

## **Extract from Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting**

**Held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at 2.00pm at B8 NWC.**

### **Item 12 - Business Improvement Programme (BIP) – Human Resources (HR)**

Mark Noble and Andy Keeling were welcomed to the meeting. Mark, as the Project Director, presented the report explaining that the BIP is looking to improve support services and to achieve savings. It was being recommended in the business case that HR functions should be split with some functions based in departments and some centralised; the emerging model was the model recommended by the Personnel Institute. The consultation period had been extended to the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

There was much discussion on this matter and the following comments made: -

1. The letter that had gone to all schools was very difficult to understand.
2. That savings made within the Schools Block should be ring fenced to Schools Block  
*Response: Any such savings would be ring fenced to the Schools Block*
3. That there could be possible staff reductions  
*Response: This was not yet known but it should be noted that Education has the fewest number of HR staff per employees*
4. There was a high degree of concern that it was essential to have suitably skilled and experienced staff as school posts have different conditions of service. Schools need access to high quality reliable advice on pay and conditions and for incidents that take place in schools. When HR people, without relevant experience, work in the Education field their previous HR experience is of little value until they gain the Education knowledge. Accurate, reliable advice is needed on child protection issues. Page 29 had a list of HR services; it was pointed out that these services are different for schools than elsewhere and different for different staff within the school itself. It was considered that Education HR staff should be based in the Children and Young People Services Department (CYPS) and that centralising the resource appeared to have no benefit.

The same comment was made in respect of Health & Safety (H&S) and Risk Management. It was considered that there are many H&S regulations that apply only to schools and access is required to people with the relevant knowledge. It was considered that this service, including training, needs to be out posted in the Children and Young People Services Department.

5. That schools might not buy into the service if changes led to a lesser service being offered. Comments were made that the service that is currently received is very dependent on the individual member of HR staff; that the service can be excellent

but sometimes not as good as it could be; at times there is a lack of basic knowledge. There is also a problem over gaining access to HR because they are overloaded. It was felt that the problem with Education HR is that they have a broader remit than capacity. It was feared that if they were moved to the corporate centre that schools would lose access to these staff. However it was also considered that a wider centre might be able to provide more flexibility at times of particular pressure.

6. Queries were raised around the timescale and whether occupational health were to be included. It was considered that it was important that this service was reviewed.

*Response: that any new system would be in place in one years time and that the occupational health issue would receive further consideration.*

7. That, in the past, schools have had a varied relationship with the corporate body and that this, along with the difficulties of training non Education, staff meant that centralisation would not be welcomed.

*Response to 4, 5 and 7:that the model is more sophisticated than being solely around centralisation. In the model they are very flexible over the service that needs to be delivered to schools and it is accepted that schools do have different needs . Although this is the model recommended by the Personnel Institute it is recognised it may need to be tailored to meet schools needs. It is recognised that one of the main issues raised has been around keeping a body of staff together that can deal with schools issues. It is the administration duties, such as updating pay or CRB checks, which are being considered for centralisation. There is an expectation that H&S advisors will be physically located in departments. It was agreed that other local authorities who are proposing to use this model would be approached to establish how they are dealing with schools.*

8. A query was raised concerning other departments reactions to this proposal and concern expressed that a central development training team could not meet all training needs.