

<p style="text-align: center;">Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 2nd April 2014 From the Schools' Forum Task & Finish Group</p>
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Agenda Item 3 – Schools' Forum Task & Finish Group

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 A decision was made at the Schools' Forum 23 October 2013, to set up a Task and Finish Group to obtain further information and clarification on a number of areas of school finances to ensure that there is both transparency and clarity of purpose as to how the funding was spent and on what. It was agreed that this was not a decision making Group but would attempt to advise Forum on the details of each issue raised. The Task & Finish Group met on three occasions on 25 November 2013, 29 January and 25 February 2014.

2. Admissions - £131,000

- 2.1 The issue raised was that VA, Foundation schools and academies pay a separate £400 per appeal for their admissions appeals in addition to their contribution to the overall £131,000. It was also noted that other services such as 'ranking' and independent panel expenses are also additional costs to VA, Foundation and Academy schools.
- 2.2 The Group was provided with full information detailing statutory and non-statutory services undertaken by the LA Admissions service and was informed that services undertaken on behalf of schools that act as their own Admissions Authority are charged back to the school. In addition, Legal and Democratic Services charge schools for any works carried out on their behalf regarding admissions.
- 2.3 AGREED: further clarification on charging will be sought from the DfE and taken to Forum on 2 April 2014. See Appendix 1.

3. Servicing Schools Forum - £35,000

- 3.1 Further detail was provided to the group on how the necessary expenditure, which included room hire, printing and officer time, was made up.
- 3.2 AGREED: the cost was accepted but Forum is to receive additional detail on the number of meetings that took place during the financial year. See Appendix 2.

4. Capital Expenditure Revenue - £628,000

- 4.1 The issue under consideration was that this portion of Capital Funding is obtained from all schools and academies but VA schools and academies are not eligible to access Capital Funding. Two options were considered:-

- Option 1 – the funding stream becomes a separate capital fund accessible by all schools.
- Option 2 – the funding is de-delegated back to schools.

4.2 Points were made regarding each option. A third option whereby some schools could opt-in and some opt-out was discounted as current regulations do not permit this. It was also noted that the Director had requested a reframing of the terms of reference for the Capital Sub-Group to ensure that, in future, its work was prioritised into ensuring that firstly all schools are wind and water tight and secondly, school buildings were fit for purpose to meet the needs of the 2014 curriculum.

4.3 AGREED:

- 1) a further report on Capital Expenditure will be brought to full Forum on 2 April detailing all aspects of Capital Funding. See Appendix 3.
- 2) the Terms of Reference of the Capital Sub-Group will be re-written to reflect the decisions taken and the agreed priorities.

5. Termination of Employment Costs (Brierton) - £31,000

5.1 It was noted that salary protection arrangements had been for four years following closure and this had now expired. However the pension protection for employees is ongoing until the employee dies.

5.2 AGREED: this is an ongoing cost that will reduce over time.

6. Carbon Reduction Commitment - £95,000

6.1 It was noted that this is the final year of payment and the DfE will make the appropriate adjustments to the DSG.

6.2 AGREED: no further action required.

7. Licences - £73,000

7.1 A number of issues were explored around which licences were included and which budgets they were funded from. In addition, a general query was raised as to whether schools were paying for the Local Authority to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. The Group were informed that £73,000 is the licence fee for the 'One' system only, it supports the delivery of services to schools such as Behaviour support and Admissions. In addition to the One License, SIMS costs of £66,000 are funded from the de-delegated budget.

7.2 AGREED:

- 1) the cost of the 'One' licence is a necessary expenditure.
- 2) the license fee is charged separately, rather than increase SLA/Buyback charges.

3) any further financial economies of scale should be explored.

8. Space to Learn - £238,000

8.1 After usage information was presented to the Group, it was noted that:-

- Current usage is approximately 75% of available sessions which is a concern.
- Both Space to Learn and Northern Lights Academy form part of the Hartlepool Regeneration Plan.
- Secondary school usage is negligible and that some primary schools make little use of it and have developed their own facility.
- Many primary schools value Space to Learn highly.

8.2 It was suggested that an 'exit strategy' be prepared should Space to Learn prove to be unsustainable once guaranteed funding ends in March 2015.

8.3 AGREED: the Local Authority is to produce a business case/viability paper for Space to Learn exploring options available.

9. School Meals - £147,000

9.1 This funding is used to subsidise the cost of the school meals to parents. A query was raised as to whether Dyke House contributed to this as they do not use the Local Authority school meal service. It was confirmed that Dyke House do not contribute.

9.2 AGREED: no further action required.

10. Vulnerable Children - £97,000

10.1 The Group was informed that prior to 2010, this was a government funded initiative that created a post in Hartlepool. This post has been retained and the funding covers salary and on-costs. It also covers home tuition (£9k) and the Letter Box scheme. £11,000 goes directly to schools to support Looked After Children and a contribution is made to overheads to maintain the service.

10.2 AGREED: no further action required.

11. Trade Union Facility Time - £32,000

11.1 Concern was expressed that this funding was used to pay union representatives who do not work/teach in Hartlepool schools and it was felt that it should be used to support schools that had to backfill the posts of in-school staff dealing with union issues. It was noted that it was not necessary for every school to have a trained representative. Outside of the Group, meetings had been held with professional associations.

11.2 AGREED: this funding is to continue, subject to the current agreement being re-written to extend to all professional associations represented in schools.

12. Behaviour Support Services

12.1 Behaviour Support Workers - £42,000

12.1.1 The behaviour support workers currently support secondary schools in addressing the needs of young people who are disengaged from education, at the risk of exclusion and with challenging social and emotional needs.

12.1.2 The funding covers 1.5FTE workers; however, there is currently a 1.0 FTE vacancy that has not been recruited to due to uncertainty over funding. The service needs have been met by increased Education Psychology support.

12.1.3 It was noted that primary schools require additional support for behavioural issues, particularly around Y5/Y6 pupils. It was further noted that most secondary schools are offering in-house behaviour support and that there was a short fall in funding as academies were opting-out of contributing.

12.1.4 AGREED: further discussion is needed with all schools to determine what service is needed for children, schools and families where challenging behaviour is the primary need and the role of Behaviour Support Workers within this.

12.2 Behaviour Support Services Inclusion (Small Steps) - £23,000

12.2.1 The Small Steps Team is based at Springwell School and offers support, advice and training to parents and professionals in relation to primary aged children with social communication difficulties or those on the autistic spectrum. It consists of 2.8 FTE teaching assistants. The posts were previously funded by the Early Intervention Grant. Following cuts to the Early Intervention Grant, Schools' Forum agreed to fund the shortfall of around £23k for twelve months until March 2015.

12.2.2 AGREED:

- 1) further discussion is needed with all schools to determine what service is needed for children, families and schools where there is a developmental delay or a complex need.
- 2) to consider a permanent funding solution to support the service.