

Central Bedfordshire
Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands,
Shefford SG17 5TQ



please ask for Martha Clampitt
direct line 0300 300 4032
date 10 January 2014

NOTICE OF MEETING

SCHOOLS FORUM

Date & Time

Monday, 20 January 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

Venue at

Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

To: The Chairman and Members of the SCHOOLS FORUM:

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 OBE, Headteacher, The Chiltern School
James Davis, Governor, Leighton Middle School
Angie Hardy, Headteacher, Clipstone Brook Lower School
Richard Holland, Governor, Harlington Upper School
Sue Howley MBE, Governor, Greenleas Lower School
Sharon Ingham, Headteacher, Hadrian Lower School
Jim Parker, Headteacher, Manshead Upper School
John Street, Academy Middle School Representative
Stephen Tiktin, Governor, Beaudesert Lower School
Rob Watson, Headteacher Stratton Upper School

Non School
Members

Mr M Foster, Trade Union representative
Ali Hadawi CBE, Post-16 Education Representative
Caroll Leggatt, PVI Early Years Providers Representative
Robert Shore, Local Authority 14-19 partnership representative - UTC
Sarah Stevens, Church of England Diocese Representative

Observer: Cllr MAG Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services

Please note that there will be a pre-meeting starting **half an hour before** the Forum meeting to enable technical aspects of the reports to be discussed with officers before the Forum meeting begins.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for absence**

To receive apologies for absence and notification of substitute members.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting 14 October 2013 and to receive an update on any matters arising from these.

Consider

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
3	Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and 2014/15 Funding Allocations To note the update on the DSG and 2014/15 Funding Allocations, and approve the DSG Admissions allocation for 2014/15.	* 13 - 20
4	Use of centrally retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2013/2014 To consider the outline of how the centrally retained DSG has been used in 2013/14 and recommendations for the use of centrally retained High Needs Block for 2014/2015.	* 21 - 32
5	Schools Forum Budget To receive an update on the use of the School Forum Budget for 2013/14 and propose the level of the 2014/15 budget.	* 33 - 34

Updates

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
6	Dedicated Schools Grant Contingency Budget To receive an update on the use of the School Contingency Budgets for 2013/14.	* 35 - 38
7	School Finance Update To note the update on License Deficit Schools and the Schools Finance Risk Register.	* 39 - 42

8 **Proposed Meeting Dates 2014/15**

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The Forum is asked to consider the following meeting dates and venues:

23 June 2014 – Priory House, Shefford 6.00pm
15 Sept 2014 – Priory House, Shefford 6.00pm
24 Nov 2014 - Watling House, Dunstable 9.00am
26 Jan 2015 - Watling House, Dunstable 9.00am
09 Mar 2015 – Priory House, Shefford 6.00pm

Information

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
9	Schools Forums: operational and good practice guide	* 43 - 72

To bring to the Forum’s attention the information contained in Table 2 “Powers and Responsibilities 2014/15” as requested by the Governor Greenleas Lower School.

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CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 14 October 2013

PRESENT

Richard Holland (Chairman)
Jim Parker (Vice-Chairman)

School Members:	Anne Bell	Headteacher, Willow Nursery School
	David Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher, Parkfields Middle School
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie	Headteacher, The Chiltern School
	James Davis	Governor, Leighton Middle 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:	Ms S Driscoll	Local Authority 14 - 19 partnership representative
	Mr M Foster	Trade Union representative
	Caroll Leggatt	PVI Early Years Providers Representative
Observer:	Cllr M AG Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
	Mr K Howkins	Education Funding Agency
Apologies for Absence:	Paul Burrett	
	Mrs E Grant	
	Angie Hardy	
	Rob Watson	
Substitutes:	Anne Kentish (in place of Paul Burrett)	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs M Clampitt	Committee Services Officer
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mrs C Jones	Head of HR Strategy
	Miss H Redding	Assistant Director School Improvement

CBSF/13/12 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 24 June 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters arising:**Minute reference CB/13/3 – Early Years Contingency**

Was the level of Early Years Contingency for 2013/14 enough for the whole year. The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that the amount was sufficient.

Age Range change Schools

A query was raised regarding the pupil premium for those schools taking on Year 5 students from September. The Senior Finance Officer explained that if the pupil was already in the school in Year 4 then their funding would remain with the school. However, if the pupil was at another school in Year 4 then their pupil premium would not transfer until after the January unless there was a local agreement between the two schools for the funds to be transferred. The Local Authority cannot provide the funds to the new school without agreement.

CBSF/13/13 The Issue of Rent as it affects Central Bedfordshire Community Maintained Schools.

The Forum considered a report which sought reimbursement from the Schools Forum's "Hardship Fund" from the Head Teacher of Ridgmont Lower School on behalf of four schools.

The Head Teacher informed the Schools Forum that they were not able to include rent as a factor in the amount of budget they receive and therefore are in financial difficulty because of the size of their school the amount of rent they pay was a significant portion of their annual budget.

The Senior Finance Officer advised the Forum that the Local Authority had applied to the DfE for an exceptional premises factor in 2013/14 to enable the LA to include rent as a factor for 2013/14. The application was declined on the basis that it did not meet the criteria set out for exceptional factors. The rent factor is a proposal to include in the 2014/15 budget as an 'in principle' application to the Department for Education has been approved for 6 of the 9 schools that pay rent. There would be a paper considered at the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then the Executive to approve the inclusion of this factor within the new formula for 2014/15.

It was noted that for an exceptional premises factor to be included for schools, the amount payable had to be above 1% of their School Budget Share and impact less than 5% of the authorities schools.

The Executive Member for Children's Services agreed to follow up with officers, as to why payment of rent for certain schools is required. It was agreed that Officers be requested to review the reasons for the rent being higher than other areas and provide a paper on the contractual relationship with landlords.

The Forum considered the information before them and the possibility of setting a precedent. It was agreed that each case would be determined on its own merits and that this request should be supported as a one off payment for one year only.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Schools Forum agree a one off payment from the Schools Contingency fund to the four Central Bedfordshire Community Schools identified in paragraph 2 of the report. The amount is approximately £29,050 however the amount payable will be based on actual invoices payable for 2013/14.**
- 2. That a report be brought to a future meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum regarding the contractual relationship with Landlords, including peppercorn rents.**

CBSF/13/14 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). From 2013/14, the DSG has been split into three notional blocks: Early Years, High Needs and Schools.

The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations defined the Local Authority education budgets for the 2013/14 financial year only. The Regulations provided simplified local formulae, greater delegation to schools and new arrangements for funding pupils with high needs.

The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) was set at negative 1.5% per pupil for 2013/14.

The deployment of the 2012/13 DSG had been discussed at the 24 June meeting (Minute No. CBSF/13/6 refers).

The Final DSG for 2013/14 is £178.842m. This is based on:

- Schools Block: 34,747 (fte number of pupils October 2012) multiplied by £4,144.47 per pupil
- Early Years Block: 2,241 (fte number of pupils January 2013) multiplied by £2,421 per pupil and will be updated again in April 2014 for 7/12ths of the January 2014 pupil numbers to cover the period September 2013 to March 2014.

The breakdown of DSG as detailed in the table at paragraph 17 were as follows:

Schools: £144,062m

Early Years: £11,478k

High Needs: £23,302k

Direct payments to Academies included Early Years = £282k and High Needs = £2,471k). As at September 2013 there had been 44 Academy conversions.

The Growth Fund 2013/14

The Forum noted that the Growth Fund was available for two purposes:

- Expenditure to be incurred due to a significant growth in pupil numbers as a result of the local authority's duty under section 13(1) of the 1996 Act to secure that efficient primary education and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area, but only where the authority has set criteria for determining the circumstances in which the expenditure can be incurred and the basis for calculating the amount of any such expenditure.
- Expenditure to be incurred in order to make provision for extra classes in order to comply with the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012(b).

Paragraph 23 of the report detailed the expenditure as at 30 September 2013. The Forum agreed an additional allocation of £200k from DSG for the Growth Fund (Minute No. CBSF/13/16 refers).

RESOLVED

That the update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) be noted.

CBSF/13/15 Revised Membership of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum

The Forum considered a paper which provided an update of the Schools Forum Membership as detailed in the School Funding Reform: Findings from the Review of 2013 to 2014 – Arrangements and Changes for 2014 to 2015. The report asked for the Forum to note the removal of the Local Authority 14 – 19 Partnership representative with a post-16 education representative.

The Forum asked for an update on the vacancies within the membership and also how the new post-16 education representative would be selected. The Assistant Director School Improvement explained that for the new post-16 education representative we would write to eligible organisations to seek membership. The clerk will continue to seek to fill the vacancy for a Maintained Middle School Head Teacher. The Team Leader, Funding Reform Team, Education Funding Agency confirmed that where there is only 1 maintained Upper School then having a Governor representative and a Head Teacher

representative was not necessary as detailed in the Schools Forum Regulations (England) 2012.

RESOLVED

That the change of membership to the Forum required by the Department for Education as detailed in their report, titled School Funding Reform: Findings from the Review of 2013 to 2014 – Arrangements and Changes for 2014 to 2015, for a post-16 education representative in place of the existing Local Authority 14 – 19 Partnership representative.

CBSF/13/16 School Funding Reform: Arrangements for 2014/15

The Forum considered a report which noted the update on the Funding Consultation with Schools. In addition, a proposal for the de-delegation of facilities time from School Contingency and an increase to the centrally retained Growth Fund were included.

The Senior Finance Officer provided the Forum with an overview of the Consultation process and meetings held by the Technical Sub Group during the summer to help form the consultation document. The Council also held seminars to help schools understand the changes to the funding formula and other aspects. The seminar was under attended with only 15 representatives for 11 maintained schools and 3 academies. However, the responses to the consultation showed some schools were still not fully understanding what was being proposed. The Forum were asked to help provide suggestions of what the Council could do to provide further support to the Schools.

The Department for Education (DfE) held 2 consultations in 2011:

- i. Rationale and Principles
- ii. Proposals for a fairer system

In March 2012 a third consultation was held “Next steps towards a fairer system”. The final arrangements for 2013/14 were announced on 28 June 2012.

On 4 June 2013 the final arrangements for 2014/15 were announced and the Council was required to consult with Schools and Academies on the proposed changes to the funding formulae. The changes to the funding formulae were detailed in paragraph 6 of the report.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2014/15 will be split into three notional blocks: Schools, Early Years and Special Needs. The per pupil unit of funding for each block would be as follows:

Schools: £4,144.47

Early Years: £3,979.80

There was a table within the report at paragraph 9 which provided the timeline for the implementation of the 2014/15 Funding Arrangements.

The Technical Sub Group had met twice to consider the funding model and the minutes of those meetings were attached at Appendix A to the report.

The Senior Finance Officer explained that for the purposes of calculating the consultation responses the strongly agree and agree responses were put together as were the strongly disagree and disagree. The EFA confirmed that our overall response rate was good and well above average.

De-Delegation

The Forum were asked to make a decision on the de-delegation of School Contingency for the maintained schools. De-delegation only applies to Primary and Secondary schools.

In 2013/14 the total de-delegation of School Contingency was £100,000 at a rate of £5.63 per pupil. In 2014/15 the total de-delegation of School Contingency is proposed to be £82,000 at the same rate of £5.63 per pupil. It was noted that any unspent DSG is reported back to the Forum and will be carried forward in accordance with the regulations operating in the new financial year.

Growth Fund

The Growth Fund is for significant pre-16 growth in schools. Funds are available to both maintained schools and academies. Where a school has elected to expand they are not eligible for the Growth Fund.

The amount for 2013/14 was set at £800K and has been insufficient and is already overspent DSG by £25k. The proposal before the Forum was to add an additional £200k making the total Fund £1m. It was confirmed that should the funds not be fully utilised the balance would be returned to DSG and passed to schools.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the responses to the proposed School Funding Consultation 2014/15 be noted.**
- 2. That the proposal to de-delegate facilities time at £5.63 per pupil for School Specific Contingency for the following phases:**
 - a. Primary Schools be agreed**
 - b. Secondary Schools be agreed****The voting was unanimous for both phases.**
- 3. That the proposal to increase the Growth Fund of £200,000 be agreed.**

CBSF/13/17 Trade Union and Professional Associations

The Forum considered a report which sought approval for the continuation of funding for facilities release time for Trade Unions and Professional Association. This would be through the de-delegation (where appropriate) for maintained Primary and Secondary Schools. Nursery and maintained Special Schools would be invoiced directly, subject to their agreement to release funds for this purpose.

The estimated annual cost would be £48,240 (£3.31 per pupil), which was calculated using the actual cost per pupil rate from 2013/14 multiplied by the estimated number of pupils for 2014/15. The Forum will be advised of the costs based on the October 2013 census when the figures become available, along with the impact of academy conversions on these numbers.

Trade Union membership numbers also affects the overall costs and cost per pupil. The figures used were based on 2013/14 arrangements and will change when the figures for 2014/15 have been provided.

The Middle School Governor suggested that the funding be allocated to schools directly and either the Head Teacher or the Governing Body would determine a reasonable amount of time to be spent.

The Head of HR Policy and Development explained that the representatives who had carried out work were working across a number of schools and the fund allows for cover arrangements to be put into place, where the teacher works. The unused fund returns to the DSG.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the de-delegation of Trade Union and Professional Associations funding, at no more than £3.31 per pupil, from the Lower / Primary Phase be agreed.**
- 2. That the de-delegation of Trade Union and Professional Associations funding, at no more than £3.31 per pupil, from the Secondary School Phase be agreed.**

The voting was unanimous for the Lower / Primary Phase representatives and 2 in favour and 1 against for the Secondary Phase.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 7.48 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated

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Meeting: Schools Forum
Date: 20 January 2014
Subject: **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and 2014/15 Funding Allocations**
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Summary: To note the update on the DSG and 2014/15 Funding Allocations, and approve the DSG Admissions allocation for 2014/15.

Contact Officer: Dawn Hill, Priory House, Shefford

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

Reason for urgency
(if appropriate)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. To note the update on DSG for 2013/14.**
- 2. To approve the DSG allocation for Admissions to be set at £260k for 2014/15.**
- 3. To note the Education Funding Agency (EFA) funding announcement for 2014/15.**

Background

1. Since the beginning of the financial year 2006/07 local authorities have received allocations of DSG to finance the Schools Budget in each authority. The full DSG received must be applied to the Schools Budget in each authority; although authorities may provide additional resources in support of the Schools Budget should they decide to do so. From 2013/14 the Dedicated School Grant is split into three notional blocks; Early Years, High Needs and Schools.
2. The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013 define the local authority education budgets (the non-schools education budget, the schools budget, the central expenditure and the individual schools budget) and set out how local authorities are to allocate funding from the individual schools budget (ISB) to maintained schools and private, voluntary and independent providers of free early years provision (relevant early years providers) through a locally determined formula.
3. The Regulations give effect to the decisions made to reform the school funding system through simplified local formulae, greater delegation to schools and new arrangements for funding pupils with high needs.
4. The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for schools has been set at negative 1.5% per pupil for 2013/14. The calculation has been simplified compared with previous years and the Regulations set out the factors which are excluded from the calculation.

5. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO), must sign two statements annually: 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 condition of the grant and The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013.

DSG Budget Allocation 2013/14

6. The distribution of the DSG for 2013/14 is based on the 'spend plus' methodology and is shown in three blocks (Early Years, Schools and High Needs).
7. The following table illustrates the updated DSG allocation for each block and additions. The Schools block is based on October 2012 School census and the Early Years block has been updated for the January 2013 census.

Block		Revised Allocation July 2013 (£M)
Schools		144.008
Early Years		9.635
High Needs	Pre 16	21.541
	Post 16	1.762
Transitional Funding (floor protection for 3 year olds)		0.050
2 Year Olds (grant transfer from RSG previous EIG)		1.793
NQT (transferred from RSG)		0.053
Total Allocation DSG		178.842

8. The Schools Block is based on a per pupil unit of funding of £4,144.47 multiplied by 34,747 pupils as reported on the October 2012 census.
9. The Early Years Block is based on a unit of funding of £3,979.80 multiplied by 2,421 full time equivalent number of pupil as reported on the January 2013 census. The Early Years block will be updated again in April 2014 for 7/12ths of the January 2014 pupil numbers to cover the period September 2013 to March 2014.
10. The High Needs Block is a single block for high needs pupils/students age 0- 24. For 2013/14 the Block has been calculated in two parts, pre 16 and post 16 (age 16-24). The post 16 combines three previous budgets, SEN Block Grant, Specialist placements funding and the cost of high needs student in Further Education (FE). The new system for funding post 16 students was introduced August 2013.
11. The floor protection for 3 year olds has reduced by £48k from the 2012/13 funding and will be completely removed in 2014/15.
12. The 2013/14 funding for early education places for 2 year olds from lower income households, previously funded through Early Intervention Grant, has now merged into the DSG. It is to fund Statutory Places (£1,288k) and 'trajectory building' (£505k) to create non-statutory places in preparation for the increased entitlement. Allocations have been calculated based on the estimated number of eligible 2 year olds likely to receive provision in the area, using Free School Meals data for 4 to 6 year olds as a proxy.

13. Funding for the cost of monitoring and quality assuring NQT induction has also been transferred into the DSG and for CBC is £53k. Nationally £10M has been reduced from the Education Support Grant to fund this.
14. The following table represents the distribution of the 2013/14 DSG based on the Academy conversions as at December 2013 (47).

	DSG	ISB Academies	Revised DSG	ISB Schools	Central Spend
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Schools	144,062	77,169	66,893	65,635	1,258
EY	11,478	0	11,478	9,120	*2,358
High Needs	23,302	1,543	21,759	8,989	*12,770
Total	178,842	78,712	100,130	83,744	16,386

* Includes EY (£267k) and High Needs (£2,967k) paid directly to Academies by the LA.

15. The centrally retained DSG of £16.4M is further analysed in the table below.

Services	DSG £'000
Special Education Needs (Inc Post 16)	8,671
Academies Statements/Early Years	3,234
Two Year old Funding	1,793
Growth Fund	800
DSG Contribution to Central Overheads	719
Pupil Referral Unit	409
School Admissions	260
School Contingency	52
Copyright Licences	84
Teachers Unions & Professional Associations	64
Early Years Contingency	297
School Forum	3
Total CE	16,386

Growth Fund 2013/14

16. The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations, Schedule 2, prescribes expenditure that may be deducted from the Schools budget before determining the Individual Schools Budget and held centrally. Growth Funding falls into this category and is for the purpose of expenditure due to significant growth in pupil numbers as a result of the LA's duty under section 13(1) of the 1996 Act to secure that efficient primary and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population and in order to make provision for extra classes in order to comply with the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) Regulations 2012.
17. Local Authorities are required to produce criteria on which any growth funding is to be allocated, and set out the circumstances in which a payment could be made and a basis for calculating the sum. The School Forum regulations requires the agreement of the School Forum for both the central spend on and the criteria for allocating funds. This was agreed for 2013/14 with the School Forum at their meeting of the 26th November 2012.

18. The following table sets out the expenditure to 31st December 2013.

	Budget £	Spend £	Balance £
2013/14 Allocation	800,000		
Growth Fund:			
Fairfield Park Lower		(130,168)	
Greenleas Lower		(314,794)	
Church End Lower		(69,071)	
Gothic Mede Lower		(40,712)	
Alameda Middle		(31,914)	
Etonbury Middle		(30,534)	
Redborne Upper		(82,705)	
Shefford Lower		(74,231)	
Russell Lower		(12,665)	
St Andrews Lower		(7,920)	
Infant Class Size:			
Houghton Regis Lower		(27,984)	
Total Growth Fund	800,000	(822,698)	(22,698)

19. The revised School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2013 allows LAs to carry over any unspent money from the 2013/14 growth and infant class size funds to be used for the same purpose in 2014/15. This is a change from the draft regulations, which proposed instead that unspent money should be included in the Individual School Budget. However, to carry forward a deficit on central expenditure to the next year to be funded from the schools budget requires School Forum approval.

2014/15 Centrally Retained DSG Budget Allocations

20. At the October 2013 School Forum meeting it was agreed that the 2014/15 de-delegated School Contingency budget would remain at the 2013/14 per pupil level of £5.63. It was further agreed that the centrally retained spend for the Growth Fund would increase to £1m for 2014/15 (an increase of £200k), to reflect the increased activity in the Council's New School Places programme with further projects to create new places going live in the coming year.
21. In accordance with The School and Early Years Finance Regulations, deductions to the Schools budget of a Local Authority for central services (Part 1, Schedule 2) must not exceed that of the previous funding period. It is also a requirement of the School Forum Regulations that central spend on Admissions are proposed by the LA but the decision making powers rests with the School Forum. The Department for Education role is to adjudicate where School Forum does not agree the LA proposal.

22. The LA proposes that the 2014/15 budget for Admissions remains at the 2013/14 level of £260k. The budget funds the 6 officer team to work on behalf of the Council as the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools and also to coordinate the admission arrangements of all schools and Academies in Central Bedfordshire. A further officer is to be recruited to the Team in 14/15 to provide additional support with the increasing complexity of admission arrangements in Central Bedfordshire as a result of schools changing age ranges and an increased number of own admission authorities. Despite this, and with the additional income from own admission authority schools and Academies who buy back services for which they are statutorily responsible, the LA is able to sustain the service at the historical budget level.

School Funding Settlement 2014/15

23. On 18th December 2013, the Education Funding Agency (EFA) announced details of the School Funding Settlement for 2014 to 2015.
24. The distribution of the DSG to LAs will continue to be based on the current 'spend plus' methodology for 2014/15, set out in three spending blocks: an Early Years Block, a Schools Block and a High Needs Block. The underlying schools budget will be kept at flat cash per pupil for 2014/15. To protect LAs with falling pupil numbers there will be arrangements to ensure that no authority loses more than 2% of its budget in cash terms. Central Bedfordshire pupil numbers based on October 2013 census data have increased by 401 pupils.
25. Although the overall schools budget will stay at the same level; on a per pupil basis before the addition of the Pupil Premium, the actual level of each school's individual budget will vary. To protect schools from significant budget reductions, the Minimum Funding Guarantee is continuing to ensure that no school sees more than a 1.5% per pupil reduction in 2014/15 (excluding sixth form funding) compared with 2013/14 and before the Pupil Premium is added.
26. The High Needs Block is a provisional allocation and will be subject to adjustments as a result of submissions from authorities, due December 2013, following their review of places. The Early Years Block will be updated during 2014/15 for January 2014 and for 7/12 of January 2015 pupil numbers (to cover the September 2014 to March 2015 period).
27. As part of the 2014/15 DSG revenue funding allocation is funding to secure early learning places for two year olds from lower income households. From 1st September 2013 early learning became a statutory entitlement for around 20% of two-year olds, which will extend to 40% from September 2014. To deliver this, funding has been allocated to extend the programme in 2014/15.
28. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) announced on the 10th December 2012, that all state funded schools in England will be withdrawn from participating in the CRC Energy Efficient Scheme from April 2014. LAs are no longer required to administer the CRC on behalf of Schools. A deduction will be made to the DSG for 2014/15 to compensate the Exchequer for the loss of revenue resulting from this change.
29. The table below illustrates the indicative DSG revenue allocation for 2014/15.

Block		2013/14 Allocation (£M)	2014/15 Allocation (M)
Schools		144.008	145.670
Early Years		9.635	9.635
High Needs	Pre 16	21.541	21.530
	Post 16 non Schools	1.762	1.717
	Post 16 in Schools		1.139
	Non Maintained Special Schools		0.011
Transitional Funding (floor protection for 3 year olds)		0.050	0
2 Year Olds		1.793	2.480
NQT		0.053	0.053
		178.842	182.235
Deduction for CRC			(0.263)
Total Indicative Allocation DSG			181.972

30. The DfE has agreed with the following agencies to purchase a single national licence managed by the Department for all state-funded schools:
- Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA)
 - Music Publisher Association (MPA)
 - Newspaper Licensing Authority (NLA)
 - Education Recording Agency (ERA)
 - Motion Picture Licensing Company (MPLC)
 - Filmbank Distribution Ltd
- Central Bedfordshire's indicative allocation of £181.972M will be further reduced to take account of the cost of the licenses. Further information will follow.
31. The Funding announcement also included capital funding to provide the extra places needed for the growing population (2015 to 2017), and to implement the universal infant free school meals entitlement, improving school kitchen and dining facilities where needed.
32. The Basic Need allocations have been calculated based on planning area data. Each LA receive a level of Basic Need funding in proportion to its needs compared with other authorities. As funding is based on LA validated data, the Department reserves the right to abate for any overpayment made. Further information to follow.
33. Every child in reception, year1 and year 2 in state-funded schools will receive a free school lunch from September 2014. Disadvantaged students at sixth form colleges and further education colleges will also be eligible for a free school meal from September 2014. Funding will be delivered through LAs for maintained schools, based on the number of infant pupils they have. The proportion for Academies will be delivered through the Academies Capital maintenance Fund (ACMF), to which Academies may bid for improvement works. Each LA will decide how best to target its share of the funding for expanding and improving facilities at individual schools in order to deliver the universal entitlement. Further information will follow.
34. The table below illustrates the capital allocations announced to date.

	2014/15 (£M)	2015/16 (£M)	2016/17 (£M)
Basic Need	9.141	5.892	6.187
Universal Infant Free School Meals Capital (Includes VA Schools)	0.588		

The Council is awaiting the DfE announcement on Schools Capital Maintenance capital for 14/15 and the LA Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP).

Pupil Premium Grant

35. The Pupil Premium for 2014/15 will increase; Primary FSM 'Ever 6' pupils will attract £1,300, while secondary FSM 'Ever 6' pupils will receive £935. Service children will continue to be allocated £300.

36. From April 2014, schools will attract the Pupil Premium for children adopted from care or who left care under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or under a Residence Order (RO). To attract the Premium for adopted children, and those subject of a SGO or RO, parent and guardians will need to inform the school about their child's circumstances and provide supporting evidence. Further information will follow.

Education Service Grant (ESG)

37. As in 2013/14 the grant will be allocated to local authorities on a per-pupil basis. The ESG General Funding Rate for local authorities in 2014/15 is £113.17 per pupil in mainstreamed schools, £424.38 per pupil in PRUS and £480.97 per pupil in Special Schools.

38. October 2013 census data will be used to calculate the General Funding pot for 2014/15. For CBC the initial allocation for 2014/15 will be £2.2m and this will be adjusted on a quarterly basis during 2014/15 financial year to take into account academies opening since 31st October 2013.

39. There will be a flat rate of £15 per pupil allocated to local authorities for the statutory duties that do not transfer to academies. The total ESG retained duties funding pot is £15 multiplied by the number of pupils aged 3 to 19 in maintained schools and academies. For CBC Retained Duties funding pot for 2014/15 will be £592k.

40. Mainstream Academies will receive a set minimum of £140 per pupil, Alternative Provisions and Special Academies £525 and £595 respectively.

Appendices:

None

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Meeting: Schools Forum
Date: 20 January 2014
Subject: Use of centrally retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2013/2014
Report of: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Summary: The report outlines how the centrally retained DSG has been used in 2013/14 and recommends use of centrally retained High Needs Block for 2014/2015.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Helen Redding, Assistant Director School Improvement
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Schools Forum is asked to:

- 1. Note how the centrally retained High Needs Block has been used in 2013/2014 to support high needs provision**
- 2. Give a view on the allocation of High Needs Block for 2014/2105**
- 3. Give a view on the distribution of unspent DSG in 2013/2014**

Introduction

The Council is required by the School Forum Regulations to report on the use of Centrally retained DSG to the Schools Forum. The content of this report provides the detail of this in relation to the High Needs Block. High Needs Block is not ring-fenced.

Budget agreed in 2013/2014 and adjustments made in year following final allocations

	Apr-13	Dec-13
Early Years children with SEN and disability allocation support function	23,970	23,970
Area SENCos	113,680	113,680
Visual Impairment Service	218,120	218,120
Early Years SEN Funding	169,800	169,800
Therapies	70,000	70,000
Statements	449,900	245,561
Academy statements	2,322,948	2,967,238
High Cost Pupils	199,900	199,900
Out of County Placements	1,689,330	1,689,330
SEN and Additional Pupil Support	219,050	219,050
High needs Post 16	1,761,598	1,761,601
Access and Inclusion	95,660	95,660
Virtual School	160,000	160,000
PRU	397,690	408,942
Commissioned Services	1,417,480	1,417,480
Other Authority Top Up Payment	1,176,288	2,011,360
Special School Union Duties	4,255	4,255
SEN Contingency	275,670	275,670
DSG & ESG Contribution to Central overheads	1,567,280	718,846
Total CE	12,332,619	12,770,463

Services funded by High Needs Block

Early Years Children With Disabilities retained panel and support function (£23,970)

1. The service was commissioned to be run by Ivel Valley and The Chiltern Area Special Schools in 2013, at which point the DSG required to run this service was transferred to them through a contract. The panel process and support function has been retained centrally, and ensures that children are allocated support when required. This element of DSG supports the salary costs of the member of staff who coordinates this process. Salary costs have now increased to £26,011 and so this allocation needs to be increased to reflect this. This could be moved from the Top Up element. Core budget has supplemented the DSG this year.

Advisory Support Teachers retained within the Psychology and Advisory Support Team (£113,680)

2. This supports 2 Area Special Educational Needs Coordinators who support Early Years settings in meeting the needs of children with SEN and Disabilities. This no longer covers the actual staffing costs of the service which have had to be supplemented by core budget, and so this allocation needs to increase this by £7,531 to cover the actual costs in 2014/2015

Visual Impairment Service (£218,120)

3. This budget supports the peripatetic function of the visual impairment service.
4. The visual impairment team consists of 2 teachers, 2 specialist support staff and a specialist resource Technician. They work with pre school and school age children within their local context, advising families, schools and settings, and providing direct support to blind and severely visually impaired children and young people and those with multi sensory impairments and who are multiply disabled with a visual impairment.
5. The service has been successfully commissioned to the Harlington Area Schools Trust (HAST) from January 2014. In 2014 the budget for this contract will therefore become part of the 'Commissioned Services' budget.
6. There continues to be an increase in the number of young children with severe visual impairments who will require specialist support including Braille as they move into and through the school system. Staffing levels have been reviewed with HAST and increased to support this. The contract price has been agreed at £252,576. 3 months of the contract price has been paid from this cost centre to cover the contract for the rest of this financial year. As a consequence of the small delay in transfer, this budget is likely to underspend by £10,000 in 2013/2014.

Other Functions supported by High Needs Block

7. **Support for high needs children in Early years:** £169,800 supports children in settings and nurseries with high needs who do not yet have a statement of SEN but require additional support. This was increased by £19,800 from £150,000 in year to meet increased demand. £121,000 has been spent to date and a further £53,676 is committed for the Spring Term. This would bring it to an overspend of £4,876. Any requests approved at panel during the Spring Term would increase the overspend. It is estimated to overspend by £10,000 by the end of the financial year, should the anticipated requests be approved at Panel. It is suggested that this budget is increased to £190,000 for 2014/2015.
8. **Therapies:** £70,000 is used to support therapies such as Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy where it has been specified as an assessed need on a Statement of SEN that therapy is required on a more regular basis than can be accessed through Health Services. This is a needs led budget. £48,936 has been allocated to date, but with Spring Term payments and any new referrals it is expected to fully spent by the end of the financial year.
9. **Statements:** £449,900 DSG is used to fund new statements in all schools across the year. This is a needs led budget and is monitored monthly. It is anticipated that this will underspend by £158,900. Any unspent budget will be redistributed to schools in 2014.
10. **Academy statements:** £2,967,238 is used to fund the cost of statements in Academies. £2,094,641 has been allocated to end of November.

11. **High Cost pupils:** £199,900 supports the additional exceptional needs of the most complex pupils in our special schools who have evidenced assessed needs that requires additional support to maintain them in our local special school provision (for example additional Teacher Assistant support for our most challenging pupils). This is a needs led budget. £166,098 has been allocated to date, and it is expected that more pupils will require additional support during the Spring Term.
12. **Pre 16 Out of County Placements:** £1,689,330 is allocated to fund Out of Authority Specialist Placements. Some of these pupils have been placed as we have been unable to meet needs locally, and some are at the direction of the SEN and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). Health and Social Care services pay a contribution towards some placements. Currently there are 13 pupils who are 16 and under placed out of Authority by education, 2 by Social Care and 1 by Health where DSG funds the education element. 4 of these pupils transferred into post 16 provision in September 2013 and so only the term in which they were in Year 11 is funded from this budget. Of the education led placements, we receive a health contribution to 1 pupil, and a social care contribution to 2 pupils. Post 16 pupils are funded through the Post 16 Cost Centre. While this is currently underspending by £468,387.45, it is offsetting an overspend in the Post 16 high needs budget which is insufficient to meet Post 16 costs. Historically, Pre 16 DSG has supplemented insufficient Post 16 funding for High Needs pupils.
13. **Additional Pupil Support:** £219,050 is allocated to support pupils with additional needs for fixed periods of time. Many of these pupils are undergoing statutory assessment and this budget supports schools in supporting these pupils' needs until the end of this process. A significant number of pupils who require this support are at risk of permanent exclusion, and specialist agencies are always involved. This is a needs led budget. £140,000 is likely to be allocated for existing pupils until the end of this term. Any new requests get approved at Panel weekly and on the basis of historical information I would anticipate a further £15,000 to accommodate this. Additionally this budget funds any educational provision for pupils in Independent Hospital facilities. There is one known pupil identified to require this in the Spring Term at a cost of £20,000. This budget is forecast to underspend by £44,050 this year some of which will offset the overspend in support for high needs children in the early years.
14. **High needs Post 16:** £1,761,601 This function and budget was transferred to Councils in April 2013. This budget funds all provision for pupils who are post 16 and high needs college placements (previously funded through the YPLA). This includes out of authority placements, top ups funding for statemented pupils who are placed in other Local Authorities' schools, high needs college and post school placements, including independent specialist providers. 4 pupils transferred from pre-16 provision so only 2 terms of costs are funded from this budget, and 4 post 16 pupils left school at the end of the summer term and so only 1 term of provision was funded from this budget. There are currently 9 post 16 pupils in out of Authority Independent or Non-Maintained Special Schools. This is forecast to overspend by £296,294 which is offset by an underspend in the Out of County budget. The amount allocated to Post 16 Provision is determined by the Education Funding Agency. Pre 16 DSG has historically supplemented the shortfall.

15. **Access and Inclusion:** £95,660 supports the staffing costs of the management of advice and process for exclusions and elective home education. This will be reduced in 2014/2015 due to the increase in Academy Schools who buy back the exclusions advice aspect of the service, and the fact that the post is now part time. It is forecast to underspend by £18,955 this year, and it will be reduced accordingly in 2014/2015.
16. **Virtual School management and delivery:** £160,000 supports the staffing costs and functions of the Virtual School for Looked After Children. This will need to be increased to £200,000 in April 2014 to take account of the need for a permanent Virtual School Headteacher. All other costs will remain the same.
17. **PRU:** £408,942 supported the running costs of the PRU for excluded pupils until it closed in August 2013. From September 2013 the Council has commissioned a different service for excluded pupils and those at serious risk of exclusion through the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (Alternative Provision Free School)
18. **Commissioned Services:** £1,417,480 supports the costs of commissioned services to schools and other providers. This has included:
£145,632 for the peripatetic and management element of the Hearing Impaired Service commissioned through HAST.
£270,548 for the Early Years Children with Disabilities Service commissioned through Ivel Valley and Chiltern Area Special Schools.
£444,539 for the Medical Needs Service commissioned through HAST.
£556,761 for the alternative to the PRU provision being commissioned through the Academy of Central Bedfordshire.

£414,645 funded the Jigsaw Centre Provision and this was paid directly into the school's budget in 2013/2014. This will not be delegated to Hawthorn Park in 2014, but will be held centrally (in the same way as the other contracts) from April 2014.

All High Needs teaching and support services that were previously centrally retained are now commissioned out to school based providers. In line with School Forum Regulations, School Forum is asked to give a view on all commissioned services contracts.

19. This is forecast to overspend by £92,000 due to an error in the calculation for supply cover for the Medical needs Service plus a significant increase in demand due to an increased number of pupils medically signed off from school requiring the service. The additional requirements have been funded outside of the contract price as numbers can fluctuate in either direction. This overspend is offset by an underspend in the Top Up budget, which was the budget that school Forum agreed should hold the balance of High Needs Block. We are currently seeking clarity from the EFA regarding whether this service can be included in the high needs return as Alternative Provision.

20. The increase in caseload for the Medical Needs Service is set out below. Additionally the regulations changed in 2013 requiring teaching hours to be calculated on what a pupil can manage based on medical advice. Previously it had been identified as 5 hours per week, or 6 hours per week for pupils with a statement of SEN. HAST is not able to provide for these requirements within the current contract price, which means that without additional resource the Council is not able to fully deliver its statutory responsibilities for these pupils. It is recommended that the correction is made to the contract price regarding actual supply costs in previous years, while HAST continues to work with the Council to determine more efficient and effective ways of delivering the service in partnership with schools. A cushion of £90,000 is required in the commissioned services budget (moved from the Top Up budget) to cover the actual supply costs while this work is completed.

	Active cases	Year 11 students
Nov-11	40	
Feb-12	45	
Apr-12	49	20
Sep-12	57	
Nov-12	72	
Mar-13	76	
May-13	81*	23
Sep-13	67	

21. There has also been a significant increase in caseload in the Hearing Impaired Service, particularly those pupils who are seen termly and annually, although there has also been a significant decrease in the numbers of pupils seen half termly, which will require an adjustment to the contract price in 2014/2015. Regularity of visits is determined using the nationally approved best practice criteria. All pupils in the specialist provisions continue to receive support on a daily basis. The changes are illustrated in the table below:

	March 2012	December 2013
Weekly	2	2
Fortnightly	3	1
Monthly	0	2
Half-termly	32	11
Termly	17	57
Twice a year	0	10
Annually	8	32
Other	0	4
TOTAL	62	119

The Council is working with HAST to determine the increase in staffing required to meet this demand which will impact on the price of the contract. An allocation of £50,000 will be moved in 2014/2015 from 'Top Ups' to 'Commissioned Services' in preparation for this.

22. **Other Authority Top-Up payments (Pre-16)** £2,011,360 This was a new budget requirement in 2013. This was previously identified as recoupment. This budget is used to fund mainstream statements in other Local Authorities' schools, and the top up element of the statement for pupils placed in other Local Authorities' special schools. At the time of last years report, the figure had not been determined, and it was agreed to use this cost centre to locate any balance. Additional budget was received from the DfE in year, and the central overheads retained by the Council were reduced as a consequence of the increase in commissioned services and therefore central overheads. Each contract has overheads costed within the contract price. Overheads elements within all of the commissioned services currently total £132,055. There will be unspent DSG in this cost centre of £967,478 mainly as a consequence of £848k relating to the calculation of overheads against allowable services, resulting in a reduced level of overhead that can be recovered this way.
23. **SEN Contingency:** £275,670 supports the provisions of Outreach Services from Special Schools and other identified excellent SEN practice
24. **DSG contribution to Central Overheads:** £1,567,280 This was reduced in year by £848,434 to £718,846 to take account of the reduction of centrally retained services and the increase in commissioned services. The balance was moved to the top-up budget, as identified in paragraph 22 above.
25. The difference between the High Needs Block allocation in 2013/2014 and the forecast spend is £1,164,600 (see table in paragraph 27). This should be transferred to the Schools Block and redistributed to maintained schools and academies on a one off basis via the AWPU through the funding formula for 2014/2015.
26. The High Needs Block will be finalised by the DfE in March 2014. This will provide information on the allocation for Post 16 and Pre 16, and will enable the figures proposed for 2014/2015 to be finalised. This will then determine the balance to be allocated to statementing.

Proposals for Centrally retained High Needs Block in 2014/2015

27.		Final DSG 2013/14	Allocated spend to date	Forecast to Year End	Initial 14/15
	Early Years children with SEN and disability allocation support function	23,970	23,970	23,970	26,011
	Area SENCOs	113,680	113,680	113,680	121,211
	Visual Impairment Service	218,120	218,120	208,120	0
	Early Years SEN Funding	169,800	174,676	184,676	190,000
	Therapies	70,000	48,936	70,000	70,000
	Statements	449,900	245,561	291,000	449,900
	Academy Statements	2,967,238	2,094,641	2,967,238	2,967,238
	High Cost Pupils	199,900	166,098	199,900	199,900
	Out of County Placements (Pre 16)	1,689,330	1,220,943	1,320,943	1,689,330
	SEN Additional Pupil Support	219,050	160,000	175,000	198,850
	High needs Post 16	1,761,601	2,057,895	2,057,895	estimated 1,761,601
	Access and Inclusion	95,660	76,705	76,705	76,705
	Virtual School	160,000	160,000	160,000	200,000
	PRU	408,942	408,943	408,942	0
	Commissioned Services (Incl Jigsaw Centre £414,645)	1,832,125	1,509,480	1,924,125	2,255,601
	Other Authority Top Up Payment	2,011,360	1,043,882	1,043,882	1,043,882
	Union Duties Special Schools	4,255	4,255	4,255	0
	SEN Contingency	275,670	275,670	275,670	275,670
	DSG Contribution to Central overheads	718,846	718,846	718,846	718,846
	Total	13,389,447	10,722,300	12,224,847	12,244,745

28. The High Needs Block settlement for 2014/2015 will not be received from the DfE until March 2014. It will be retained until the following issues have been resolved with the EFA, and any unspent will then be redistributed to school in 2015/2016:
- The resource implications of changes in SEND provision through the implementation of the Children and Families Bill in 2014 is determined.
 - The funding mechanism for the the Academy of Central Bedfordshire to be clarified by the EFA.
 - Whether Medical Services can continue to be identified as Alternative Provision as they were previously, and so count as £8,000 per place.
 - The impact of Post 16 changes are known.
 - How the EFA plans to top slice Local Authorities and whether that will impact on the initial settlement.
 - How the EFA plans to apply growth in 2014/2015.

29.

Summary Commissioned Services

The table below sets out the centrally retained High Needs Block to be paid to schools for commissioned services through a contract (new and continuing commissions)

	2013/2014	2014/2015	Comment
HAST Hearing Impairment Service peripatetic element	£145,632	£195,632	Proposed increase to take account of the increase in caseload. This will fund increase in staffing levels.
Jigsaw Centre (Hawthorn Park)	£414,645	£414,645	
Early Years Children With Disability - Ivel Valley and The Chiltern	£270,548	£270,548	
HAST Medical Needs Service	£444,539	£467,539 plus £67,000 held centrally outside of the contract to support the actual supply costs submitted with evidence by HAST on a monthly basis while demand is high.	Contract price increased to rectify error with contract information regarding actual supply costs in previous year. Additional capacity required currently outside of the contract as numbers of pupils taught has increased significantly.
HAST Visual Impairment Service	£0	£252,576 plus £6,200 as per comment	Additional capacity agreed outside of the contract for 6 months to support induction of new staff and the short term resource adaptations required due to the change in the braille system. £6,200.
AP Free School	£556,761 for commission part year (part year percentage of place element and top up element for 50 places)	£581,461 top up element for 50 places commissioned by the Council	This is the previous PRU budget with £400,000 top sliced by EFA for £8k x 50 places— this may change and will be confirmed following discussions with EFA about the Place element for the ACB
Total	£1,832,125	£2,255,601	

Summary

All spending using DSG is carefully monitored to ensure it is spent appropriately and in line with the requirements that are set out in the School Funding Regulations. Some elements are needs led and are reviewed monthly. Unspent High Needs Block is now released and redistributed to schools in the following year.

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Meeting: Schools Forum

Date: 20 January 2014

Subject: School Forum Budget

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children’s Services

Summary: To provide an update on the use of the School Forum Budget for 2013/14 and propose the level of the 2014/15 budget.

Contact Officer: Dawn Hill, Priory House, Shefford

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To note the School Forum spend to 31st December 2013.
2. To propose the 2014/15 budget for servicing the School Forum be set at the 2013/14 level of £3,000.

Background

1. The School Forum Budget falls under Schedule 2 of The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013. ‘Classes or descriptions of planned expenditure prescribed for the purposes of the Schools budget of a Local Authority which may be deducted from it to determine the Individual Schools Budget’ – ‘establishment and maintenance of, and consultation with, Schools Forums’. Any deduction must not exceed the amount deducted for the previous funding period.
2. A budget of £3,000 for 2013/14 has been set for costs associated with the operation of the Forum, with the continued membership of the F40 group and £2,000 delegated to the Chairman of the Schools Forum to fund the commissioning of consultancy and administration support. The level of the budget will be reviewed annually.

Expenditure 2013/14

3. The following table sets out the expenditure to 31st December 2013:

	BUDGET £	SPEND £	BALANCE £
Budget Allocation 2013/14	3,000		
Venue Hire/Refreshments		(456)	
F40 Subscription		(1,000)	
Total	3,000	(1,456)	1,544

Budget Allocation 2014/15

4. In accordance with The School and Early Years Finance Regulations, deductions to the Schools budget of a Local Authority for central services (Part 1, Schedule 2) must not exceed that of the previous funding period. It is also a requirement of the School Forum Regulations that central spend on servicing of Schools Forum are proposed by the LA but the decision making powers rests with the School Forum. The Department for Education role is to adjudicate where School Forum does not agree the LA proposal.
5. The LA proposes that the 2014/15 budget for serving the schools forum remains at the 2013/14 level of £3,000, with the continued membership of F40. Any unspent funding at the end of the financial year added back into the funding formula for the benefit of all schools in the following funding period.

Appendices:

None

Meeting:	Schools Forum
Date:	20 January 2014
Subject:	Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budget
Report of:	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Summary:	To provide an update on the use of the School Contingency Budgets for 2013/14.

Contact Officer:	Dawn Hill, Priory House, Shefford
Public/Exempt:	Public
Wards Affected:	All
Function of:	Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To note the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Contingency spend to 31st December 2013.

Background

1. From 2013/14 the Dedicated School Grant is split into three notional blocks; Schools, High Needs and Early Years with each block holding its own contingency budget.

School Block

2. The Schools Specific Contingency Budget falls under Schedule 2 (Part 5) of The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013; 'Classes or descriptions of planned expenditure prescribed for the purposes of the Schools budget of a Local Authority which may be deducted from it to determine the Individual Schools Budget (ISB)'. Part 5 relates to items that may be removed from Maintained Schools' Budget Shares by way of de-delegation. De-delegation is not an option for Academies, special schools, nurseries or PRUs.
3. Expenditure on the Schools Specific Contingency is central expenditure deducted for the purpose of ensuring that monies are available to enable an increase in a school's budget share after it has been allocated and where it subsequently becomes apparent that a governing body have incurred expenditure which it would be unreasonable to expect them to meet from the school's budget share which may include expenditure in relation to:
 - Schools in financial difficulty
 - The writing off of deficits of schools which are discontinued, excluding any associated costs and overheads
 - New, amalgamating or closing schools, or
 - Other expenditure where the circumstances were unforeseen when initially determining the school's budget share

High Needs Block

4. Contingencies are held centrally to fund Outreach work and the writing off of deficits of special schools which are discontinued.

Early Years Block

5. Early Years provision is funded based on predicted total number of hours attendance of registered pupils. The LA must review the budget share when further information on actual hours of attendance is available, in accordance with Part 3 of The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013. The Early Years Contingency budget has been set aside to fund the headcount adjustment that is allowable within the regulations.

School Contingency

6. It was agreed at the School Forum meeting of the 22nd October 2012 that £100k would be de-delegated back to the LA for the purpose of School Contingencies for 2013/14.
7. The following table sets out the expenditure to 31st December 2013:

	BUDGET £	SPEND £	BALANCE £
Carry Forward from 2012/13	778,963		
Budget Allocation 2013/14	100,000		
Adjustment Academy Recoupment 12/13		24,163	
Adjustment Academy Recoupment 13/14		5,225	
Age Range Funding		(261,236)	
Rent Adjustment		(29,050)	
DSG Adjustment		17,282	
Total School Contingency	878,963	(243,616)	635,347

High Needs Contingency

8. It was agreed at the School Forum meeting of the 21st January 2013 that SEN Contingency will continue to fund the extended role of a school such as commissioned work for Outreach and other services. Chiltern, Ivel Valley and Oakbank are currently commissioned to carry out an Outreach role.
9. The following table sets out the expenditure to 31st December 2013:

	BUDGET £	SPEND £	BALANCE £
Carry Forward from 2012/13	72,858		
Budget Allocation 2013/14	275,670		
Closing School		(53)	
Outreach		(193,243)	
Total SEN Contingency	348,528	(193,296)	155,232

10. The following table sets out the expenditure to 31st December 2013:

	BUDGET £	SPEND £	BALANCE £
Budget Allocation 2013/14	352,450		
January 2013 census adjustment		44,200	
May 2013 census adjustment		(182,549)	
October 2013 census adjustment		82,950	
Total Early Years Contingency	352,450	(55,399)	297,051

Appendices:

None

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Meeting: Schools Forum
Date: 20 January 2014
Subject: School Finance Update
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Summary: To note the update on License Deficit Schools and the Schools Finance Risk Register.

Contact Officer: Dawn Hill, Priory House, Shefford

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

Reason for urgency
(if appropriate)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To note the update

Background

1. There are 89 Maintained Schools in Central Bedfordshire as at 31st December 2013. The total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for Central Bedfordshire for 2013/14 is £178.8M of which £162.4M is delegated to Schools, £83.7M to Maintained Schools.
2. The financial controls within which delegation to maintained schools works are set out in Central Bedfordshire Council's Financial Regulations for Schools in accordance with Section 48 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act (1998) and approved by the Secretary of State.
3. Each school is required to submit a budget plan approved by the Governing Body or by a Committee of the Governing Body, to the Authority no later than 31st May of each year and a revised budget plan also approved by the said Committee no later than 31st October of each year.
4. The Scheme (Section 4.9) permits schools to plan for a deficit budget with the maximum length of time over which schools may recover being three years.
5. Unlicensed deficits are reported to the Department for Education as part of the School's Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) return.
6. Schools must satisfy the minimum requirements with regards to financial controls, procedures and systems in operation so far as necessary for the discharge of the LA's Section 151 Officer responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1972. As this involves all financial records being maintained in schools, these documents become the prime record.

7. To assist the Section 151 Officer in exercising his duties under the Act, Schools are categorised into Red, Amber and Green (RAG) ratings of risk. This process normally takes place twice a year. A regular update is held as schools circumstances change. A letter will be sent to all Schools advising of this process and their allocated rating. This information is also shared with other LA Officers, including School Improvement.
8. The criteria used to allocate a RAG rating is attached in Appendix A.

Update

9. No School has been issued a 'Notice of Concerns' under Section 2.3 of Central Bedfordshire's Scheme for Financing Schools following the 2012/13 financial year end.
10. There are currently 2 schools with an agreed license deficit, with a value of £37k.
11. The RAG exercise that took place in December 2013 places 25 of our 89 maintained schools into a category as shown in the table below.

Phase	No. of Schools	No Rag	Green	Amber	Red
Nursery	4	2	0	2	0
Lower	73	52	16	5	0
Middle	8	7	0	0	1
Upper	2	1	0	0	1
Special	2	2	0	0	0
Total	89	64	16	7	2

All red and amber schools will receive a visit from their School Financial Adviser during the autumn term. Those schools coloured green will be closely monitored and if necessary will also receive a school visit.

12. A letter will be sent to all schools informing them of their RAG category and the use of criteria following the School Forum update.

Criteria Used to allocate 2013/14 RAG rating

Criteria	Red	Amber	Green
Notice of Concern issued	X		
'No Assurance' audit statement	X		
Application for Licensed Deficit late in financial year (December)	X	X	
Unlicensed Deficit >5k or 2.5% of School Budget Share (SBS)	X		
Unlicensed Deficit < 5k or 2.5% of SBS		X	
Licensed Deficit for one year > 10% of SBS		X	
Licensed Deficit for one year < 10% of SBS			X
Licensed Deficit for two years > 10% of SBS	X		
Licensed Deficit for two years < 10% of SBS		X	
Budget monitoring concerns	X	X	
No submission of Schools Financial Value Standards (SFVS)	X		
Provisional Licensed Deficit for future year			X
Timeliness and/or accuracy of returns			X
Change of Head teacher and/or Bursar/Finance Officer			X

The allocation of a rating may be uplifted where more than one criteria applies.

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Education
Funding
Agency

Schools Forums: operational and good practice guide

**For local authorities and members of
Schools Forums**

October 2013

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Executive summary

The two tables in this section are provided as a summary of the structure of Schools Forums and the decision making powers of the local authority (LA) and the Schools Forum according to Regulations.

TABLE 1: SCHOOLS FORUM STRUCTURE			
Category	Schools Members	Academies Members	Non-School Members
Represented groups	<p>Where the LA maintains the following types of school, they must be represented on the Schools Forum:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary Schools • Special Schools • Nursery Schools • PRUs <p>There is no specific requirement in Regulations for a primary rep, but this is captured by requiring membership to be based on pupil proportions</p>	No specific groups, but academies members will represent academies, free schools, UTCs and Studio Schools	<p>16-19 providers</p> <p>Early years Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers</p> <p>Before considering other groups, the LA must consider diocesan representation</p>
Type of member	<p>Within each of the five groups above there are the following types of member:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteachers (or their representative) • Governors • Headteachers and Governors <p>In overall terms there must be at least one headteacher (or their representative) and one governor</p>	Any	Any

Category	Schools Members	Academies Members	Non-School Members
Schools Forum Structure	<p>Schools members and academies members must comprise at least 2/3rds of the Schools Forum membership</p> <p>Primary schools, secondary schools and academies must be broadly proportionately represented on Schools Forum, based on the total number of pupils registered at them</p>		
Voting	<p>Only primary representatives can vote on primary school de-delegation</p> <p>Only secondary representatives can vote on secondary school de-delegation</p> <p>All schools members can vote on any other Schools Forum business, including the consultation on the funding formula</p>	<p>No voting on de-delegation</p> <p>All academies members can vote on any other Schools Forum business, including the consultation on the funding formula</p>	<p>No voting on de-delegation</p> <p>Only PVI representatives can vote on the consultation on the funding formula.</p> <p>All non-school members can vote on any other Schools Forum business</p>
Elected by	<p>The relevant sub-group of the relevant type of school e.g. primary school governor representatives are elected by the governors of primary schools, secondary school headteachers are elected by the</p>	<p>Proprietors of academies</p>	<p>Election only applies to the representative for the 16-19 providers, who is elected by all 16-19 providers¹</p>

¹ This is a change proposed in the draft 2013 School and Early Years Finance Regulations, expected to come into force in January 2014. Further information on the representative for 16-19 providers can be found in paragraph 1.38

	headteachers of secondary schools.		
<p>Category</p> <p>LA appointment of members</p>	<p>Schools Members</p> <p>Only if no election takes place by the agreed date or in the event of a tie</p>	<p>Academies Members</p> <p>Only if no election takes place by the agreed date or in the event of a tie</p>	<p>Non-School Members</p> <p>Can appoint a 16-19 representative only if no election takes place by the agreed date or in the event of a tie</p> <p>For all other non-schools members the LA appoints, but it is good practice to seek nominations from the relevant bodies</p>
<p>Other attendees who are permitted to contribute to a Schools Forum meeting</p>	<p>An observer appointed by the Secretary of State</p> <p>The Director of Children's Services</p> <p>The Executive Member for Children's Services</p> <p>The Executive Member with responsibility for resources</p>	<p>The Chief Financial Officer</p> <p>Officers providing financial & technical advice to Schools Forum</p> <p>Presenters (restricted to the paper they are presenting)</p>	

TABLE 2 - SCHOOLS FORUMS: POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES 2014-15

Function	Local Authority	Schools Forum	DfE Role
Formula change (including redistributions)	Proposes and decides	Must be consulted [Voting restrictions in table 1 above] and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	None
Contracts	Propose at least one month prior to invitation to tender, the terms of any proposed contract	Gives a view and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	None
Financial issues relating to: arrangements for pupils with special educational needs; arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school; arrangements for early years provision; administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants	Consult annually	Gives a view and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	None
Minimum funding guarantee (MFG)	Proposes any exclusions from MFG for application to DfE	Gives a view	Approval

Function	Local Authority	Schools Forum	DfE Role
<p>De-delegation for mainstream schools for: contingencies administration of free school meals insurance licences/subscriptions staff costs - supply cover support for minority ethnic pupils/underachieving groups behaviour support services library and museum services</p>	<p>Proposes</p>	<p>Primary and secondary school member representatives will decide for their phase</p>	<p>Will adjudicate where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal</p>
<p>Central spend on and the criteria for allocating funding from: growth fund (to meet requirements for basic need and infant class size regulations) falling rolls fund for surplus places in good or outstanding schools where a population bulge is expected in 2-3 years</p>	<p>Proposes</p>	<p>Decides</p>	<p>Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal</p>
<p>Central spend on: funding for significant pre-16 pupil growth equal pay back-pay places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils early years expenditure</p>	<p>Proposes</p>	<p>Decides</p>	<p>Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal</p>

Function	Local Authority	Schools Forum	DfE Role
Central spend on: admissions servicing of schools forum	Proposes up to the value committed in 2013-14	Decides for each line	Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal
Central spend on: capital expenditure funded from revenue contribution to combined budgets schools budget centrally funded termination of employment costs schools budget funded prudential borrowing costs special education needs transport costs	Proposes up to the value committed in 2013/14 and where expenditure has already been committed.	Decides for each line	Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal
Carry forward a deficit on central expenditure to the next year to be funded from the schools budget	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal
Scheme of financial management changes	Proposes and consults the governing body and Head of every School	Approves	Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal
Membership: length of office of members	Decides	None (but good practice would suggest that they gave a view)	None
Voting procedures	None	Determine voting procedures	None
Chair of Schools Forum	Facilitates	Elects <i>(may not be an elected member of the Council or officer)</i>	None

Introduction

1. This guide is designed to provide members of Schools Forums, local authority officers and elected members with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of Schools Forums.
2. It is organised in two sections:
 - Section 1 provides information on the constitutional and organisational requirements for Schools Forums; and
 - Section 2 covers a number of key aspects of the operation of Schools Forums at local level, drawing on good practice from a number of Schools Forums.
3. The guide draws on the experience and knowledge of Schools Forum members, local authority members and officers and the Department and its partners. Other than where it is describing requirements set out in the Schools Forum Regulations 2012 it is not designed to be prescriptive – what is good practice in one Schools Forum may not be appropriate in another, given the diverse circumstances of local areas. However, it is hoped the guide will stimulate some debate within Schools Forums and contribute to their ongoing development.
4. The Department hopes that Schools Forums and local authorities find this guide useful. It has been the subject of consultation with a wide variety of external partners. In particular, members of the Department’s Schools and Academies Funding Group, made up of representatives from central and local government, teaching associations, unions representing support staff as well as organisations representing academies and governors, have provided valuable input and advice on the content of the guide. The Department is grateful for their assistance.
5. The [Department’s website](#) contains details of all the announcements, documents and other information relating to school funding and Schools Forums. This website also has a range of useful links to other sites that may be of relevance to Schools Forum members.
6. The main [school funding page](#) on the DfE website has links to the latest news and information on schools funding. There are also dedicated [Schools Forums pages](#) and a [Quick guide to Schools Forums](#).
7. If you have any queries about the operation of Schools Forums please contact the Education Funding Agency: reformteam.funding@education.gsi.gov.uk.

The postal address of the agency is:
Education Funding Agency
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Section 1 – Schools Forum Regulations: Constitution and Procedural Issues

Regulations

- 1.1. National regulations² govern the composition, constitution and procedures of Schools Forums. Local authorities can provide Schools Forum members with a copy of these regulations or alternatively they are available from the [Department's website](#).
- 1.2. A [Quick guide to Schools Forums](#) for schools and academies is also available on the department's website. This explains the role of Schools Forums and the responsibilities of schools and academies.

Schools Forum powers

- 1.3. Schools Forums generally have a consultative role. However, there are situations in which they have decision-making powers. The respective roles of Schools Forums, local authorities and the DfE are summarised in Table 1 on pages 3-5. The overarching areas on which Schools Forums make decisions on local authority proposals are:
 - De-delegation from mainstream schools budgets (separate approval will be required by the primary and secondary phase members of Schools Forum), for prescribed services to be provided centrally.
 - To create a fund for significant pupil growth in order to support the local authority's duty for place planning (basic need) and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund.
 - To create a fund for falling rolls for good or outstanding schools if the schools' surplus capacity is likely to be needed within the next three years to meet rising pupil numbers and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund.
 - Continued funding at existing levels for prescribed historic commitments where the effect of delegating this funding would be destabilising.
 - Funding for the local authority in order to meet prescribed statutory duties placed upon it. Approval is required to confirm the amounts for each duty and no new commitments or increases in expenditure from 2013/14 are permitted unless agreed by the Secretary of State.
 - Funding for central early years expenditure, which may include funding for checking eligibility of pupils for an early years place and/or free school meals.

² Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/2261)

- Authorising a reduction in the schools budget in order to fund a deficit arising in central expenditure that is to be carried forward from a previous funding period.

In each of these cases, the local authority can appeal to the DfE if the Schools Forum rejects its proposal.

- 1.4. Local Authorities should be aware that the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 restrict the delegation of local authority decisions to Cabinet, a member of Cabinet, a Committee of Cabinet or an officer of the Council, which would not include Schools Forums. As a result the local authority cannot delegate its decision making powers to Schools Forum, e.g. decisions on the funding formula.
- 1.5. Regulations state that the local authority must consult the Schools Forum annually in connection with various schools budget functions, namely:
 - amendments to the school funding formula, for which the voting is restricted by the exclusion of non-schools members except for PVI representatives
 - arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs
 - arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school
 - arrangements for early years provision
 - administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the local authority
- 1.6. Consultation must also take place when a local authority is proposing a contract for supplies and services which is to be funded from the Schools Budget and is in excess of the EU procurement thresholds. The consultation must cover the terms of the contract at least one month prior to the issue of invitations to tender.
- 1.7. The Schools Forum has the responsibility of informing the governing bodies of all schools maintained by the local authority of the results of any consultations carried out by the local authority relating to the issues in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6.
- 1.8. For 2014-15, local authorities will need to discuss with the Schools Forum any proposals to:
 - vary the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)
 - use exceptional factors
 - vary pupil numbers
 - allow additional categories of, or spending on, central budgets
 - amend the sparsity factor
 - vary the lump sum for amalgamating schools
 - vary the protection for special schools and special academies
 - Proposals will need to be approved by the Secretary of State.

Membership

- 1.9. The Regulations provide a framework for the appointment of members, but allow a considerable degree of discretion in order to accommodate local priorities and practice.

- 1.10. There is no maximum or minimum size of a Schools Forum. Authorities will wish to take various issues into account in deciding the actual size, including the need to have full representation for various types of school, and the local authority's policy on representation of non-schools members. However, care should be taken to keep the Schools Forum to a reasonable size to ensure that it does not become too unwieldy.
- 1.11. Types of member: Schools Forums must have 'schools members' (para 1.16-1.32), 'academies member(s)' if there is at least one academy in the local authority's area (para 1.33-1.37) and 'non-schools members' (para 1.38-1.42). Schools and academies members together must number at least two-thirds of the total membership of the Schools Forum and the balance between maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies members must be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category, so the structure of Forum should be regularly reviewed, e.g. annually. There is no requirement for academies members to represent specific phases, but it may be encouraged to ensure representation remains broadly proportionate to pupil numbers.
- 1.12. Schools Forum members will need the skills and competencies to manage Forum business (as detailed in Table 2 on pages 6-8) and to take a strategic view across the whole education estate whilst acting as representative of the group that has elected them. Furthermore, they should be easily contactable and pro-active in raising the profile of issues and communicate decisions, and the reasons behind them, effectively

Term of office

- 1.13. The term of office for each schools member and academies member should be stipulated by the local authority at the time of appointment. Such stipulation should follow published rules and be applied in a consistent manner as between members. They need not have identical terms – there may be a case for varied terms so that there is continuity of experience rather than there being a complete change in the membership at a single point. The term of office should not be of a length that would hinder the requirement for the structure of Schools Forum to mirror the type of provision in light of the pace of academy conversions. Examples of how this may work include:-
- Holding vacancies until the Schools Forum structure is reviewed providing that this does not mean holding vacancies for an unreasonable length of time
 - Increasing the size of Schools Forum temporarily to appoint additional academy members, then delete schools member posts at the end of a term of office or when a vacancy arises
 - Consider continuity of service – where an academy conversion affects the school of a current schools member, would academies consider appointing that person as an academies member?
- 1.14. The length of term of office for non-schools members is at the discretion of the local authority. Schools and academies must be informed, within a month of the appointment of any non-schools member, of the name of the member and the name of the body that that member represents.

- 1.15. As well as the term of office coming to an end, a member ceases to be a member of the Schools Forum if he or she resigns from the Schools Forum or no longer occupies the office by which he or she became eligible for election, selection or appointment to the Schools Forum. For example, a secondary schools member must stand down if their school converts to an academy. A schools member representing community primary school governors who is no longer a governor of a community primary school in the relevant local authority must cease to hold office on the Schools Forum even if they remain a governor of a school represented by another group or sub-group. Other situations in which membership of the Schools Forum ends are if a member gives notice in writing to the local authority and, in the case of a non-schools member, the member is replaced by the local authority, for example at the request of the body which the member represents.

Schools members

- 1.16. Schools members represent specified phases or types of maintained schools within the local authority. As a minimum, Schools Forums must contain representatives of two groups of schools: primary and secondary schools, unless there are no primary or secondary schools maintained by the LA. Middle schools and all through schools are treated according to their deemed status.
- 1.17. Where a local authority maintains one or more special schools the Schools Forum must have at least one schools member from that sector. The same applies to nursery schools and pupil referral units (PRUs).
- 1.18. The local authority then has discretion to divide the groups referred to in paragraph 1.16 and 1.17 into one or more of the following sub-groups–
- headteachers or headteachers’ representatives in each group;
 - governors in each group;
 - headteachers or headteachers representatives and governors in each group;
 - representatives of the particular school category.
- 1.19. Headteachers can be represented by other senior members of staff within their school. Governors can include interim executive members of an interim executive board. The sub-groups do not have to be of equal size – for example, there may be more representatives of headteachers of primary schools than governors of such schools, or vice versa. The membership structure of Schools Forum should ensure there is sufficient representation of each type of schools member in each group to ensure that debate within the Schools Forum is balanced and representative. As a minimum, there must be at least one representative of headteachers and one representative of governors among the schools’ members.
- 1.20. Whatever the membership structure of schools members on a Schools Forum, the important issue is that it should reflect most effectively the profile of education provision across the local authority to ensure that there is not an in-built bias towards any one phase or group.

Election and nomination of schools members

- 1.21. The relevant group or sub-group is probably best placed to determine how their schools members should be elected.
- 1.22. It is good practice for those who draw up the scheme to ensure that a vacancy amongst a represented group would be filled by a nominee elected according to a process that has been determined by all those represented in that group, e.g. community primary school headteachers, or secondary school governors, ensuring that everyone represented has had the opportunity to stand for election and/or vote in such an election.
- 1.23. It is not appropriate for a single person to be elected to represent more than one group or sub-group concurrently, i.e. if they were a governor at a primary and secondary school. They can stand for election from either group but can be appointed to represent only one of those groups.
- 1.24. The purpose of ensuring that each group or sub-group is responsible for their election process is to guarantee that there is a transparent and representative process by which members of Schools Forums are nominated to represent their constituents.
- 1.25. Appropriate support to each group or sub-group to manage their election processes should be offered by the clerk of a Schools Forum, or the committee/democratic services of a local authority. This may just include the provision of advice but may also consist of providing administrative support in actually running the elections themselves.
- 1.26. As a minimum, we would recommend that the clerk of a Schools Forum make a record of the process by which the relevant schools within each group and sub-group elect their nominees to the Schools Forum and be able to advise the Chair of the Schools Forum and local authority on action that needs to be taken, where necessary, to seek new nominees.
- 1.27. In determining the process by which elections should be operated it is perfectly legitimate for a local authority to devise, in consultation with their Schools Forum, a model scheme for the relevant schools within a group or sub-group to consider and be invited to adopt. However, such a model scheme cannot be imposed on that body of schools: adaptations and/or alternative schemes may be adopted. A single scheme need not be adopted universally.
- 1.28. Care should be taken to ensure that every eligible member of a group or sub-group has an opportunity to be involved in the determination of their group's election process, is given the opportunity to stand for election if they choose to do so, and is involved in the election of their representative(s).
- 1.29. It would not be compliant with the Regulations for the steering committee or Chair of a 'parent' group simply to make a nomination to represent their group or sub-group on a Schools Forum. Schools members must be elected, subject to paragraph 1.30 below.

- 1.30. The local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint the schools member if the election has not taken place by that date. The person appointed should be a member of the relevant group.
- 1.31. We would recommend that any scheme takes into account a number of factors:
- a. the process for collecting names of those wishing to stand for election;
 - b. the timescale for notifying all constituents of the election and those standing;
 - c. the arrangements for dispatching and receiving ballots;
 - d. the arrangements for counting and publicising the results;
 - e. any arrangements for unusual circumstances such as only one candidate standing in an election; and
 - f. whether existing members can stand for re-election.
- 1.32. In the event of a tie between two or more candidates, then the local authority must appoint the schools member instead. The local authority may decide to appoint someone else rather than one of the candidates and might wish to take into account the experience or expertise of the individuals, and the balance between the different types of school represented on the Schools Forum.

Election and nomination of academies members

- 1.33. Academies members must be elected by the proprietor bodies of the academies in the local authority's area, and they are probably best placed to determine the process. Academies members are there to represent the proprietor bodies of academies and are, therefore, not necessarily restricted to principals, senior staff or governors. The same factors should be taken into account as for the election of schools members, set out in paragraphs 1.21 to 1.32. For the avoidance of doubt, Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools are classed as academies for this purpose. There is no distinction between sponsored, non-recoupment and converter academies.
- 1.34. Where there is only one academy in the local authority's area, then their proprietor body must select the person who will represent them.
- 1.35. There is no requirement for academies members to be split into specific sub-groups. e.g. primary, secondary, special, alternative provision. However, local authorities may wish to encourage academies to consider the pupil proportions across all academies when electing their representatives.
- 1.36. It is possible that a single person be appointed as an academies member to more than one Schools Forum, for example if an academy chain is located across multiple local authorities, providing they are elected on each occasion in accordance with the agreed election process for each separate Schools Forum.
- 1.37. As with schools members, the local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint an academies member if the election does not take place by that date, or if an election results in a tie between two or more candidates.

Non-schools members

- 1.38. Non-schools members may number no more than a third of a Schools Forum's total membership (excluding observers – see paragraph 1.51). A representative of providers of 16-19 education must be elected from those providers. This includes those in the FE sector (FE and sixth form colleges) and other institutions that specialise in special education needs (SEN) and learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) provision (ISPs), where 20% or more of their students reside in the local authority's area. As with academies the providers are probably best placed to determine the election process.
- 1.39. The local authority must appoint at least one person to represent early years providers from the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. Early years PVI settings need to be represented because funding for the free entitlement for three and four year olds comes from the Schools Budget, and all settings are funded through the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) including funding for the free entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds.
- 1.40. Before appointing additional non-schools members to the Schools Forum, the local authority must consider whether the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses situated in the local authority's area; and, where there are schools or academies in the area with a different religious character, the appropriate faith group, should be represented on the Schools Forum. If diocesan authorities nominate members for appointment as non-schools members they may wish to consider what type of representative would be most appropriate – schools-based such as a headteacher or governor, or someone linked more generally with the diocese, e.g. a member of the education board.
- 1.41. It is also good practice for local authorities to ensure that the needs and interests of all the pupils in the local authority are adequately represented by the members of a Schools Forum. The interests of pupils in maintained schools can be represented by schools members. Some pupils in a local authority, however, are not in maintained schools but instead are educated in hospitals, independent special schools and non-maintained special schools. Certain types of non-schools members can play an important role in representing the interests of these groups of pupils. They can also play a role in representing the interests and views of the services that support those groups of vulnerable and at-risk pupils who nevertheless are on the roll of maintained schools, such as looked after children and children with special educational needs.
- 1.42. The purpose of non-schools members is also to bring greater breadth of discussion to Schools Forum meetings and ensure that stakeholders and partners other than schools are represented. Organisations which typically provide non-schools members are trades unions, professional associations and representatives of youth groups. Parent groups could also be considered. However, as there are clearly limited numbers of non-schools members able to be on a Schools Forum, care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate representation from wider stakeholders is achieved.

Other membership issues

1.43. There are three restrictions placed on who can be a non-schools member of a Schools Forum. The local authority cannot appoint:

- an elected member of the local authority who is appointed to the executive of that local authority (a lead member/portfolio holder) 'executive members',
- the Director of Children's Services or any officer employed or engaged to work under the management of the Director of Children's Services, and who does not directly provide education to children (or manage those who do) ('relevant officer' (a) and (b)),
- other officers with a specific role in management of and/or who advise on funding for schools ('relevant officer' part (c)).

1.44. Schools Forums have the power to approve a limited range of proposals from their local authority: the restrictions ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the proposing body (the local authority) and the approving body (the Schools Forum).

1.45. However, non-executive elected members and those officers who are employed in their capacity as headteachers or teachers and those who directly manage a service which provides education to individual children and/or advice to schools on, for example, learning and behavioural matters are eligible to be members of Schools Forums.

1.46. In the case of non-executive elected members, they may be a schools member (by virtue of them being a school governor), an academies member or a non-schools member. As a non-schools member they may be well placed to fulfil the broader overview and scrutiny role they have within the local authority in general.

1.47. However, the inclusion of non-executive elected members and certain officers is not a requirement. Many Schools Forums do not have such members on them and it is for each local authority and Schools Forum to consider how best to ensure the right balance of school and non-school representation on the Schools Forum, taking into account their local circumstances and preferences.

The role of executive elected members

1.48. A Schools Forum needs to ensure that there are systems in place for executive members of the Council to be aware of its views on specific issues and, in particular, any decisions it takes in relation to the Schools Budget and individual budget shares.

1.49. Executive members with responsibility for education/children's services or resources of the local authority are able to participate in Schools Forum meetings. By doing so such elected members are able to contribute to the discussion and receive first-hand the views of the Schools Forum: it is clearly good practice for this to be the case and the regulations provide the right for executive members to attend and speak at Schools Forum meetings. However, there is no requirement for this to happen so at the very least there should be clear channels of communication between the Schools Forum and executive members.

Communication may also be assisted if Schools Forum members attended relevant Cabinet meetings as members of the public, e.g. when the funding formula is decided.

Recording the composition of Schools Forums

- 1.50. Each local authority must make a written record of the composition of its Schools Forum detailing the numbers of schools members and by which group or sub-group they were elected, the number of academies members and the number of non-schools members, their terms of office, how they were chosen and whom they represent. This record should also indicate the term of office for schools and academies members.

Observers

- 1.51. The Regulations provide that the Secretary of State can appoint an observer to attend and speak at Schools Forum meetings, e.g. a representative from the Education Funding Agency (EFA). This allows a conduit for national policy to be discussed at a local level and provide access for Schools Forum to an additional support mechanism, e.g. where there are highly complex issues to resolve.

Participation of local authority officers at meetings

- 1.52. Only specific officers can speak at meetings of the Schools Forum. These officers are:
- Director of Children's Services or their representative
 - Chief Financial Officer or their representative
 - Any person invited by Schools Forum to provide financial or technical advice
 - Any person presenting a paper to Schools Forum but their ability to speak is limited to the paper that they are presenting.
- 1.53. In the majority of cases Schools Forums are supported by a specific officer. In the course of their work, however, Schools Forums will be required to consider a whole range of issues and they may consider it appropriate that other officers attend for specific items of business. Where this is the case, the local authority should meet the Schools Forum's requests as far as possible.

Procedures

- 1.54. Many procedural matters are not prescribed in the Regulations and are at the discretion either of the local authority or the Schools Forum itself. However, there are requirements in the Regulations relating to:
- a. quorum: A meeting is only quorate if 40% of the total membership is present (this excludes any observers, and it is 40% of the current

membership excluding vacancies). If a meeting is inquorate it can proceed but it cannot legally take decisions (e.g. election of a Chair, or a decision relating to funding conferred by the funding regulations). An inquorate meeting can respond to local authority consultation, and give views to the local authority. It would normally be good practice for the local authority to take account of such 'unofficial' views, but it is not legally obliged to do so. In practice, the arrangements for meetings should be made to reduce the chance of a problem with quora. The quorum stipulation is in the Regulations to help ensure the legitimacy of decisions;

- b. election of a Chair: Under the Regulations, if the position of Chair falls vacant the Schools Forum must decide how long the term of office of the next Chair will be. This can be for any period, but the Schools Forum should consider carefully whether a period exceeding two years is sensible. A long period will also cause problems if the member elected as Chair has a term of office as a member which comes to an end before their term of office as Chair ends. The Schools Forum must elect a Chair from amongst its own members, so it is not possible to elect an independent Chair. In addition any elected member of the local authority or officer of the local authority who is a member of a Schools Forum may not hold the office of Chair. Schools Forums can also appoint to a position of vice Chair to provide cover if the Chair is absent or the post vacant;
- c. voting procedures: The Regulations provide that a Schools Forum may determine its own voting procedures save that voting on:-
- the funding formula is limited to schools members, academies members and PVI representatives
 - de-delegation will be limited to the specific primary and secondary phase of maintained schools members.

The powers which Schools Forums have to take decisions on a range of funding matters increase the importance of clear procedures, e.g. decisions are made on a simple majority or the threshold to be met if higher. These procedures should take account of any use of working groups by the Schools Forum – for example a decision might be taken by voting to accept and adopt a report by a working group (see 1.58). As part of any voting procedure there should be clarity in the procedures for recording the outcome of a vote, and any resolutions a Schools Forum makes in relation to any vote taken;

- d. substitutes: The local authority must make arrangements to enable substitutes to attend and vote (where appropriate) at Schools Forum meetings. This applies to schools members, academies members and non-schools members. The arrangements must be decided in consultation with Schools Forum members.
- e. defects and vacancies: The Regulations provide that proceedings of the Schools Forum are not invalidated by defects in the election or appointment of any member, or the appointment of the Chair. Nor does the existence of any vacancy on the Schools Forum invalidate proceedings (see paragraph 1.52(a) on quorum).

- f. timing: Schools Forums must meet at least four times a year
- 1.55. Where the Regulations make no provision on a procedural matter, local discretion should be exercised. It is for the local authority to decide how far it wishes to establish rules for the Schools Forum to follow, in the form of standing orders. While it is entitled to do so, it is of course good practice to allow the Schools Forum to set its own rules so far as possible.

Public access

- 1.56. Schools Forums are more than just consultative bodies. They also have an important role to play in approving certain proposals from their local authority and are therefore involved in the decision making process surrounding the use of public money at local level. As a result Schools Forums are required to be open to the public. Furthermore papers, agendas and minutes must be publicly available well in advance of each meeting. It is good practice that notification that Schools Forum is a public meeting is included on the website and papers are published at least a week in advance.
- 1.57. Some Schools Forums already operate very much along the lines of a local authority committee. This is perfectly legitimate and will provide a consistent framework for the running of meetings that are open to the public, and the publishing of papers and agendas well in advance of the meeting and minutes published promptly as required under Regulation 8(13) of the Schools Forum Regulations 2012.

Working groups

- 1.58. It is open to a Schools Forum to set up working groups of members to discuss specific issues, and to produce draft advice and decisions for the Schools Forum itself to consider. The groups can also include wider representation - for example, an early years reference group can represent all the different types of provider to consider the detail of the early years single funding formula. The reference group would then be able to give its considered view on the local authority's proposals to the Schools Forum. The Schools Forum should not delegate actual decisions or the finalisation of advice to a working group, as this may have the effect of excluding legitimate points of view.

Urgent business

- 1.59. It is good practice for the local authority to agree with its Schools Forum an urgency procedure to be followed when there is a genuine business need for a decision or formal view to be expressed by the Schools Forum, before the next scheduled meeting. The local authority may of course call an unscheduled meeting; but it may also wish to put in place alternative arrangements such as clearance by email correspondence or some other means. Such instances should be avoided so far as possible but are legitimate provided all members of the Schools Forum have an opportunity to participate, the logistics provide a

reasonable opportunity for consideration and the local authority policy on data security is not compromised.

- 1.60. It is not legal for the Chair to take a decision on behalf of the Schools Forum, no matter how urgent the matter in question; but a Schools Forum may wish to put in place a procedure for the Chair to give the local authority a view on an urgent issue.

Resources of the Schools Forum

- 1.61. The costs of a Schools Forum fall in the centrally retained budget portion of the Schools Block of local authorities. Nationally there is variation in the level of funding local authorities identify against Schools Forum expenditure: the median budgeted expenditure in 2013-14 was £24,158.
- 1.62. It is legitimate to charge the running costs of Schools Forums to this budget including any agreed and reasonable expenses for members attending meetings, the costs of producing and distributing papers and costs room hire and refreshments and for clerking of meetings. Beyond these costs some Schools Forums have a budget of their own to use for activities such as commissioning research or other reports. The 2012 School and Early Years Finance Regulations provide that the level of resource devoted to running Schools Forums in 2013-14 is limited to 2012-13 levels unless the Secretary of State agrees an increase. Similar arrangements are in the draft 2013 Regulations.

Section 2 – Effective Schools Forums

Introduction

- 2.1. As the previous section outlined, local authorities have responsibility for establishing Schools Forums. They also have an ongoing responsibility to provide them with appropriate support, information and guidance in carrying out their functions and responsibilities.
- 2.2. The following outlines some aspects of what local authorities and Schools Forums should consider in ensuring that their Schools Forums are as effective as possible. The pace of academy conversions in particular means that this significant sector must be properly represented and feel that it is able to play a meaningful part in the discussions of the Schools Forum.
- 2.3. Central to the effectiveness or otherwise of a Schools Forum will be the relationship between it and its local authority. The local authority will have a significant influence on this: the support it provides; the resources it devotes and the weight it gives to the views of Schools Forums all contribute to the nature of the relationship. There are therefore a number of characteristics of this relationship that are particularly important:
- *Partnership: Having a shared understanding of the priorities, issues and concerns of schools, academies and the local authority.*
 - *Effective Support: The business of the Schools Forum is supported by the local authority in an efficient and professional manner.*
 - *Openness: It is important that a Schools Forum feels it is receiving open, honest and objective advice from its local authority.*
 - *Responsiveness: Local authorities should as far as possible be responsive to requests from their Schools Forums and their members. Schools Forums themselves should also be aware of the resource implications of their requests.*
 - *Strategic view: Members of Schools Forum should consider the needs of the whole of the educational community, rather than using their position on a Schools Forum to advance their own sectional or specific interests.*
 - *Challenge and Scrutiny: Schools Forums may be asked to agree to proposals from their local authority that will have an effect on all schools and academies in the local area. The extent to which Schools Forums can scrutinise and challenge such proposals is an important aspect of their effectiveness.*
- 2.4. The characteristics identified above are just some of the aspects that will contribute to an effective Schools Forum. The following provides more detail on some of the specific issues that local authorities and Schools Forums may wish to consider in thinking about their own arrangements.

Induction of new members

- 2.5. When new members join the Schools Forum appropriate induction materials should be provided. These might include material relating to the operation of the Schools Forum together with background information about the local and national school funding arrangements. Typically they might comprise:
 - a. the constitution of the Schools Forum
 - b. a list of members including contact details and their terms of office
 - c. any locally agreed terms of reference explaining the relationship between the Schools Forum and the local authority
 - d. copies of minutes of previous meetings
 - e. the programme of Schools Forum meetings for the year
 - f. the local Schools Forum web address
- 2.6. This Operational and Good Practice Guide, suitably supplemented by local material, should also be provided to new members on their appointment.
- 2.7. Where there is sufficient turnover of Schools Forum members in any particular year the local authority may wish to organise a one-off induction event to brief new members. Such an event would usefully include an outline of the role of the Schools Forum and the national funding arrangements for schools and local authorities. It might also include an explanation of the local funding formula and any proposals for review. The opportunity could also be taken to explain the main reporting requirements for school and local authority expenditure.

Training

- 2.8. Ideally Schools Forum members should be able to use some of the budget set aside for Schools Forum running costs for accessing relevant training activities. Some training will be provided by officers of the local authority but members may wish to attend national or regional events, the costs of which, where necessary, can be supported from the Schools Forum budget.
- 2.9. Training will need to be provided in response to any changes in the role of the Schools Forum and national developments in respect of school funding.

Agenda setting

- 2.10. The process by which the agenda for a meeting or cycle of meetings is set is in many respects one of the key determinants of the effectiveness or otherwise of a Schools Forum.
- 2.11. The frequency and timing of meetings of the Schools Forum should be agreed in advance of each financial or academic year. In drawing up this cycle of meetings, in consultation with the Schools Forum, the local authority should provide a clear overview of the key consultative and decision-making points in the school funding cycle. These will be drawn from a combination of national and local information and should inform the basic agenda items that each meeting needs to cover. For instance meetings will need to be scheduled at appropriate points to enable the

Schools Forum to consider the outcomes of local consultations and national announcements.

- 2.12. Although the business of Schools Forums must be open and transparent, it is recognised that from time to time items of a confidential nature will need to be discussed. It is recommended that authorities apply the same principles that they apply to Council/Cabinet meetings when judging an item to be confidential and adopt similar practices for dealing with those reports in the meeting, e.g. placing them together at the end of the agenda.

Preparation for a Schools Forum meeting

- 2.13. It is vital that Schools Forum is transparent, open and has clear communication lines to all of the members that are represented. This ensures the wider school family are aware of the business discussed, the impact on their setting and the reasons for the decisions.
- 2.14. The vast majority of a Schools Forum's business will be transacted on the basis of prepared papers. It is therefore important that these are concise, informative and produced in a timely and consistent manner. Recommendations should be clearly set out at the beginning of each report. It is also helpful if the front of the report confirms whether the report is for information or decision and who is eligible to vote where relevant.
- 2.15. It is good practice for the Schools Forum and local authority to agree a standard for these. It is usual for papers to be dispatched at least one week prior to the meeting at which they will be discussed to allow members to consider them and if necessary canvass views from the group they are representing. Papers should be published on the local authority's website at this time to enable representations to be made to Schools Forum members.
- 2.16. Consistency in the presentation of papers also contributes to the effectiveness of meetings: it helps set the tone of meetings, facilitate the engagement of all members and signal the importance the local authority attaches to the work of the Schools Forum. Ideally such a standard should be agreed between the Schools Forum and local authority. The publishing of papers as a single pdf file is helpful as it saves time and avoids accessing multiple documents both in advance of, and during, the meeting. An Executive Summary of the reports can provide Schools Forum members and members of the public with an overview of the agenda and the decisions required.
- 2.17. The publishing of papers on a publicly available website well in advance of the meeting ensures that all interested parties are able to access papers. Some Schools Forums ensure that each represented group meets in the days immediately prior to the Schools Forum meeting to ensure the agenda is discussed and Schools Forum members are properly briefed by the group they represent. Although on occasions it is inevitable that Schools Forums will receive late, or tabled reports it does create some difficulty for members as they will not have been able to seek the views of those they represent.

- 2.18. Schools Forums can consider adopting a flexible arrangement for time immediately prior to the meeting. For example it could be used for training of new members, or as a drop-in session for members to ask items of clarification, or for members to meet without officers to discuss the agenda.

Chairing the Schools Forum

- 2.19. The Chair of a Schools Forum plays a key role in setting the tone, pace and overall dynamic of the Schools Forum. They should provide an environment within which all members are able to contribute fully to discussions and guide the Schools Forum to making well informed decisions.
- 2.20. The relationship between the Chair and the local authority is therefore vital. The Chair should be very clear on the substance of the agenda items, understand the issues involved and the decisions and/or actions that need to be taken in respect of School Forum business. It is good practice for there to be a pre-meeting between the senior officer of the local authority supporting the Schools Forum and the Chair of the Schools Forum to ensure that all the issues are clearly understood.
- 2.21. Equally, the Chair has the responsibility of representing the views of the Schools Forum back to the local authority: for instance, they should, where appropriate, take the initiative to make suggestions for improvements to the way the business is conducted, and, in exceptional cases and with support of the members of the Schools Forum take the view that they do not have sufficient information on which to base a decision and ask that an item is deferred until further information is available. However, in doing so, the Chair and Schools Forum should be fully aware of the consequences of deferral.
- 2.22. The independence of Schools Forum is paramount. Enhancing the role of Chair to a paid position, rather than the reimbursement of reasonable expenses, could blur the lines of independence. Similarly, if the Chair undertakes significant work for the LA in another capacity, e.g. as an external consultant, they could be viewed as equivalent to an officer of the local authority.
- 2.23. Local authorities could consider if sharing contact details of the Schools Forum Chair with neighbouring authorities would be helpful for peer support and improving networking opportunities.

Clerking the Schools Forum

- 2.24. Clerking of a Schools Forum should be seen as more than just writing a note of the meeting. A good clerk provides an invaluable link between the members of the Schools Forum, the Chair and the local authority. It is a role often undertaken by an employee of the local authority though we would recommend consideration is given to the use of an independent clerk.
- 2.25. Clerks should manage the logistics of the meeting in terms of ensuring dispatch of papers and producing a note from the meeting. In considering the style of meeting notes consideration should be given to making them intelligible enough for non-attendees to get a sense of the discussion as well as clearly indicating the

conclusion and action agreed in relation to each agenda item. Verbatim reports of a Schools Forum's discussion, however, are unlikely to be very useful. Schools Forums may consider whether a simple action log should be maintained by the clerk to ensure all action points agreed are followed up.

- 2.26. Beyond this a good clerk can:
- a. provide the route by which Schools Forum members can access further information and co-ordinate communication to Schools Forum members outside of the formal meeting cycle;
 - b. respond to any queries about the business of the Schools Forum from headteachers, governors and others who are not on the Schools Forum themselves;
 - c. be responsible for ensuring contact details of all members are up to date;
 - d. maintain the list of members on the Schools Forum and advise on membership issues in general;
 - e. assist with the co-ordination of nomination/election processes run by the constituent groups;
 - f. keep the Schools Forum website up to date: e.g. by posting latest minutes and papers etc;
 - g. monitor, on a regular basis, the Schools Forum and general Schools Funding section of the Department for Education (DfE) website or the gov.uk website; and arrange for the distribution of any relevant DfE information to Schools Forum members;
 - h. if appropriate, provide technical advice in relation to the Schools Forum regulations and in relation to the operation of a Schools Forum's local constitution; and
 - i. organise, operate and record any voting activity of the Schools Forum in line with the provisions of its local constitution.
- 2.27. Not all of these tasks may be able to be undertaken by the Schools Forum clerk. However, each one is important and there should be arrangements in place to ensure they are discharged adequately.

Good practice for Schools Forum meetings

- 2.28. Schools Forums should ensure there is a clear debate of all agenda items. Whilst sub-group meetings are valuable in working through detailed issues, Schools Forum should consider that the level of debate held at the Schools Forum meeting and recorded in the minutes will be the official reflection of the level of challenge and discussion on each issue.
- 2.29. The use of nameplates for Schools Forum members also showing which group they are representing can be helpful to members of the public and presenters of papers.
- 2.30. The use of coloured cards or coloured nameplates can be helpful when specific members of Schools Forum are eligible to vote on specific items, e.g. de-delegation or changes to the funding formula.

2.31. Consultations with Schools Forum are a key responsibility of a local authority, ranging from the funding formula to the letting of contracts. Each consultation will be different and depend on the subject being consulted on, but local authorities should consider the following factors as good practice for effective consultation:-

- Plan and consult early
- Allow reasonable timescales for response (as Forum members may need to consult the groups they represent)
- An open and honest approach
- Fully inclusive
- Allow for ongoing dialogue
- Provide feedback
- Clear communications.

Meeting notes and recording of decisions

2.32. A vital part of the effective operation of a Schools Forum is to ensure that an accurate record of the meeting is taken. This must include the clear recording of votes where there are contrary views. Recommendations to, and decisions of, Schools Forum must be clearly set out.

2.33. Notes or minutes of each Schools Forum meeting should be produced and put on the website as soon after the meeting as possible to enable members and others to see the outcome of any discussions and decisions/votes. It is good practice to formally agree the accuracy of the note/minutes at a subsequent meeting but the publication of the draft minutes should not be delayed as a result.

2.34. In order to provide clarity about representation at each meeting, it is good practice for the minutes to record the group and/or subgroup that each member represents against their name.

Communication

2.35. Communication to the wider educational community of the discussions and debates of, and decisions made by, Schools Forum is fundamental to their effective operation. The more schools and other stakeholders know about the proceedings of the Schools Forum, the more their work will be an important and central part of the context of local educational funding. This is particularly important given the decision making role that the Schools Forum has. Local authorities should consider the operational differences between the types of stakeholders and plan their communications accordingly. For example ensuring effective communications across the PVI sector may be more difficult than with schools, who are more likely to have existing channels of communication e.g. headteacher meetings.

2.36. Each Schools Forum should therefore be clear what its channels of communication are. One channel is the requirement that all its agenda, minutes and papers are publicly available on the local authority's website. However, the Schools Forum should also consider additional communication processes. These could include:

- a. the reporting back by Schools Forum members to their 'parent' group of the business of the Schools Forum is a key responsibility of Schools Forum members. This can be a particularly useful method of ensuring that Schools Forum members have an ongoing dialogue with the constituents of their group or sub-group and are therefore well able to represent their views at Schools Forum meetings;
- b. an annual report on the proceedings of the Schools Forum;
- c. attendance by the Chair, or other Schools Forum member, at other relevant consultative or management groups such as any capital working group; or senior management meetings of the Children's Services Department; or
- d. a brief email to all schools, early years providers and other stakeholders after each Schools Forum meeting informing them of the discussions and decisions with a link to the full papers and minutes for further information
- e. a Schools Forum newsletter can be a less formal and more interesting way of communicating forum business and raising the profile of Schools Forum and its members.

News updates

- 2.37. Most, but not all, members of the Schools Forum will already be in receipt of regular information on school funding matters from the local authority and DfE. Other Schools Forum members should be copied into such information flows so that they can be kept abreast of developments between meetings.
- 2.38. Many local authorities have already established dedicated Schools Forum websites on which they post key information for Schools Forum members and other interested parties.



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