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## School Forum – 28<sup>th</sup> June 2010

### Papers to be distributed for Agenda items:

#### Proposals involving Decisions

1. School Audit Strategy – Nick Murley
2. Barring and Vetting – Philip Howard
3. Surplus Balances – Matt Bowmer

#### Discussion Topics

4. School Redundancies – Matt Bowmer

#### Updates and Feedback

5. Schools Asset Management – Rob Parsons
6. Consultation on the future distribution of School Funding – Matt Bowmer
7. Dedicated School Grant Out-turn 2009/10 and Budget 2010/11 – Matt Bowmer
8. 14 – 16 Practical Learning and Diploma Funding – David Bray
9. School License Deficits – Matt Bowmer
10. Good Practice and Future of School Forum – Jim Parker
11. School Forum Regulations 2010 – Mel Peaston

#### Correspondence to and from the Forum

#### Proposed dates of Future Meetings and Agenda Items

### Proposals

#### 1. School Audit Strategy

The report presents the proposed School Audit Strategy 2010/11 – 2012/13 to the Schools Forum for note and comment, and to seek approval for continued DSG funding to enable a rolling programme of FMSiS re-assessments to be undertaken, an outline of the background to FMSiS and the need for a change in approach, in order to put the proposed change in context

#### Recommendation:

- 1) Note and comment on the proposed School Audit Strategy
- 2) To approve top sliced DSG funding at the current level of £38,231 over the next four years to enable Internal Audit to deliver a programme of light touch FMSiS re-assessments.

#### 2. Barring and Vetting

The report advises Schools Forum on the statutory requirements and responsibilities of the Vetting & Barring Scheme, and highlights the recommendations of the Corporate Management

team in respect of Schools meeting the costs of employees and volunteers registration under the scheme. The report gives indications as to the possible costs and recommends that the Forum decide the option to be taken in relation to meeting the cost of staff, governors and volunteers registration with the Independent Safeguarding Authority until 2015.

**Recommendation:**

- 1) To approve the proposal for Schools to pay for existing and new recruits from existing budgets

**3. Surplus Balances**

The report advises of the updated guidance issued to Authorities regarding Surplus Balances and although not statutory is likely to represent the direction of any action backed by statutory powers in the future and as such, is strongly suggested it is followed.

Guidance suggests revisiting thresholds, definition of committed balances and process followed in challenging schools.

Total Revenue balances for 2009-10 is £7.9m a use of reserves of £0.3m. Before the declaration of earmarked funds, 54 schools would be subject to the Surplus Balance Sub Group for having balances above the defined thresholds (8% Nursery, Lower and Special and 5% Middles and Uppers).

**Recommendation:**

- 1) To discuss and comment on the latest update
- 2) To agree membership for the Surplus Balance Sub Group to discuss surplus balances arising from the 2009-10 financial year.
- 3) To propose any claw back arising from the 2009-10 review of Surplus Balances be re-cycled to School Specific Contingency.
- 4) To consult on revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools to
  - require a revised budget plan to be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> October each year
  - reduce the surplus balance thresholds in 11/12
  - redefine the definition of Earmarked Funds

**Discussion Topic**

**4. School Redundancies**

Discussion item to direct way forward on Schools budget led redundancies which are currently funded by the DSG, through School Specific Contingency. Cost to date of £680k for 2010/11 a large increase from 2009/10 of £190k. It is the aim that School Contingency should be increased to cover the increased costs.

**Updates and Feedback**

**5. Schools Asset Management**

The report provides advice on the 2010/11 schools capital programme and shares the first draft of the school asset management plan (AMP). There is a proposal to establish a Schools Asset Management Planning sub group of the Forum and request nominees, to oversee the future development of the school capital programme, AMP and to develop our schools carbon reduction action plan.

## **6. Consultation on the future distribution of School Funding**

Following the Department for Education's review of the formula and methodology for allocating the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to local authorities, the department launched a consultation on the future distribution of school funding on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010 with a closing date of 7<sup>th</sup> June.

The report updates the Forum on the guiding principles by which the review has being conducted and the resultant distribution formula for DSG to local authorities should be based on the principles of transparency, simplicity and stability. The proposed formula elements include a Basic entitlement, Additional Educational Needs (AEN), High cost pupils (HCP), Sparsity and an Area Cost Adjustment (ACA).

A joint training / consultation session was held in May for Officers and Forum members to discuss the proposals and form a response to the consultation.

## **7. Dedicated School Grant Out-turn 2009/10 and Budget 2010/11**

It is a requirement that the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Director of Children Services, sign annually two statements to confirm the Actual deployment (out-turn) and Budgeted Allocation of the DSG, confirming that it has been fully deployed in support of the School's Budget in accordance with the conditions of the grant and the School Finance Regulations, this must be discussed with the Schools Forum. The paper fulfils this requirement.

## **8. 14 – 16 Practical Learning and Diploma Funding**

This paper sets out the current proposed use of DSG practical learning funding for 2010/11. The funding is used to support 14 - 16 year old students who need to access courses at FE Colleges or other providers because they struggle with general qualifications and this provision meets their learning needs and can not be easily delivered by schools. It also supports the delivery of the diploma, a new practical course that has been designed by industry to meet their needs and has been introduced by central government as an entitlement for all students to access by 2013.

## **9. School License Deficits**

The report updates the School Forum on the financial position for Schools, including the number of schools in deficit, that is licensed and un-licensed, the issuing of two Notice of Concerns and informing the Schools Forum of the criteria that schools will be judged against if applying for a deficit beyond a two year recovery position.

## **10. Good Practice and Future of School Forum**

A small sub group of the forum met to draft proposals to present to the next School Forum meeting as to how School Forum business could be managed more effectively.

The discussion centred on three main areas, meeting structure, representation and communication and the administration support and training. The proposals being put forward are as follows; increase the number of meetings to five (two during business hours), introduce a pre meeting to allow discussion on technical aspects, production of a newsletter, and an audit of training needs.

## **11. School Forum Regulations 2010**

This report sets out the main requirements of the new Schools Forum Regulations and their impact on the membership requirements of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum's Constitution and Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference requires the deletion of the reference to the Learning and Skills Council, adding the provision for a representative from the Academy and changing the number of meetings.