

FAIR FUNDING CONSULTATION OUTCOMES 2008-11 **WORCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM (WSF) ISSUES**

The WSF met twice during the Autumn Term 2007, on 27 September 2007 and 6 December 2007. The main areas discussed are detailed in the following sections.

FAIR FUNDING CONSULTATION

The detailed consultation papers were considered by the WSF at its meeting on 27 September 2007 prior to circulation to all consultees.

The outcomes to the consultation were considered by the WSF at its meeting on 6 December 2007. The key issues discussed were as follows:-

- The WSF raised concerns on the level of responses, which was less than in previous years. It was felt, although the issues were extremely important, the position reflected a number of competing pressures and priorities within schools. The WSF commented this position could demonstrate school's confidence in the WSF being the main consultative body for school funding matters. However, the WSF recognised that there were a number of consultation meetings serviced by officers during the consultation period to support the consultation process as well as the consultation being available electronically. Discussing alternative ways for future consultations was supported.
- On the individual consultation questions, the main areas discussed by the WSF related to:-
 - The additional headroom funding of £1.576m allocated within the DSG for Worcestershire in 2008/09 under the Ministerial priority for 'pockets of deprivation' intended to support the costs relating to Social Deprivation. The WSF noted this welcome additional resource. The use of ACORN data as a potential formula driver for this additional resource was supported by the WSF. They requested specific formula development in this area prior to the allocation of school budgets for 2008/09.
 - The need for continued rigour for the Management of Surplus School Balances. The proposed enhancements to the Fair Funding Scheme provisions for a re-distribution methodology from 2008/09 were supported by the WSF. They commented that individual schools plans for their surpluses and the local authority monitoring and challenge processes on these plans were key. The WSF commented that all issues on surpluses balances needed to be viewed in the context of the low comparative overall funding position for Worcestershire schools. In particular, the WSF felt there was a need to consider issues relating to resources allocated and to those committed, together with the continuing need for the planning and resourcing of specific capital projects from revenue surpluses by individual schools.
- The WSF recognised their continuing statutory role in being the main source of consultation for the budgets for the period 2008-11. The WSF noted they

are programmed to meet on 31 January 2008 to consider further detailed funding and budgetary issues.

In summary the WSF supported the outcomes of the consultation as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2. On the basis of these consultation responses, the WSF resolved to support the recommendations for changes to the WCC Schools Local Funding Formula and Scheme for Financing Schools for the period 2008-11 as detailed. The WSF noted that some of the areas would be introduced at different times during the period.

NATIONAL FUNDING ISSUES 2008-2011 AND OTHER LOCAL ISSUES

As well as the consultation paper and its outcomes, the WSF in both of its meetings in the Autumn Term 2007 considered a number of issues resulting from both the national DCSF proposals and local issues in relation to:-

- The operational and technical implications for schools and the local authority for the introduction of 3-year budgets for schools from April 2008 including the varying of data sets in the period.
- The continuation of the national Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for schools with the ability for local variations.
- Changes to the current funding system for early years and the introduction of the KS4 diplomas from September 2008.
- Proposals for continuing the spend plus model for allocating the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from April 2008.
- Proposals for a national review of the DSG methodology from April 2011.
- New statutory requirements on the WSF constitution and membership.
- A national review and the need for a local working group to consider funding supporting the costs of social deprivation within the WCC local formula.
- The management of surplus balances including local provisions and the DCSF proposals for a 5% levy.
- Strategies for supporting schools in deficit including challenge and support processes.
- Government announcements in November 2007 on the School Funding Settlement 2008-11 including: -
 - Indicative levels for the DSG including Ministerial priorities for personalisation and 'pockets of deprivation'.
 - Indicative allocations of specific grants for the Standards Fund, School Standards Grant (SSG) and SSG Personalisation.

Specific issues will be discussed further at future WSF meetings during 2008.