DCSF wording and proposal was extremely unclear.

(c) Under 7 the final submission and supporting document for the school funding consultation was circulated to the WSF on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2007.

#### **3.3 Outcomes of the DCSF Consultation on School, Early Years and 14-16 Funding Arrangements 2008-11**

(a) Andy advised that Jim Knight Schools Minister had announced, earlier than anticipated, Government decisions on the recent consultation. The summary of the responses prepared by the DCSF made reference to the f40 group, which noted the current funding distribution being unfair and penalising children in the lowest funded LA areas. It was noted that further technical guidance on all the decisions was due to be issued in July 2007.

(b) The report detailed the key decisions and the potential impact for WCC. Andy summarised the issues and the WSF commented as follows: -

- Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – the continued use of the spend plus model was welcomed together with the potential for more resource on recognition of deprivation within LA's.
- Surplus balances – the WSF raised concerns on the proposed policy for a 5% levy and how it would operate. Andy advised that further guidance was to be issued by the DCSF.
- Forum membership – the proposals to widen membership were noted but there was a concern on the future level of school membership. Andy advised that the DCSF would need to issue further details on the revisions to the existing statutory guidance.

- Key Stage 4 (KS4) Diplomas – WSF noted the grant funding for this area and it was confirmed that this was for supporting the cost of the new diplomas not existing vocational arrangements. Colin advised that the WSF would need to liaise with the 14-19 Management Group on this issue and the new membership proposals for Forums would allow for relevant WSF membership from the sector.
- Early Years Funding – WSF noted the significant proposals. Andy advised that these changes would be introduced during the next 3-year period, which was at variance with previous DCSF policy. Colin commented on the potential need to have a sub group of WSF members and other representatives to move these issues forward. Forum members noted the key issues of qualified staff in the maintained sector and staffing ratios. The role of the current PVI Forum and pathfinder resources were detailed.
- Pupil Count Date – the WSF noted the decision to continue with a January Pupil Count date was not anticipated.

**RESOLVED – the WSF agreed for the relevant actions to be taken in introducing the new funding requirements for 2008-11.**

#### **4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **4.1 Schools Forum Leads Group**

Andy reported on a recent group set up by Phil Moss for lead officers for midlands LA's. Relevant matters would be brought back to the WSF and vice versa.

##### **4.2 SEN**

(a) Some Forum members raised issues on the level of funding for SEN. It was noted that an evaluation of the arrangements was programmed for the Autumn Term 2007. The WSF requested some data and trends on SEN statements including these as a percentage of total pupils.

**ACTION – Data on SEN statements to be brought to the next WSF meeting.**

(b) Concerns were raised on the funding of post 16 SEN. Colin confirmed that this was being pursued with both the LSC and central government.

##### **4.3 Other**

Information on the current position on s106 resources was still to be provided.

**ACTION – s106 information to be provided for the next WSF meeting.**

#### **5. UPDATE SFG 116b MUSIC KS2**

5.1 The Chair welcomed Chris Stowell, Head of Worcestershire Youth Music (WYM), to the meeting. The WSF were reminded of the previous decision to allow the WYM to retain the grant centrally to manage the project and the purpose of the report was to update the WSF on the progress on the project

5.2 Chris reported on the success of the Droitwich Pilot project in 2006/07. It was noted that these schools were continuing sustainability by paying for tuition and accessing funding for instruments by extended services resources. The report confirmed the proposal in 2007/08 to target vulnerable pupils (approximately 1,200 5% of KS2) but by the use of other strategies, including concerts, this could be raised to 25%.

5.3 Forum members commented as follows: -

- On the proposed success criteria there were concerns in how to measure improvement in classroom behaviours.
- The scheme was welcomed and the WSF understood the need to target groups to have maximum effect as otherwise the resource would be spread too thinly. However by concentrating at Year 4 only had not targeted middle schools.
- There were concerns on longer-term sustainability, although the potential to access community funding was being pursued. The future of the grant, for the next multi year budget period, had not yet been decided by the DCSF.
- The current Arts review in WCC could impact in this area.

5.4 On behalf of the WSF the Chair thanked Chris for the update on the scheme.

**Chris Stowell left the meeting at 3.00pm**

## **6. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

6.1 Andy advised on two resignations with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2007 – Paul Crosher Union Representative and Flora Wright Primary Governor Representative. Paul is to be replaced by Steve Baker (ATL) and the Worcestershire Association of Governors (WAG) would nominate a further member. There were no notifications of any further resignations.

6.2 However, it was noted that some associations were due to meet prior to the end of term to discuss WSF membership issues. At this stage, it was agreed that all other members whose terms of office were due to expire on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2007 would serve for a further 2-year term. Any changes to this following relevant association meetings need to be notified to Andy either by the end of the Summer Term 2007 or as soon as possible in the Autumn Term 2007.

**RESOLVED – The above resignations and new membership are accepted and agreement given to further 2-year terms to relevant existing members be approved.**

**RESOLVED – Any other changes to be made to the membership of the WSF for September 2007 to be notified to Andy as soon as possible.**

## **7. SCHOOL FUNDING ISSUES 2006/07**

### **7.1 School Balances**

(a) Andy introduced the paper, which summarised the balances position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

(b) On the balances the WSF commented: -

- The need to highlight those small schools where the balances limit was 1FTE teacher.
- School balances accrue and are necessary for a number of reasons e.g. capital contributions for VA schools, support falling rolls, staffing protection (long term sickness, maternity cover, etc), impact of LSC allocations, etc.
- There were robust LA mechanisms for support and challenge.

(c) It was confirmed the next meeting would receive further information on the challenge processes for schools in surplus and the support processes for schools in deficit. This would include information on individual schools use and intended use of balances.

**ACTION – Further analysis to be brought to the next Forum meeting.**

(d) There was further discussion on the process for budget plans. The WSF raised issues on the 1<sup>st</sup> May timetable for submission of plans and the need to change plans during the year for changes in circumstances, further resource allocations, etc.

7.2 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Carry Forward

(a) Andy introduced the paper, which confirmed the DSG end of year position for 2006/07 and an analysis of the Schools Specific Contingency. In line with the ring fenced statutory requirements a surplus of £1.752m (£0.56m schools and £1.192m centrally retained) has been carried forward into 2007/08. This includes the additional DSG of £0.412m previously reported.

(b) The WSF noted this position and the areas of variation. It was confirmed school balances are shown separately. Andy further advised of the need to use the schools element of the carry forward in setting the schools budgets for 2007/08 (see section 8).

7.3 Standards Fund School Development Grant (SDG)

(a) Andy introduced the paper, which confirmed the DCSF had recently finalised the SDG for 2006/07. The grant is mainly devolved to schools and is subject to the per pupil minimum funding guarantee. Any LA centrally retained element is cash limited at the 2005/06 level.

(b) Any remaining grant has to be devolved to schools and the WSF have previously resolved to allocate any remaining grant pro rata to schools original allocations in both 2006/07 and 2007/08.

(c) The WSF considered two issues – remaining schools devolved SDG of £63,756 and an allocation in the base calculation for EIC of £139,517 (additional DCSF resource to LA's potentially to support intervention strategies).

(d) Debate ensued on the EIC element with the options being to allocate on the pro rata basis or to target to individual schools for intervention purposes for schools in LA strands 5 and 6. Colin advised the new shorter OFSTED programme was impacting in this area.

**RESOLVED – For the remaining schools devolved SDG in both 2006/07 and 2007/08 devolve any remaining balance as previously agreed i.e. pro rata to the individual schools allocations in both years.**

**RESOLVED – For EiC 2006/07 this to be managed centrally for allocation to individual schools for targeted support to schools in strands 5 and 6.**

**ACTION – Colin Weeden to bring a report back on the 2006/07 allocations.**

**RESOLVED – For EiC 2007/08 for further discussion at a future WSF meeting.**

## **8. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) 2007/08**

(a) Andy introduced the paper confirming the final DSG in 2007/08 of £271.961m. This is £1.513m less than the indicative but £0.277m more than the amount included in the section 52 budget statement 2007/08. This additional grant is anticipated in 2007/08. The WSF commented on the extreme accuracy of the forecasting and requested their thanks to be passed onto Sue Howell. It was noted this forecasting process would continue for the next multi budget period.

(b) Andy referred to paragraph 4.4 of the report and advised for the multi budget period the formula units have to be set for each year using estimated data at the beginning of the period. So when the updated data sets are used for final budgets then this impacts on the ISB. The use of January 2007 data resulted in an additional requirement of £1.626m. This was funded from the schools share DSG carry forward 2006/07 of £0.369m, the carry forward 2006/07 on the schools specific contingency of £0.191m, the schools specific contingency 2007/08 of £0.94m and a share of the estimated additional DSG 2007/08 of £0.126m.

(c) Andy confirmed that these adjustments result in an amount remaining of £0.151m of additional DSG in 2007/08 (£0.122m schools and £0.029m centrally retained). The options for this are to deploy in 2007/08 or carry forward into 2008/09 to support the budget next year. The WSF agreed to option 2 in the paper.

**RESOLVED – To carry forward the remaining additional DSG of £0.151m into 2008/09 and confirm this arrangement to the Director of Financial Services for the DCSF statement.**

## **9. SCHOOLS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY – CONSULTATION OUTCOMES**

(a) The paper summarised the outcomes of the consultation. The WSF made the following comments: -

- The number of returns was disappointing but this could be a consequence of schools unsure of how to respond. However from the responses there were a number of useful comments made.
- There needs to be a clear LA strategy for supporting such schools and a clear description of the work.
- The working group may need to reconvene to consider the comments received.

(b) Colin advised that further analysis of deficits would be available at the next Forum meeting. The vast majority of schools do very well and work is in progress on those

schools above the staffing benchmark of 85%. Deficit repayments are normally over a 3-year period.

(c) There was still cause for concern on some schools but it was noted that there would not be a large number of schools potentially qualifying for support from the scheme.

**RESOLVED – The WSF Sub Group have a further meeting to consider the comments received and to bring a final recommendation to the next meeting of the WSF.**

#### **10. SOCIAL DEPRIVATION FUNDING – REPORT OF FORUM SUB GROUP**

(a) The amount of work completed in this area was recognised by WSF members and officers alike. Andy advised that this will continue to be an issue on the DCSF agenda. They will monitor progress and LA's will be asked for a progress update in the Autumn.

(b) The report detailed the progress. A sample of some of the comparative data was included showing the funding levels per pupil against 2006 examination data. This demonstrated no specific correlation between the issues. The WSF felt the sub group's conclusions were extremely valid and given the low funding base in WCC that there was no real scope to propose significant changes. However it was felt any additional DSG arising from within LA deprivation could provide an opportunity. The WSF thanked the sub group for their work.

**RESOLVED – The WSF noted the detailed work in this area and agreed to include some of the relevant detail in the Autumn Tern consultation as required.**

#### **11. PROPOSED FORUM MEETINGS ACADEMIC YEAR 2007/08**

These were noted and were not in County Hall but at the Countryside Centre and Wildwood due to room availability. It was further noted that some would depend upon the DCSF budget notification timetable.

**The meeting finished at 4.00pm**

**Date of next meeting:           Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007  
2.00pm Woodlands Room Countryside Centre  
County Hall Campus**