

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 9th October 2012
At 6.00 pm at County Hall

Chris Allcock welcomed Keith Howkins, the EFA representative, to the Forum and Ruth Lane who was attending to take the minutes.

Present:

Brendan Hickey, David Baker, Mike Davison, Peter Hamer, Atholl Donaldson, Peter Thorne, Martin Brader, Barry Thacker, Denise Cunningham, Lindsey Partridge, Julie Cadman, Lesley Hartley, Andrew Cartledge, Shirley Harvey, Roger Tomlinson, Philip Sutherland, Linda Du-Roe, Rosemary Mackenzie, Lee Floyd, John Holmes, John Crofts, Chris Wayment, Cathy Tattersfield, Cllr M Longden, Keith Howkins.

Apologies:

Julie Bloor, Paul Mason, Andrew Wild, Penny Pennington, Angela Colmar, Carole Nelson, John Partington, Jonathan Fawcett, Cllr B Lewis, Cllr S Ellis, Ollie Pardo.

Other attendees:

Ian Thomas, Chris Allcock, Mary Murkin, Karen Gurney, Chris Tilley, Ruth Lane, Andy Callow, Les Biggs

Martin Brader chaired the meeting.

Chris Allcock was asked to check that the Forum was quorate and he confirmed that it was.

12/22 Minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2012

The minutes were agreed as a true record and there were no matters arising.

12/23 Schools ICT Systems update

Andy Callow presented the report which consisted of four different areas. He commented as follows:

Broadband – the end of the contract is very close now and all but a handful of schools have selected their new services. Transition to new services is taking place; any problems which are arising are being solved and the whole process should be completed by the end of October.

Extranet – a letter has been published on the extranet explaining the changes that will take place towards the end of October.

Learning Platform (LP) – at the last meeting the Forum had asked for a request to be sent to Cabinet to reconsider the decision to extend the existing contract to August 2014. Andy explained that the key issue is that only schools using the LP are actually paying for it. He reported that 274 schools are still using it and by extending the contract they have plenty of time to arrange alternative provision when the contract ceases. Schools can

cancel their participation at any of three points during the year. Very few have cancelled in the last six months and it can therefore be assumed that they are finding value in the LP. Andy asked if the Forum would retract their request to ask Cabinet to reconsider the contract extension.

Derbyshire Schools Administration System (DSAS) – a pilot of SAP is currently being run in 15 schools and will end shortly. It is hoped to go to Cabinet in November with recommendations for SAP's suitability for use in Derbyshire schools after conclusions have been drawn from the pilot.

The Chairman asked for questions from the floor.

A number of points were raised about the LP, around who bears the cost, are schools aware they can cancel, and is the contract with the LA or individual schools. Andy confirmed that the contract is with the LA, which is invoiced three times a year based on the number of pupils registered. Schools are charged on an annual basis. Therefore, if schools cancel their LP, subject to a notice period, other schools' costs are not increased. Chris Tilley added that at the forthcoming Headteacher meetings he would ensure schools were made aware they could cancel.

Forum members made it clear that they were unhappy that their request for Cabinet to reconsider the contract extension had not been taken forward. Andy Callow explained this was because it had been felt that Forum had not fully appreciated the position regarding the costs of the contract and how these were met. He had consulted with Cllr Longden and, in the circumstances, it had been felt to be more appropriate to clarify the position to the Forum instead.

A union representative asked if the SAP system could adapt to the Pay & Conditions for Teachers. Andy replied that the pilot will assess if SAP is a suitable replacement for DSAS in schools. A Forum member also questioned if the SAP trial was a genuine trial or whether it would be introduced into schools anyway. Andy replied that it is a genuine trial and SAP needs to be assessed for connectivity and ability to meet schools' financial and other needs.

Union representatives raised a couple of issues regarding the new extranet. Was it true that schools would have to pay if they required more than 10 log on users as the original aim of the extranet was for communication, and now Teachernet was no longer available, the extranet could provide valuable resource information, especially for Teachers? Andy confirmed there was a cost for additional users.

The Strategic Director suggested that a small user group be set up to consider issues around the new extranet.

The Forum noted the report.

12/24 Implementation of Single Status in Schools (ISSIS)

Les Biggs presented the briefing to the Forum and outlined the areas on which agreement had been reached and those where it had not. He said there was a difficulty in communicating progress with individual employees. Although information was posted on the extranet, not everyone had access, and he urged staff in schools to pass information

on. Forum members, particularly the Trade Unions representatives, raised a large number of questions/issues:

Pay protection is proposed for two years, rather than three years as had been the case in the LA.

Les replied that it was LA policy that pay protection has been reduced. The Trade Union representative responded that it was not school employees' fault that ISSIS had been delayed. Les replied that it could be argued that they have had an extra three years' protection due to the delay.

The Derbyshire package enables staff to work flexi-time, between the hours of 7am and 7pm, and take their holiday entitlement when they would like; how will this work in schools?

Les replied that it was not an employee's right to work flexi time but it was a management decision as to whether the duties of the job could accommodate flexi time, and which periods of time were suitable for employee holidays. The exigencies of the service will always be a priority.

It was raised that if schools, on a local basis, made different decisions about holidays and working hours, inconsistencies would arise.

Les replied that it was up to managers to apply the Derbyshire Package and that in some schools, holidays were already sometimes approved during term-time.

A governor representative asked who had decided that it will be the governors' responsibility to undertake the role of job matching for school staff; they are volunteers and won't necessarily have the appropriate skills. Why doesn't the LA take on that role? Can Governors opt out of the Derbyshire Package? Who is the employer for school staff?

Les replied that for community and controlled schools the Authority is the employer. However, governors have delegated powers and therefore it is their responsibility to match staff to job roles. He felt that Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Midday Supervisors should be relatively straightforward to assimilate; however administrative staff may be more difficult as they undertake different roles in different schools. The Authority will provide governors with robust advice and support.

The issue of transitional funding was raised and Chris Allcock confirmed that £1 million per year had been set aside to cushion the effects of Single Status in schools. The amount in the Single status reserve stood at around £4 million at the end of the 2011-12 financial year. However, this also has to cover any other pay related issues that might arise e.g. equal pay claims.

A question was raised about term-time versus 52 week contracts and 37 hour versus 32.5 hours contracts. Les replied that a 52 week contract, working 37 hours per week was a standard Derbyshire contract, anything less than this is part-time and will be paid pro-rata accordingly.

A representative from a Special School said it was already difficult to place TAs on level 4 in Special Schools and more flexibility was required.

Les replied that the Derbyshire Package is for all DCC employees. Level 4 is very specific in that TAs at level 4/HLTA undertake specified work without the direct supervision of a teacher. Revisions to the TA Framework will be made based on the outcomes and discussions at TA meetings.

A Trade Union representative raised the issue that LA staff can apply for up to 5 days a year for Urgent, Personal or Domestic (UPD) leave, whilst school staff can apply for up to 10 days as they can't take holidays during term-time. Whilst the Trade Union position is they don't want two sets of Pay & Conditions, they disagree with the LA's position but recognise work is on-going.

At this point Ian Thomas suggested that Schools Forum wasn't the appropriate place for some of this debate on detailed terms and conditions which will be decided in the Working and Steering Groups and no further questions were raised.

The Forum noted the report.

12/25 Mainstream Formula Consultation

Chris Allcock presented the report and confirmed that the Mainstream Schools formulae should be sent to the DfE by 31/10/12. In Derbyshire's case it can't be presented to Cabinet until 6/11/12, so will be submitted to the DfE subject to Cabinet approval. Special School funding is not subject to the same time constraints and will therefore be considered at a later stage commencing with a meeting with Special School and ERS representatives on 8/11/12.

There were 14 Secondary and 31 Primary responses to the consultation, which have been summarised on the hand out provided. With the exception of using the EYFSP score of 73 as the Low Cost High Incidence (LCHI) indicator, the LAs proposals were supported by schools. Chris asked the Forum to note that the Government is relying heavily on the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to protect schools' budgets at -1.5%; however it doesn't apply to the whole school budget so some schools will see losses in excess of the 1.5%. MFG is estimated to increase by £1.6m to £6m, therefore either multipliers will need to be pared back or alternatively schools' gains could be capped.

The Chairman asked for comments from the floor.

A Forum member asked that, as Capital Maintenance funding was being delegated, was the LA confident that all school buildings are in good condition. Chris replied that there were bound to be variations in school building conditions. Some problems will be met from the LA Capital Programme, but schools would be encouraged to set this newly delegated funding aside for future maintenance. Schools had been asked in the consultation if they would like to return this funding to the LA in a scheme similar to the Derbyshire Property Package; this proposal had received a large degree of support.

Chris drew the attention of the Forum to the general comments on the reverse of the hand out and expanded that he will continue to look at the amount of the lump sum as some schools, particularly the smaller schools in the 11-16 sector, have lost funding.

Derbyshire are within the range of lump sum's being used by our neighbouring authorities, which was reassuring.

A Forum member asked if the lump sum had to be the same for primary and secondary schools. Chris replied that it did. He had asked the DfE if this could be changed but had received a negative response. It was asked if any lobbying in this respect could be done. Chris invited the EFA representative on the Forum to comment. Keith Howkins (EFA rep.) responded that extensive discussions had taken place and that the Lump Sum must be the same in both sectors for 2013-14. The DfE will review the outcome of the 2013-14 process and issues such as this *may* be reconsidered for 2014-15.

The Chairman commented that the F40 group, of which Derbyshire is a member, is making representations to the DfE on this matter.

A Forum member stated that they were disappointed with the number of respondents to the consultation and felt that it was possibly just too complicated. Chris said that the document had been made as manageable as possible. However, given the technical nature of the subject matter, and the limited time available to respond, the response rate wasn't entirely surprising.

There were no further comments from the floor. Forum agreed to note the responses to the consultation.

12/26 Central Schools Block allocations

Chris Allcock presented this report. He said he wanted to remind the Forum of the retained (LA) functions and funding and that if this was to continue, Forum approval would be required. He was happy for the Forum just to consider these retentions at this point, except the Early Years functions which required the approval of the Forum now. Questions were invited from the floor.

A member of the Forum asked how the cost of the Schools Forum compared with other LAs. Chris replied he didn't know but would find out.

A further question was raised about whether Academies had access to these resources to which the reply was yes.

The Chairman asked if the Forum was agreeable to all of the retentions or if it should be considered next time. No objections were raised so all retentions were approved.

12/27 Date of next meetings

Chris Allcock suggested that an extra meeting take place on 3rd December at 6pm at County Hall before the next scheduled meeting on 23rd January 2013. This was agreed.