

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Committee Room 1 - The Council Offices, High Street North, Dunstable, on Monday, 24 January 2011

PRESENT

Jim Parker (Chairman)

School Members:	Anne Bell	Headteacher, Willow Nursery School
	David Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher Parkfields Middle School
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie	Headteacher, Glenwood Special School
	Richard Holland	Governor, Harlington Upper School
	Sue Howley MBE	Governor, Greenleas Lower School
	Sharon Ingham	Headteacher, Hadrian Lower School
	Vaughan Johnson	Governor, Edward Peake Middle School
	Ray Payne	Headteacher, Henlow Middle School
	Rob Robson	Headteacher, Samuel Whitbread Collegiate
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Linslade Lower School
Tom Waterworth	Principal of All Saints Academy	
Non-School Members:	Libby Bevan	Union Representative
	Ian Greenley	Church of England Diocese Representative
	Mr A Hadawi	14 - 19 Partnership Sector Representative
	Bill Hamilton	Roman Catholic Diocese Representative
Observer:	Cllr Anita Lewis	Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Apologies for Absence:	Mrs E Grant Caroll Leggatt	
Officers in Attendance:	Dawn Hill Ms K Riches Mrs S Tyler	Finance Manager - Schools Head of Audit Head of Early Intervention & Prevention

CBSF/10/107 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 1 November 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Further to minute CBSF/10/97 the Forum noted that officers would provide an update to the next meeting of the Forum on the annual maintenance resource implications for Harnessing Technology and Learning Platforms.

CBSF/10/108 Financial Management Standard in Schools

The Forum considered a report setting out an update on the Department of Environment's (DfE) announcement that the Financial Management Standard was no longer mandatory and was to be replaced by a simpler standard. DfE guidance was that the replacement system would be in place before Summer 2011.

The Forum was reminded that at the meeting in June 2010 (minute CBSF/10/71 refers) it was agreed, because of the onerous FMSiS regime, that schools due for reassessment would be assessed using a lighter touch risk based approach. It was anticipated that the new simpler standard would be consistent with that approach. It was noted that continuation of the previously approved use of top sliced DSG funding would enable Internal Audit to continue the programme of assessments against the simpler standard. It was clarified that the arrangement did not include Academies.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the report, updating the Forum that the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) in its current form is no longer mandatory and is to be replaced by a simpler standard, be noted;**
- 2. that approval be giving to the continued use of top sliced DSG funding of £38,231 for the financial year 2011/12 only to fund the revised standard to be introduced during 2011/12.**

CBSF/10/109 14 - 19 Practical Learning

The Forum received and considered a report proposing continuation of the use of Central DSG Grant for funding of 14-19 practical learning.

The School Forum was reminded that in January 2006 it was agreed that central DSG should be delegated to the 14-19 partnership to support learners taking practical courses to meet their needs which could not easily be delivered by schools. It was noted that the arrangements did not include Academies.

The Forum noted that as the Coalition Government's new qualification framework was still unclear, the proposal was for the continuation of funding for one year only. It was recognised that there needed to be a longer term closer look at the financial implications of running practical courses in light of impending changes to the funding of schools and the education system.

RESOLVED

that the current level of funding for 14 -19 Practical Learning from Central DSG continue for 2011/12.

CBSF/10/110 Teachers Union and Professional Association

Item deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

CBSF/10/111 Early Years Single Funding Formula

The Forum received and considered a report setting out details of the requirement to introduce a formula for Early Years Single Funding from April 2011.

It was noted that for this to be achieved a consultation had taken place on possible formulae and after discussion with the Early Years Reference Group a proposed formula has been put forward for recommendation to the Schools Forum. Officers clarified that the Schools Forum regulations allow that the LA proposes and decides on Formula change, but that School Forum must be consulted. It was noted that the Section 151 Officer was required to sign annually to verify that the Dedicated School Grant had been deployed according to the School Finance Regulations.

RESOLVED

- 1. that Option D, as detailed in the submitted report and as proposed by the Early Year Reference Group (EYRG), be implemented from April 2011 as the formulae for Early Years Funding;**

2. **that the level of protection be set as 1% of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG);**
3. **that from 2012/13 the Early Years Funding Stream will be subsumed within the overall DSG be noted;**
4. **that Option D requires £54k contribution from the wider Individual Schools Budget (ISB) funding to be directed to Early Years (EY) be noted;**
5. **that the termly headcount adjustment will be paid out of Schools Specific Contingency, in line with other phases, be noted.**

CBSF/10/112 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Pupil Premium Update 2011/12

The Forum received and considered a report on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the Pupil Premium.

It was noted that the Department of Education (DfE) had continued to operate the current methodology for allocating DSG to local authorities for 2011/12. The unit of funding not including mainstream grants was £4,093.84; the inclusion of grants increased the amount to £4,658.10. As agreed at the Forum meeting on 1 November 2010 (minute CBSF/10/99 refers) mainstreamed grants would be distributed by the methodology used in 2010/11.

The Forum was advised that a Pupil Premium of £430 would be introduced from April 2011 based on Free School Meals for all maintained schools and alternative provision. It was noted that the Local Authority would retain responsibility for allocating the premium for pupils at Special Schools and Alternative Provision. A further premium of £200 was paid to children whose parents were in the armed forces. It was noted that the Pupil Premium was not ring fenced at school level.

It was noted that the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) had been set at negative 1.5%.

Funding of Academies was through a General Annual Grant, made up of an amount equivalent to the current school's budget and local authority central spend known as LACSEG. It was noted that the LACSEG recoupment was not due to be published until February 2011.

The Forum noted that as soon as the DfE consultation document on the introduction of a national funding formula based on the needs of pupils was available, expected Spring 2011, consideration would be given to the best way of consulting with the Forum.

In response to comments that the schools needed to know the allocation of headroom for 2011/12 as soon as possible because of the setting of school budgets officers advised the Forum that until the census information was available the Authority would not know the allocation of headroom. At this stage it was unclear as to whether this information would be available for the next meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the school funding settlement for 2011/12, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted;**
- 2. that the Pupil Premium allocation for Special Schools and Alternative Provision be retained;**
- 3. that the Minimum Funding Guarantee at negative 1.5%, as advised by the DfE excluding Early Years, be agreed;**
- 4. that, initially headroom be allocated arising from the distribution of the DSG to the Schools Specific Contingency, pending the final settlement;**
- 5. that the update on Academies, as set out in the submitted report, be noted.**

CBSF/10/113 Revision to the Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum received and considered a report on a proposed revision to the Scheme for Financing Schools.

It was noted that consultation was undertaken in November 2010 regarding the proposed removal of choice of bank accounts effectively requiring all schools to be Fully Funded from April 2011. 24% of Centrally funded schools responded with concerns but no strong objections came forward. It was noted that main concerns were implications on funding and capacity along with provision of training and conversion date.

The Forum noted that revised guidance for Local Authority Schemes was received in December 2010 for implementation in April 2011 and consultation had started. The main changes included: schools being allowed to opt out LA contracts, removal of FMSiS, no requirement for clawback mechanism for excess balances, maximum length of deficit 3 years and the inclusion of guidance relating to costs of redundancies and early retirements. It was noted that a further report with proposals would be brought to the next School Forum meeting in March 2011.

During consideration of the report the Forum expressed some concern about the timing of the changes and the capacity of schools to accommodate the additional responsibility. Officers gave assurance that Local Authority support to schools would be provided at workshops and, if appropriate, one to one support.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the proposed change to the Scheme for Financing Schools be approved removing the option of being centrally funded for April 2011;**
- 2. that new consultation with Headteachers and Governing Bodies following revised DfE guidance published in December 2010 be noted, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.**

CBSF/10/114 School Forum Budget

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the School Forum Budget for 2010/11. It was noted that the available balance as at 31 December 2010 was £3,848.

In view of the level of budget still available the Forum questioned whether it was making the best use of the money. The Chairman, in consultation with officers, undertook to review the level of the Forum's budget for 2011/12.

RESOLVED

that the School Forum's available budget of £3,848 as at 31 December 2010 be noted.

CBSF/10/115 Correspondence to and from the Forum

Letter from Headteacher of Redbourne School

The Chairman tabled a letter from the Headteacher of Redbourne School urging that the Forum when considering the Specialist College budget for 2011/12 that the money be reallocated to those schools currently receiving the fund. The letter drew attention to the difficulties the school would encounter by the withdrawal of the specialist funding.

CBSF/10/116 Schools Specific Contingency Budget

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the use of the Schools Specific Contingency Budget for 2010/11. It was noted that as at 31 December 2010, General Contingency balance was £575,997 and SEN Contingency was £335,335. It was also noted that the £205,058 to finance the shift of funding between Central Bedfordshire the and Bedford Borough arising from the Special Schools Funding Formula review had yet to be paid and was in dispute with Bedford Borough. The Forum agreed that payment should be withheld for 2011/12. Officers advised of an additional request from the Borough for further funding in 2012/13. Members discussed the request and agreed that payment should not be extended to 2012/13.

RESOLVED

that the Schools Specific Contingency position statement as at Period 09 be noted.

CBSF/10/117 Future Meeting Arrangements

The Forum noted that arrangements for the following meetings of Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum:

- 7 March 2011 at 6.00pm in Room 14, Priory House
- 21 June 2011 at 9.00 am in Room 15, Priory House

(Note: The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.12 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated