

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 26 November 2012

PRESENT

Richard Holland (Chairman)

Jim Parker (Vice-Chairman)

School Members:	David Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher, Parkfields Middle School
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie	Headteacher, Glenwood Special School
	James Davis	Governor, Leighton Middle School
	Angie Hardy	Headteacher, Clipstone Brook Lower School
	Sue Howley MBE	Governor, Greenleas Lower School
	Sharon Ingham	Headteacher, Hadrian Lower School
	John Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Linslade Lower School
Non-School Members:	Mr M Foster	Trade Union representative
	Caroll Leggatt	PVI Early Years Providers Representative
Observer:	Cllr M AG Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
Apologies for Absence:	Anne Bell	
	Paul Burrett	
	Mrs E Grant	
	J Reynolds	
	Robert Shore	
	Rob Watson	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs M Clampitt	Committee Services Officer
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr R Parsons	Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning
	Miss H Redding	Head of Learning and School Support
	Mrs S Tyler	Head Child Poverty and Early Intervention & Prevention

CBSF/12/64 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

1. The Terms of Reference would not be considered until the January 2013 meeting due to work commitments.
2. The Risk Register would not be considered until the January 2013 meeting due to the fullness of the agenda.

3. The order of items would be varied to consider item 4 prior to Item 3. The balance of the agenda would be considered in order.

CBSF/12/65 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 22 October 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

It was noted that the vacancies on the Schools Forum would be advertised.

CBSF/12/66 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) & Early Years Funding

The Forum received a report which provided an update on arrangements for Early Years Funding within Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and proposed changes.

The Department for Education (DfE) has decided that all free early education will be funded directly by Local Authorities from September 2013. This would be achieved through the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) on the base rate. The MFG for schools and free early education will be the same level and the EYSFF base rate cannot be reduced by more than 1.5%.

Changes have been proposed to the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) to reflect the removal of the premises hourly rate, and the admin lump sum are the following:-

- Increase PVI base rates by 30p/hr to £3.60 for non-flexible and £3.75 for flexible
- Maintain payments for Quality
- Maintain payments for Deprivation
- Provide an allowable lump sum of £100k for Nursery Schools(4)
- Apply MFG of minus 1.5% to base rate for Nurseries using DfE tool for MFG
- Apply MFG of minus 1.5% to base rate for PVIs
- Remove all non-allowable factors

The report contained a table at paragraph 9 which detailed the new EYSFF sums incorporating the changes.

RESOLVED

1. **that the arrangements for funding Early Years from within the 2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), be noted.**
2. **that the following changes for the distribution of the Early Years Block for the 2013/14 financial year, be agreed:**

- (i) increase PVI base rates by 30p/hr to £3.60 for non-flexible and £3.75 for flexible;
- (ii) provide an allowable lump sum of £100k for Nursery Schools;
- (iii) apply MFG of minus 1.5% to base rate for Nurseries and PVI;
- (iv) remove all non-allowable factors.

CBSF/12/67 School Funding Reform - Growth Fund arrangements for 2013/14

The Forum considered a report which proposed the definition and criteria for the allocation of Growth Funding for 2013/14.

It was noted that Growth Funds, with the Schools Forum's agreement, can be retained from the Schools Block before allocating formula for funding:-

- Significant pre-16 pupil growth
- Expenditure incurred to enable schools to comply with Infant Class Size Regulations

The Early Years block covers the pre-statutory pupil growth.

The Forum noted that where the Local Authority commissions new school places as:-

- A new school
- Or equivalent new split site school provision
- Or as permanent or temporary increases to an existing school site (i.e. to accommodate a bulge year).

Additional funding is provided for pre opening costs and any shortfall in places.

The Forum noted that the process for considering funding would be via an application and assessment process. The approval of successful applications would be under delegated authority from the Schools Forum by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services.

Concerns were raised of the need to reduce the administrative burden on schools in the application process. Similarly concern was raised of the impact on existing schools managing significant growth without appropriate support. Officers stressed that the fund is intended to support schools more effectively than at present and agreed that the process will be refined and streamlined with time.

RESOLVED

1. that the proposed definition, and allocation criteria as set out in the **School Funding Reform – Growth Fund: Arrangements for 2013/14**, be approved.
2. that the delegation to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services for approval of successful applications to the Growth Fund, be approved.

CBSF/12/68 Consultation on Revision to the Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum considered a report recommending that Schools be consulted on changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools.

The Central Bedfordshire Council's Scheme for Financing Schools details the financial relationship between the authority and the maintained schools. Any proposed revisions would be subject to consultation with the governing body and the head teacher of every school maintained by the Authority prior to Schools Forum approval.

The proposed changes would need to be published on the Council's website prior to the date the revisions become effective.

The Forum noted that the current Scheme provided a Loan Scheme which had been adopted from the Bedfordshire County Council Scheme for Financing Schools. The Scheme is in need of updating, making the loans more widely available and designed to provide funding for particular projects at a time when sufficient funds may not be available. The revised section 4.10 is attached to the Minutes at Appendix A.

The consultation will conclude on 21 December 2012 and the Schools Forum will be asked for final approval at the 21 January 2013 meeting.

The Forum asked for clarification on a number of points as follows:-

- How is the Loan funded?
The loan is fully funded out of unspent balances.
- How much can be borrowed?
Up to a maximum of 10% of school budget.
- What can the loan be used for?
The loan is for Capital projects.
- What is the incentive to use this facility instead of a bank?
The interest rate is the same rate as schools receive for cash advances.
Schools are not permitted to take loans.

The Forum supported the consultation.

RESOLVED

That consultation with the maintained schools on a revision to Central Bedfordshire's Scheme for Financing Schools, Section 4.10 – Asset Loan Scheme, be agreed.

CBSF/12/69 Schools Specific Contingency Budget

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the School Contingency Budget for 2012/13 and proposed the distribution of unspent Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

At the Schools Forum meeting held on 5 March 2012, the following budgets were agreed:-

- £500,000 General Contingency
- £275,670 SEN Contingency

The total budget agreed for 2012/13 was £775,670. There was also a carry forward from 2011/12 of £898,917 which was split £818,999 (General) and £79,918 (SEN). The balances were £1,318,999 (General) and £355,588 (SEN).

As at October 2012 the balances were the following: £1,674,460 (General) and £289,085 (SEN).

It was noted that due to unspent centrally retained DSG and the reduction in forecasted expenditure that a one off payment of a minimum £50 per statutory pupil registered in the January 2012 census be transferred to Central Bedfordshire Maintained Schools.

The SEN Contingency budget allowing for known commitments would be fully spent by the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the School Contingency spend as at 31 October 2012 be noted.**
- 2. that the allocation of unspent DSG of a minimum of £50 per statutory pupil registered on the January 2012 census to Maintained Schools as a one of allocation for 2012/13 be delegated to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in consultation with the Senior Finance Officer to agree the final amount.**

CBSF/12/70 Support for Vulnerable Learners at Key Stage 2

The Forum considered the report which summarised the impact of the KS2 targeted funding in 2011/12 and set out how it had been used in 2012/13.

The Head of Learning and School Support informed the Forum that the overall aim was to embed good practice and facilitate school to school support which could be utilised beyond the term of the project.

It was noted that at the 5 March 2012 Schools Forum meeting it was agreed that £90,000 be allocated to maintained middle and primary schools with year 5 pupils identified as not making sufficient progress towards their Key Stage 2 targets. There were 19 Schools to be supported. It was noted that a school had converted to an academy during this period and a second payment was not made. To date £63,900 had been spent and the Forum has been requested to agree the monies being returned to the programme to help further students.

The School Improvement Advisers (SIAs), met at the start of each half term, with Headteachers and senior curriculum managers to review progress and funding. In November 2012 a workshop was attended by 80 colleagues to show the effective practices being used. In February 2012 the Middle Schools Heads Association held two workshops during the build up to the SATs, attended by 80 colleagues. Local Authority Officers attended and provided presentations.

The Forum noted that of the original 703 targeted pupils 66% had made two levels progress from the end of KS1 to the end of KS2 in Maths. In addition, of the original 703 targeted pupils 72% made two levels progress from the end of KS1 to the end of KS2 in English.

Members of the Forum raised concerns on how the monies had been allocated and why not all schools had been contacted regarding the project or even to pass on the good practices.

The Forum agreed that the good practices and the scheme as a whole should be advertised to the qualifying maintained Lower Schools to show what has been done.

The Forum agreed that the unspent monies should be put back into the Scheme to help more KS2 students.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Support for Vulnerable Pupils at Key Stage 2 report be noted;**
- 2. that the benefits of the scheme be advertised to all qualifying maintained schools;**
- 3. that the unspent £26,100 be put back into the Scheme to allow more KS2 students to be helped.**

CBSF/12/71 School Funding Reform: Update on arrangements for 2013/14 High Needs Block (including Alternative Provision)

The Forum considered a report which provided an explanation on the High Needs Block Funding and a summary of changes and the implications from 2013/14.

The Head of Learning and School Support advised the Forum that two additional papers would be considered at the Schools Forum meeting on 14 January 2013. The reports would cover (a) utilisation of the DSG and (b) high needs block way forward.

The Forum noted the funding provisions of £6k would be in line with current expectation that schools fund the first 12 hours of support. In addition, funding for specialist provisions would be based on the number of required places and the amount would be £10k base funding plus top up to the current agreed level.

Officers were seeking advice from the DfE regarding travel, cleaning and other issues across sites. In addition, a review of the bands and their descriptions was being carried out.

The Forum expressed concerns regarding the change from the Local Authority (LA) billing cross border schools for funding to the Schools billing each other respectively. The Forum were of the opinion that there was no advantage but rather a disadvantage for direct invoicing between schools. Officers were understanding of the concerns raised and confirmed that the transition will be as smooth as possible.

It was noted that for new pupils the change in billing will be quite simple, the concerns were for the existing students. It appeared to be a loss of transparency with the new rules.

It was agreed that both unofficial and official channels of challenge should be used to raise concerns over the changes to the funding.

It was further noted that de-delegation was not permitted and that the Council was looking at contingencies which would be allowable for outreach and services direct from schools. The guidance from the DfE was not providing alternatives whilst restricting the use of the maintained school option.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the report and direction of travel be noted.**
- 2. that a further report on use of current Direct Schools Grant (DSG) for SEN and future use of High Needs Block, to include impact of the further modelling on special school budgets, be presented to the January 2013 Schools Forum meeting, be agreed.**

CBSF/12/72 School Forum Budget

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the Schools Forum Budget for the year 2012/13.

The Forum noted that the Schools Forum Budget had been reduced over several years to £3,000. The Senior Finance Officer had informed the Forum, that the DfE had been contacted with regards to increasing the Budget. The DfE confirmed that the budget could only be increased to the limit of the previous year. The Forum noted that the Budget had been set at £3,000 for the last two years and therefore could not be increased.

The Forum enquired if the decision of the DfE could be appealed against.

RESOLVED

that the School Forum spend as at 31 October 2012 be noted.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 7.55 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated

4.10 Asset Loan Scheme

The LA operates an Asset Loan Scheme which does not operate by way of a licensed deficit but rather by way of expenditure by the LA, on asset purchases or certain building repairs and maintenance, in respect of a particular school on condition that repayments of principal and interest are repaid from the budget share. The current rate of interest on such loans is the 7 day London Interbank Bid Rate.

The Loan shall be in accordance with the following conditions/requirements:

(a) the maximum length of time over which schools may repay the loan will be three years. Schools' requests for loans will need to be supported by the School's Development Plan. At no stage will the loan period be extended beyond four years;

(b) Loans will only be agreed if they meet the criteria outlined in Central Bedfordshire Council's Asset Purchase Scheme;

(c) The maximum permitted value of a purchase shall not normally exceed 10% of a school's budget share.

(d) The minimum value of a purchase considered to be appropriate to the loan scheme is £10,000;

(e) No more than one third of the collective balances held by the LA will be used to back these arrangements.

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