

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held in Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday, 25 January 2010

Present

Anne Bell	Jim Parker (Chairman)
Shirley-Anne Crosbie	Stephen Tiktin
Richard Holland	Ian Greenley
Sue Howley MBE	Bill Hamilton
Sharon Ingham	Carol Leggatt
Ian Mitchell	Bill McCarthy
David Packer	Chris Vesey

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Mrs Anita Lewis and Ray Payne

Observer: Tom Waterworth

In Attendance: Jim Smart and Neil Bramwell

Officers in Attendance: Matt Bowmer, Edwina Grant, Dawn Hill, Sandra Hobbs, Jo O'Loughlin, Mel Peaston, Micky Pompa, Patrick Shevlin, Bob Thompson, Sue Tyler and Roger Willoughby

The Chairman welcomed the new members to the Forum:-

- David Packer, Governor, Vandyke Upper School
- Stephen Tiktin, Governor, Linslade Lower School.

He also thanked Jim Smart, as he had retired from the Schools Forum, for his contribution.

L/04/33

Minutes of 19 October 2009 and Matters Arising

RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 29 June 2009 as a correct record and to authorise the Chairman to sign them subject to the following amendments:-

- a) to remove the word 'Councillors' before Ray Payne under the apologies for absence; and
- b) to amend the spelling of Tom Waterworth's name.

Members were advised that the training, mentioned in minute no. L/04/26, for those schools where there was an issue with their finances was being addressed.

L/04/34

Early Years Single Funding Formula

The Forum received a report that sought approval to postpone the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) until April 2011. Members were advised that the EYSFF for all schools and settings, making the free early years entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds was due to be implemented in April 2010. The Minister had announced that Local Authorities might postpone the implementation until April 2011.

Consultation with schools on the EYSFF had been carried out during November 2009 and a total of 81 schools had responded. The options were supported as follows:-

- **Option A – 33 supported:** 27 schools and 6 PVI settings of which 5 were voluntary supported this option;
- **Option B – 25 supported:** 6 schools and 19 PVI settings of which 14 were voluntary or childminder supported this option;
- **Option C – 10 supported:** 8 schools and 2 PVI settings of which 1 was voluntary and 1 a childminder supported this option;
- **Option D – 12 supported:** no schools and 12 PVI settings of which 5 were voluntary, 6 were private and 1 was a childminder supported this option; and
- **Option C or D – 1 supported:** 1 voluntary setting supported either of these options.

The Early Years Reference Group on 10 December had considered the consultation responses and the Ministers announcement and recommended to the Schools Forum that implementation be deferred until April 2011 to allow further work to be undertaken.

As part of the EYSFF consultation it had been proposed to bring Central Bedfordshire in line with the majority of local authorities nursery schools by counting them the same way as lower schools, namely a 3 year old would be counted as 0.5 FTE and a four year old 1.0 FTE. Members were advised that Officers were waiting for new regulations, as this might have an impact on the admissions pattern.

RESOLVED

1. to postpone the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula until April 2011
2. that nursery schools to be counted on headcount

3. that the methodology be consistent with Lower Schools (based on date of birth of child):
 - a) 3 year old counted as half or half of value; and
 - b) 4 year old counted as 1 FTE
4. that there would be no changes to Age Weighted Pupil Unit for nurseries. The value of the amount per pupil (£192) and Amount per Place (£3,248) based on 2009/10 would be added together, allocations to be uplifted for 2010/11 as per lowers schools
5. to mirror the formula used for Lower Schools but no change to lump sums
6. that an additional factor be payable for rises of 4% in pupil numbers for Autumn terms (as per all sectors)
7. that protection would be in the form of the Minimum Funding Guarantee
8. that protection on implementation of the EYSFF be revisited.

L/04/35

Technical Funding Sub Group

The Forum received a report which updated Members on the work of the Technical Funding Sub-Group and proposed formula changes for funding period three (1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011).

The Technical Sub-Group had considered the following areas:

- the thresholds for 'deprivation funding' and whether it should include a tapering element;
- a review of 'ghost funding'; and
- the impact of Armed forces pupils having significant mobility, outside of natural transition stages.

Deprivation Funding

In total the Sub-Group had considered 21 different models when considering the deprivation funding. The deprivation factors were recalculated on updated January 2009 ACORN data. The Group looked at category four and five pupils as they currently were being considered separately and there was a 'cliff edge' of a 20% threshold, with 37 schools currently benefiting from the deprivation factor. The Group advised that whichever model was chosen there would always be winners and losers, but they had tried to recommend a model that would not have an adverse impact on the schools. The schools that would lose out if the recommendation was agreed would be protected by the minimum funding guarantee (MFG).

Members discussed the role of the Technical Sub-Group and the responsibility given to the Group to put together a transparent solution. The Chairman advised Members that he had been looking at the practices of other Schools Forums and the communication with schools.

Ghost Funding

The Sub-Group considered eight models. At the current time the ghost funding pot was 'ring fenced' and was divided each year by the number of 'ghost pupils' in the overall system. The Group considered that the amount per 'ghost pupil' should be calculated based on the cost of a main scale teacher and not dependant on the total number of 'ghost pupils' in the system. This would result in an objective unit rate per 'ghost pupil'.

Armed Forces

A request had been received from Campton Lower School for a factor to be included in the Individual Schools Budget for mobility due to pupils from armed forces personnel. The Sub-Group agreed that this was not a unique situation as it also related to schools near traveller sites, university campuses etc. and had recommended that no additional factor be included in the Individual School Budget.

Hearing Impaired and Language Provisions

At the Schools Forum meeting on 28 September Members had resolved that further information be brought back to them on the cessation of the additional payments to headteachers of schools with Language or Hearing Impaired Units. Members were advised that this was an historic payment and that there was no longer a case for making this payment.

New School Factor/Relocating Schools/Lump Sums

The Sub-Group had also considered the new school factor, relocating schools and lump sums.

Fairfield Lower School believed that their rates were particularly high and it had not been taken into account in the way that the base model had been built up. The Sub-Group compared the allocation to Fairfield Lower School with similar schools of that size and concluded that in their opinion the school was generously funded, although they did agree that the process for the new school factor needed to be reviewed as a matter of urgency so that the same situation would not arise for future new schools. Sue Howley, MBE declared a personal interest as she was a Governor at Fairfield Lower School and spoke on this issue explaining the situation.

The Sub-Group thanked the Finance Manager – Schools for the huge amount of work she had done to support the Group.

Members noted that the recommendation relating to Early Years had been resolved under the previous minute 'Early Years Single Funding Formula'.

RESOLVED that the following proposed changes from the Technical Funding Sub-Group for funding period three of the current three year settlement (1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011), be approved:

1. Deprivation Factor:

- a) Funding to be calculated on a combination of category four (Moderate Means) and category five (Hard Pressed) pupil numbers.
- b) Category 4 to be weighted 0.33 (1/3) and Category 5 1.0.
- c) Funding to be directed at schools with a combined weighted total of 15% or more of pupils in categories four and five.
- d) A tapering methodology to be applied correlating to the weighed pupil numbers in each school.
- e) Differential factors to be applied to reflect pupil numbers at each phase (total weighted pupils in category 4 and 5 divided by total school population per phase).

2. Ghost Funding:

- a) Recalculate the amount per 'Ghost Pupil'.
- b) Ghost Funding no longer to be a 'ring fenced pot'.
- c) The Ghost funding unit to be recalculated each year based on Teachers Main Scale 6 divided by 30 pupils.
- d) Protection to be given to schools where 'Ghost Pupil' numbers reduce as a result of a falling role.
- e) Protection to be based on 5/12ths (April – August) of reduced funding.

3. Pupils of Armed Forces Personnel:

- a) No additional factor to be included in the Individual School Budget (ISB).

4. Hearing Impaired and Language Provisions:

- a) No further additional payments would be made from School Contingency to headteachers of schools with special units.
- b) The basis of the specific funding for special units to be reviewed.

5. New School Factor:

- a) No additional contribution to Rates to be made for 2009/10.

- b) The New Schools Factor should be reviewed by the Technical Funding Sub-Group as a matter of urgency.
- c) That Finance Officers investigate and resolve the situation that had arisen at Fairfield Lower School with regards to their rates.

6. Relocating Schools:

- a) A payment to be made to Roecroft Lower School subject to a business case being provided detailing anticipated additional expenditure for the school.
- b) The business case and proposed additional funding to be agreed by the Director of Children, Families and Learning, payable from the School Contingency.
- c) No additional Formula Factor to be included in the ISB for re-locating schools.
- d) All relocating schools to provide a business case and be assessed on an individual basis, payable from School Contingency.

7. Lump Sums:

- a) To allocate from the Contingency an amount of £20,000 to St Vincent's as a contribution to the additional KS2 classes for the period September 2007 up to March 2010.
- b) St Vincent's lump sum for the period April 2010 to March 2011 an additional £7,915 added to the Lower School lump sum (pending lump sum review).
- c) To review all lump sum factors for all phases, to include Primary (Yr 1 – 6), Secondary (Yr 7 – 13) and through schools (Yr 1 – 8) for the 2011/12 Formula Allocation.

L/04/36

Schools in Licensed Deficit

The Forum received a report that proposed the part use of Schools Specific Contingency to fund the additional administration and monitoring involved with Schools in Licensed Deficit. A number of the schools in Central Bedfordshire were in financial deficit and were asking for support. It was anticipated that the additional support would equate to approximately £1,000 (25-30 hours) per Licensed Deficit School.

Central Bedfordshire Council was under great financial pressure and schools were being asked to spend their money carefully. Central Bedfordshire Council was conducting a review of its senior management structure to reduce management by 20%.

Members were advised that there were a number of statutory grants that the Council currently received, but these were no longer likely to be granted. Local Authorities would need to reduce their costs and focus on the statutory functions.

Members agreed that if funding was being used from the Schools Specific Contingency for additional administration then it must be of use to the school in training them.

RESOLVED to propose that part use of Schools Specific Contingency to fund the additional administration support involved with Schools in Licensed Deficit as set out in the report.

L/04/37

Centrally Funded Schools - Administration Charge

The Forum received a report that proposed that a charge be introduced to Centrally Funded Schools for Administration Services provided above the statutory requirement. It was proposed that a nominal fee of £0.50 per pupil, based on the January numbers on the role. This would equate to the smallest school being charged £15.50 annually to a large upper school being charged £634.

RESOLVED that Centrally Funded Schools be charged an annual Administration Fee of £0.50 per pupil, based on the January numbers on the role for services provided above the statutory requirement.

L/04/38

Standards Fund 2010-11

The Forum received a report that updated Members on the Standards Funds for 2010-11. Members were advised of the key issues and the proposals to be determined:

- The distribution of the 2.1% increase in School Development Grant (approximately £100k) – it was proposed that this be distributed flatly as a 2.1% inflation increase per pupil, in line with the Minimum Funding Guarantee.
- The allocation of the School Lunch Grant (£359k) – it was proposed that the grant be separated into the total amount for the schools in the Local Authority (LA) Contract and those schools who make their own arrangements. This allocation would be on the basis of the funding to the LA i.e. 70% on a per pupil basis and 30% on free school meal eligibility.

The amount in respect of schools on the LA Contract would be held centrally, to fund the subsidy to school meals arising from the new menus.

The amount for schools outside the LA Contract would have the funding devolved on the above basis, to assist with their local arrangements.

- The distribution of Harnessing Technology Funding (£1.12m) – it was proposed that this funding be distributed in line with previous years 60% held centrally and 40% devolved to schools.
- KS2 Music Funding (£437k) – it was proposed that this funding be used in line with previous years that the grant was held centrally and managed by the Music Service.

Members were advised that copies of the Draft Standards Fund Circular would be available for collection after the meeting and comments to be fed back to the Finance Manager – School Improvement.

NOTED the Standards Fund amounts, the issues to be determined.

RESOLVED that the proposals re the Schools Development Grant, be endorsed.

L/04/39

Securing our Future: Using our resources well

The Forum received a copy of the publication from the Department for Children, Schools and Families 'Securing our future: using our resources well – A discussion paper on the better use of resources in schools'. Members were given a brief introduction to the document and were advised that it would be discussed in detail at their next meeting. The document focused on investment in schools and getting real value for money and achieving efficiency savings while at the same time continuing to improve school standards and raising levels of achievement by working in partnership.

NOTED the report.

L/04/40

National Review of Dedicated Schools Grant

The Forum received a report which advised Members on the national review of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) being carried out by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The review was looking at formula and methodology for allocating DSG to local authorities from April 2011, the first year of a new Comprehensive Spending Review period. The DCSF were carrying out the consultation from January to March 2010. Officers were concerned that the risk to Central Bedfordshire was that the level of DSG received might reduce from April 2011.

NOTED the latest update on the national review of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

L/04/41

Position Statement on Central Bedfordshire Council FMSiS Assessments & Future Funding for Assessments

The Schools Forum received a report which updated Members on the current position with regards to schools that had passed the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS). Members were advised that further work had been completed on the backlog of 2008-09 assessments, as well as commencement of the programmed assessments for 2009-10.

As at 31 December 2009 a total of 20 submissions for assessment were expected. At the current time a total of 13 submissions had been received, the majority of which were received in the last week of term. Internal Audit was developing a revised approach to the FMSiS Assessments for 2010-2013.

Members were advised that the Bedford Schools Forum had considered a similar report and there was concern that School Governors were not able to sign-off these assessments due to their indemnity insurance and Officers at Bedford Borough Council had agreed to seek legal advice on this.

NOTED the report.

L/04/42

Update on School Attendance Manager Post

The Schools Forum received a report that updated Members on the proposals for Human Resources (HR) support in schools in relation to attendance management. A questionnaire had been sent to all the schools in Central Bedfordshire seeking feedback in relation to the Attendance Manager Service. The Feedback from this service had been very positive.

As previously agreed by the Schools Forum the work of the attendance manager would be incorporated into the buy back service in future. Schools had reported that they valued the service, but they had also requested more support staff to contact on a daily basis for initial queries and advice on a wider range of issues than just attendance. The HR team were looking at creating an HR Officer role to provide a wide variety of HR advice to schools.

NOTED the proposals for future HR support to schools in relation to attendance management.

L/04/43

Schools Specific Contingency Budget

The Forum received a report which updated Members on the use of the Schools Contingency Budget. Members were advised of spend against the general contingency and against the Special Educational Needs (SEN) contingency to date for 2009/10. Members were advised that the spend against the SEN contingency was due to be spent by the end of March 2010. A concern was raised that the SEN funding was not being received by the Special Schools in time to be used by the end of the financial year.

Members also requested that an update on the Oakbank building be circulated.

NOTED the position statement as at Period 9 on the Schools Specific Contingency Budget.

L/04/44 **School Forum Budget**

The Forum received a report which updated Members on the use of the Schools Forum Budget. Members were advised that the balance remaining of the Schools Forum Budget was £2,872. A suggestion was made that training be provided to the new Schools Forum members.

NOTED the report.

L/04/45 **Feedback from F40 Group**

Feedback on the F40 Funding Conference was tabled at the meeting. Members were advised that the F40 Group represented the lowest 40 Dedicated Schools Grant funded authorities in England. Central Bedfordshire Council was ranked in 24th place for 2009/10. Officers attended the conference on 3 November 2009 and the majority of representatives at the conference were Councillors and Forum Chairman.

RESOLVED to continue to be a member of the F40 Group with the Chairman and the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services attending their meetings.

L/04/46 **E-Procurement for Schools**

The Forum received a report which updated Members on the electronic procurement tool available to Schools. Central Bedfordshire had made a commitment in their Corporate Commissioning and Procurement Strategy 2009/10 that the Council would work with the Department for Children, Schools and Families to encourage schools to implement OPEN (Online Procurement for Educational Needs). The OPEN market place allowed for schools to have easy and secure access to suppliers' electronic catalogues for goods and services. Members were advised that there would be no charge to schools for the use of OPEN up to the end of March 2011.

A steering group, consisting of Officers from Procurement, Audit and Schools Finance had been set up to discuss the next steps and to formulate a timeline.

NOTED the update on E-Procurement for Schools.

L/04/47

Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum Membership

The Forum received a report recommending an amendment to the terms of reference of the Schools Forum to recognise that where a representative was Chairman of the Forum, there was a need for another person from the same class of representatives to sit on the Forum for the duration of the Chairman's term of office. The report also suggested a process to enable minor membership amendments to the Schools Forum's terms of reference to be made without recourse to the Executive, so long as the Forum had first approved them.

Members were advised of the recent review of the membership which had taken place in December. Members discussed the proposal and raised concerns about the role of the Vice-Chairman standing in for the Chairman and the Chairman having the casting vote. Members agreed that further consideration needed to be given to the terms of reference and the best practice of other Forums, including the suggestion of having parental representation.

RESOLVED to receive a further report on the terms of reference for the Schools Forum at their next meeting.

L/04/48

Any Other Business

Members had received a report regarding an application for 'PFI Factor' for Harlington Upper School. The Mid Bedfordshire Schools PFI project was designed to provide additional school places based on demographic projections. The failure to meet these projections, and the lower-than-expected growth in the number of pupils from within catchment area who attend Harlington Upper School, had caused a structural imbalance in funding the School. A request was made for the Technical Sub-Group to review the case for a PFI factor and to report back to the next Schools Forum meeting.

Members raised that there was only 2 members remaining on the Technical Sub-Group, so this would need to be considered at the next meeting.

L/04/49

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 28 June 2010, but Officers were recommending that there be an additional meeting on Monday 8 March 2010. Members were advised that a room was not available at Priory House, Chicksands for a 6.00 pm start, but there was a room available at the Council Offices, Dunstable.

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum be scheduled for the Monday 8 March 2010 at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Dunstable.

L/04/50

Close

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 8.40 p.m..)