

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Committee Room 2, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable on Monday, 3 September 2012

PRESENT

Richard Holland (Chairman)

School Members:	Anne Bell	Headteacher, Willow Nursery School
	David Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher, Parkfields Middle School
	Paul Burrett	Headteacher, Studham CofE Lower School and Pre-School
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie	Headteacher, Chiltern School
	James Davis	Governor, Leighton Middle School
	Richard Holland	Governor, Harlington Upper School
	Sharon Ingham	Headteacher, Hadrian Academy
	John Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Linslade Lower School
Non-School Members:	Martin Foster	Trade Union representative
	Bill Hamilton	Roman Catholic Diocese representative
Observer:	Cllr Mark Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
Apologies for Absence:	Jim Parker	
	Jon Reynolds	
Officers in Attendance:	Mr P Dudley	Acting Director of Children's Services/Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning)
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr L Manning	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs H Redding	Head of Learning and School Support

CBSF/12/59 **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**

The Chairman opened the meeting by expressing thanks, on behalf of the Forum, to the members of the Technical Funding Group and the Council's officers for their efforts in preparing the consultation on the revised school funding formula for 2013/14 in Central Bedfordshire.

Consideration was first given to the background to the requirement for the consultation exercise. The meeting was reminded that the Department for Education (DfE) had launched its own consultation on school funding reform,

entitled 'Next Steps Towards a Fairer System', in March 2012. That consultation had ended in May 2012 and the final funding arrangements for 2013/14 announced on 28 June 2012. The meeting noted how, under the new arrangements, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be split into three notional blocks: Schools, High Needs and Early Years. Local authorities would be free to move funding between the blocks subject to compliance with the requirements of the Minimum Funding Guarantee and central expenditure. The entire Schools Block had to be delegated to schools with a few exceptions. The meeting noted the arrangements for the High Needs and Early Years funding blocks. The arrangements for these blocks did not form part of the consultation process.

The meeting further noted that the DfE had announced that it would introduce a national funding formula in the next Spending Review period. To support the movement towards this all local authorities were required to simplify their arrangements for distributing funding to schools and other providers. The current School Funding Regulations allowed for up to 37 funding factors in an authority's formulae; Central Bedfordshire Council operated with 27 but from 2013/14 only 12 factors would be allowed, two of which did not apply to Central Bedfordshire.

Members were aware that, as a result of the DfE's announcement, a Technical Funding Group had been formed at the Schools Forum meeting on 25 June 2012 to consider the factors in the Council's current formula which were not compliant under the new system. The minutes of two of the three Group meetings which had been held were attached at Appendices A and B to the report (the third meeting having not been minuted due to the nature of its workload). Arising from the Group meetings a draft 'School Funding Consultation 2013/14' document had been prepared. A copy of the document, attached at Appendix C to the report, included proposals for allocating all funding through the factors which were permissible under the new system. Also arising from the Group meetings had been the preparation of a Frequently Asked Questions document to help with initial questions. A copy of the document was attached at Appendix D to the report.

With regard to the timescale for the consultation it was noted that the consultation document and the Frequently Asked Questions sheet would be issued to schools on 4 September and surgeries for specific school queries would be held at the Council's offices in both Chicksands and Dunstable on 20 September 2012. There would no presentations on the basis that all schools were fully aware of the background to the funding reform measures. The collation and analysis of responses would follow and the outcome submitted to the Forum meeting on 22 October 2012.

A copy of the questionnaire that would accompany the consultation document was circulated to all Members for comment. The meeting was advised that an example of the responses received to the questionnaire would be used to inform the surgeries. In addition the information received would be used to periodically update the FAQ sheet because of the possible impact it could have on later questions.

There were no queries on the content of the FAQ sheet, the minutes of the Group meetings or on the questionnaire to be circulated with the consultation document.

Reference was made to the tight deadline between the close of the consultation on 28 September and the collation and analysis of the responses to enable consideration by the Forum on 22 October. In response the Head of Learning and School Support explained that responders would be encouraged to return the on-line consultation as this would assist in the collation and analysis process. The Senior Finance Manager, Children's Services added that the start of the consultation had been set for 4 September to ensure that schools had returned from the summer break and staff were present. With regard to ensuring that the views of school governing bodies were also submitted she stated that governors had been briefed over the previous 18 months and were fully aware of the DSG arrangements and funding reform consultation. A Member suggested that governing bodies would, in any case, be almost certain to be scheduled to meet within the first half of the first term.

The Senior Finance Manager, Children's Services referred Members to the draft consultation document. She explained that the document to be circulated would comply with the corporate format and so would appear different to that of the draft. The Senior Finance Manager, Children's Services stated that there would be slight changes to grammar to the draft consultation document but not to the context of the document itself.

The meeting then worked through the draft consultation document, Members raising various comments and suggestions. In particular the Forum acknowledged that it should be made clear in the covering letter accompanying the consultation document that the revised funding formula would initially be applied for one year only and would subsequently be revised in the light of further changes. It was also felt that the need to revisit the allocation of an additional lump sum to those schools meeting the definition of split site as, possibly, more schools merged and worked across two sites, should be made clear.

At this point in the meeting the Detailed Financial Model (Appendix E to the report) was circulated for Members consideration. The Senior Finance Manager, Children's Services worked through the Model which was to be circulated, as supplied, with the consultation document. Comment was passed on the need to include a clear indication as to the financial impact on individual schools. Due to the constraints on the existing format it was felt that a separate summary of the Model presenting the most essential data should be circulated as well.

There being no further comments the Senior Finance Manager, Children's Services stated that the proposed amendments would be incorporated in the consultation document, together with any additional information required, and circulated to all head teachers and governing bodies the next day.

NOTED

the deployment of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2012/13.

RESOLVED

- 1 that, subject to the incorporation of the required amendments, the consultation document on the proposed school funding for 2013/14 be approved and circulated to all head teachers and governing bodies for comment;**
- 2 that the list of Frequently Asked Questions be approved and circulated with the consultation document and that the list be amended in response to those questions received from schools;**
- 3 that the questionnaire be approved and circulated with the consultation document;**
- 4 that, subject to the incorporation of the required amendments, the Detailed Financial Model be approved and circulated with the consultation document;**
- 5 that a summary of the Financial Model be prepared and circulated with the consultation document;**
- 6 that the cover letter issued with the consultation document include a reference stating that the revised funding formula will apply for one year (2013/14) and will subsequently be revised.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 4.30 p.m. and concluded at 5.51 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Dated