

Minutes of AMP Network Focus Group Meeting held on Tuesday 17th September 2002 at DfES, Caxton House, London.

Present:

Paula McCree	Devon
Vesna Godwin	Northamptonshire
Mark Dolling	Milton Keynes
Keith Rowley	Waltham Forest
Alex Freemantle	DfES
Barry Watts	Dorset
Alan Jones	DfES
Ray Baker	Cheshire
Peter Cotterill	Peterborough
Ian Cook	Pillar Consultancy
Ged Mitchel	Manchester
Beech Williamson	DfES* (part of meeting only)
Nick Mayer	DfES
Alan Pavey	Bournemouth
Alex McCleod	Leeds

Not present:

Nicola Van Hoen	Worcestershire
Lindsey Wilson	Stockport
Gerald Snaith	Lincolnshire
Chris Owen	Cornwall
Graham Dalton	Cardiff
Peter McIntosh	Gateshead
Helen Rowlay	Wokingham
Janet Newton	Lancashire
Kirry Frewin	Pillar Consultancy
Tony Palmer	Leeds
Rory Kennedy	Camden

Ian Cook welcomed those attending their first Focus Group meeting:- Alex Freemantle and Keith Rowley

- 1. Previous Minutes** (of meeting held on 23rd July 2002)
item 1 page 1 3rd para (Energy water data) delete “only every 3 years to reduce bureaucracy” and add “on an annual basis”

Matters arising:

Page 1 The Estate Management Guide is still due out in the Autumn but is being held up by lack of suitable Case Studies. Despite this none are required from the Focus Group.

Page 2 Valuation Office problems are being experienced – discussion delayed until item 2

Page 3 Item 6 Focus Group details on website – any further corrections to Pillar please

2. DfES update

Alan Jones introduced Alex Freemantle who had recently joined the DfES BDU team.

He explained that his update would include:-

- 2.1 Capital Policy
- 2.2 Initial AMP Appraisal findings
- 2.3 AMP data next year (to be covered by Nick Mayer)
- 2.4 The two draft publications issued to the Focus Group by E mail
- 2.5 Net Capacity and BB82 (to be covered by Beech Williamson)

2.1 Capital Policy

The settlement is quite generous and has a focus on directing money towards Secondary Schools. Target funding and PFI is also impacted.

What proportion of the money will go direct to schools or via the LEAs is not yet known

2.2 Initial AMP Appraisal findings

Feedback from DfES LID division and DfES external partners (not in priority order):-

- Assessment of performance is very varied – there are still some LEAs not adopting AMPs and carrying on with old methods (Still some cynicism about AMPs)
- Not as much progress / further improvements being made – is there a need for sanctions or more flexibility (as a reward) Need to focus on measurable targets as indicators of performance
- Capital implications of inter departmental priorities / national priorities (but national and local priorities may not align)
- Step changes introduced by DfES has “confused” some LEAs – more strategic aspects have not been grasped whereas Condition/Suitability/Sufficiency was understood. In many LEAs AMP is still handled at technical level rather than Chief Executive level. Compartmentalized working still prevails in some instances.
(Focus Group suggested that the EDP should take account of capital investment – include in future DfES guidance on EDP preparation **DfES**)
- Despite all data collection systems few authorities can identify major building issues – interrogation of data poor?
(FG example of - % of schools uneconomic to repair)
DfES are seeking to publish examples of good practice
(FG raised complications re delegation to schools and not knowing how they are spending. In addition with a proportion of the VA sector no knowledge at all.

Formal feedback letters will be received by LEAs in December at the same time as Capital allocations are made.

Ian Cook agreed to extend an invitation to LID division to attend the AMP regional meetings

– *(Please note: this has been done and they have declined “due to pressure of work”)*

DfES have so far completed 37 LEA Chief Executive Officer visits.

2.3 AMP data next year (covered by Nick Mayer)

Condition – a list of amendments is on the DfES web site. ABCD priorities will not be required (only the costs). Provision added for including a percentage for prelims/fees.

Suitability – All schools now to be covered. SEN/disability survey to be dropped as Access audits will be required to comply with legislation. SEN spaces to be assessed on same form. No data to be collected on access next year

– only Yes/No re access audit completed.

In November guidance will be given on data transmission - to be issued hoping to eliminate “bad” rules to assist validation.

(FG suggested DfES IT people should liaise with AMP software suppliers) **DfES**

Appraisal will be against guidance 3 + web site revisions NOT against “Getting Into Condition” – but see 2.4 below

2.4 Draft publications issued to the Focus Group

2.4.1 “Getting Into Condition”

Alan Jones asked for reactions to this document prepared by John Allen – in particular to para 88 regarding a 1 year review. It is an aspirational document not for appraisal (although some would prefer that it is used for appraisal).

Ian Cook handed over a copy of an E mail from Camden asking :-

“We would find it useful if the document had a paragraph giving guidance on the usefulness or otherwise of allocating liability for repairs (i.e. LEA, school, etc) by item.

OFSTED commented on this for our AMP condition surveys, saying we should be keeping a record of liability along with condition records”.

Vesna Godwin commented that it would be better if the classifications of Capital / Revenue were replaced with Strategic / Decorative which schools are better able to understand. Also it should be made clearer that cyclical repairs (painting etc.) should be included **DfES**

Alan Jones thanked the FG for their comments and explained that a smaller steering group were still involved with JA and the aim is to publish a draft on the web by October with cartoon illustrations to be added. – FG comment relevant only please.

Any further comments to DfES within a week.

ALL

2.4.1 “AMP Initial Data Analysis publication”

This was welcomed as a good document.

At present it only includes authorities within plus or minus 10% but it was suggested that if a way could be found to publish all data but highlight the same band within each illustration it would be a better document and this would save a lot of Q&A at authority level as to why some authorities are missed out. **DfES**

Agreed that the condition data and priority 1 items are the most important

Very wide variations are still apparent.

2.5 **Net Capacity and BB82** (covered by Beech Williamson)

A lively discussion was held regarding problems being experienced with the valuation office VO – generally these have been notified to Tamasin Dale at DfES

– (see also later E mails dated 19.09.02)

Suggested that the deadline of November be extended to allow Authorities to check and validate VO information but Beech Williamson commented that:-

- Secondaries can be send in unchecked as DfES will amend in accordance with the revisions
- LEAs CAN change (without reference to VO):-
room Names / Status but NOT Area measurement or missed areas in which case they should inform VO and DfES at the same time for VO to correct
– there is no need for LEAs to re-survey
- Batches of projects are acceptable and it is still preferred to aim at November so that checking can be completed by January 2003

Nevertheless it was felt that if this problem is widespread it could be a sensitive issue and be raised at the forthcoming regional meetings taking up time and cause problems when neither BW or TD are presently scheduled to attend. DfES to consider whether it appropriate for them to attend or to brief their colleagues instead. **DfES**

BB82

This is now on the DfES website but a hard copy will not be published until the document receives official approved. It is Non Statutory Guidance.

Approximately 10% increase is included except for 6th Form

Mark Dolling explained that in his authority briefing for new primary schools the consultants had been asked to work to the new guidelines and a very positive scheme has been achieved – the new guidelines were welcomed

3. **ODPM / Corporate AMP Update**

No meetings have been held since the last Focus Group meeting (see previous minutes for report). Dates of the next corporate AMP regional meetings are on the IPF website.

Mark Dolling commented that to have the same deadline for Education AMP and Corporate AMP was not helpful and it would be best if the two were staggered. Late issue of both sets of guidelines made the problem worse. Discussion recognized that the Education AMP normally informs the Corporate AMP but it is difficult to consult with schools in July anyway and it depends whether the two are prepared “from the bottom up” or “from the top down”. Barry Watts explained that it had taken some time to bring the dates into line but he would report back to the corporate AMP steering group to seek improvements.

BW/Dorset

4. Autumn 2002 Regional Meetings

The Focus Group had been E mailed the revised programme which was required by DfES wishing to delay any presentation on the “Estate Management Guide” and DfES SEN division not being able to supply a speaker on “School Access Plans”. The morning presentation had been filled by M4i and the afternoon workshop B will now be on “School Access Audits & School Access Plans” led by Pillar with assistance from DfES.

Ian Cook explained that whilst Pillar had now some experience of carrying out Access Audits he would appreciate any help Focus Group authority representatives attending workshop B are able to give on School Access Plans and LEA Accessibility Strategy.

All

Alan Pavey made reference to the 6 page summary guidance: Accessible Schools which may be of assistance – available on web site:- www.dfes.gov.uk/sen then click on quick links –DfES SEN Publications, and then “Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) : schools” opening either the full version LEA/0168/2002 or the summary DfES/0462/2002

Vesna Godwin welcomed the addition of “Sustainability” and “Re-Thinking Construction” for these regional meetings which has had the effect in Northamptonshire of creating more interest from Property colleagues and this is reflected in additional attendance.

5. Website

Agreed that direct hyperlinks between the AMP site and DfES publication pages etc will be helpful as some are difficult to find. Focus Group to E mail Pillar with all suggestions please.

Pillar/DfES

6. Membership of the Focus Group

Any further corrections to the web site page to Pillar Consultancy please:- www.pillarconsultancy.com/focusmember.htm

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Ian Cook referred to an E mail from Rory Kennedy (Camden) copied to all Focus Group members in connection with “model of impact of capital works” – no FG members were able to offer help with this at present.

Camden

7.2 Barry Watts described problems in Dorset relating to the procurement of works by the VA sector where standards were unlikely to be met in a lot of cases. Nick Mayer agreed to raise this within DfES

DfES

8. Next Meeting

Now confirmed that the meeting will be on Wednesday 27th November at DfES Caxton House in room 349