

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 19 September 2016

PRESENT

David Brandon-Bravo (Chairman)
Sue Howley MBE (Vice-Chairman)

School Members:	Ali Brabner	Governor, Cranfield Academy
	Paul Burrett	Headteacher, Studham CofE Lower School and Pre-School
	Mr P Cohen	Academy of Central Bedfordshire / Oak Bank
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie OBE	Headteacher, The Chiltern School
	Mrs L Davies	Headteacher, Williw Nursery School
	Karen Hayward	Headteacher, Sandy Upper School
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Beaudesert Lower School

Non-School Members:	Mr M Foster	Trade Union representative
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Observer:	Cllr Steven Dixon	Executive Member for Education and Skills
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Apologies for Absence: Sharon Ingham
Kim McCamley
Mrs M Morris
Mrs S Mortimer
John Street
Rob Watson

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs M Clampitt	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs P Day	Children's Centre Development Officer
	Mrs S Harrison	Director of Children's Services
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Miss H Redding	Assistant Director School Improvement
	Mrs S Tyler	Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention

CBSF/15/7. **Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 13 June 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters arising:

The Forum asked for assurance that the Technical Sub Group for Early Years would be meeting as a separate meeting to the Early Years Reference Group. In addition, it was requested that after the Terms of Reference had been agreed at the Technical Sub Group that the Terms of Reference be brought to the next Schools Forum meeting on 21 November 2016.

The Forum received confirmation that the Childcare was included in the Early Years report later in the agenda.

The Forum requested clarification on the Growth Fund Outturn Pre-16 because it was unclear if it included the Early Years contingent. It was confirmed that it only represented the Schools Block and the Senior Finance Officer agreed to clarify the statutory terminology for future agendas.

Officers confirmed that there had not been a response to the request for a refund from the conference Officers and Forum members attended. It was agreed that a follow-up request would be sent.

CBSF/15/8. **Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Update and LA proposed amendments to Central Bedfordshire's Scheme for Financing Schools**

The Forum received a report which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Growth Fund Outturn for 2016/17 and funding arrangements for 2017/18. The agreement of a DSG transfer from the Early Years Block to the Schools Block and to approve the Local Authority (LA) proposed amendments to Central Bedfordshire's Scheme for Financing Schools.

From 2013/14, the DSG would be split into three notional blocks: Early Years, High Needs and Schools.

The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) was set at negative 1.5% per pupil for 2016/17.

It was noted that the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is no longer required to complete two statements annually instead the DfE have now requested one annual outturn statement, confirming that the DSG received by the Authority was fully deployed in support of the school budgets in accordance with the conditions of the School Regulations. In addition, it will also include a Non Maintained Special School (NMSS) statement and Fraud cases reported in school statement.

DSG 2016/17

The Schools Block is based on a per pupil unit of funding of £4,294.39 (an increase of £5.30 from 2015/16) multiplied by 36,643 pupils as reported in the October 2015 census (an increase of 777 pupils).

The Early Years Block is based on a unit of funding of £3,979.80 multiplied by 2,621 full time equivalent number of pupils as reported on the January 2016 census. In June 2016, the block was updated for 7/12ths of the January 2015 pupil numbers to cover the period September 2015 to March 2016.

The High Needs Block is a single block of high needs pupils/students age 0 – 24. For 2016/17 the block is split into two parts, pre-16 and post-16 (ages 16 – 24). The Forum noted that since August 2013, the post-16 funding has combined three previous budgets: SEN block grant, specialist placements funding and the cost of high needs students in Further Education (FE).

The distribution of the 2016/17 DSG based on the 51 Academy conversions at August 2016 was £195,373 (£92,507 went to Academies ISB). Paragraph 18 of the report provided a breakdown of the centrally retained DSG of £19.201m.

Growth Fund 2016/17

The Growth Fund can only be used for the purposes of supporting significant pre-16 growth in schools to meet basic need as a result of the local authority's duty under section 13(1) of the 1996 Act to secure that efficient primary/secondary education are available. 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 2016/17 was set at £2m. The Forum noted that the unspent amount of £241,830 from 2015/16 will be used for the same purpose in 2016/17. An adjustment was due from the EFA of £18k in respect of a Growth Fund payment to Academies. The adjustment will be included in the 2016/17 Growth Fund.

Funding announcement for 2017/18

The Forum noted that on 21 July 2016, the DfE announced the DSG for 2017/18 and that it would remain split into three notional blocks: school, high needs and early years.

The final DSG for 2017/18 is £196.854m. This is based on:

- Schools Block: £157.466m – which is based on the SBUF published in July 2015. For CBC the SUBF is £4,314.16 an increase of £19.77 (due to the transfer of the ESG retained duties and the one off DSG funding of £105k added to schools in 2016/17. Schools block will also include funding for the previous Education Services Grant (ESG) retained duties (£15 per pupil) which will be transferred into the schools block for 2017/18 (£618k for CBC).
- High Needs Block: £25.886m – which is based on the 2015/16 carry forward plus an additional top-up of £47m distributed based on the 2-19 aged population in each Local Authority.
- Early Years: £12.206m – which is based on the same rate as in 2015/16 £3,979.80 for three to four year olds. This includes the early

year pupil premium (EYPP) £300 per year per eligible pupil equating to £139k and funding for disadvantaged two year olds at an hourly rate of £5.03.

Paragraph 31 of the report provided a breakdown of the indicative DSG Revenue allocation of £196.854m for 2017/18.

Paragraph 16 provided a list of the single national licence managed by the Department for Education for all state-funded schools in England. The Forum noted the estimated cost will be £245k.

Paragraph 18 provided a breakdown of the centrally retained DSG of £19.201m for 2016/17.

Amendments to CBC's Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum, at their meeting on 13 June 2016, agreed in principle to a consultation being carried out with all maintained schools regarding the reinstatement of the clawback. The consultation was carried out between 1 – 29 July 2016. There were 19 responses (22% of schools) – 1 nursery, 14 lower, 1 middle, 2 upper and 1 special school. 16 schools agreed in principle to the inclusion of the balance control mechanism.

Option 3 received the most support and therefore it will be implemented by the Local Authority (LA). It was explained by the Senior Finance Officer that the clawback only applies to surplus funding which has not been earmarked for a specific purpose. If a school cannot provide a rationale as to why the funds have been held. It was noted that only once in three years had a clawback occurred.

The Forum noted that the changes provided in Appendix A to the report showed the changes to be made to the Capital Spending from Budget Shares. It was noted that the changes, indicated by track changes, were to provide clarification rather than alter the accounting procedures.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the update on the 2016/17 DSG allocations be noted.**
- 2. That the transfer of £226,821 for 2016/17 from the Early Years Block to the Schools Block (increasing to £237,044 2017/18) be agreed.**
- 3. That the update on the 2016/17 Growth Fund be noted.**
- 4. That the 2017/18 funding announcement be noted.**
- 5. That the LA proposed amendments to Central Bedfordshire's Scheme for Financing Schools be approved.**

CBSF/15/9. Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the Schools Contingency Budget for 2016/17. It was noted that the Dedicated Schools Grant since 2013/14 had been split into three notional blocks: Schools, High Needs, and Early Years and each holds its own contingency budget.

Schools Contingency

The Forum noted that £500k had been ring-fenced for the three schools which were closing through applying for the Secretary of State to disapply the regulations.

The balance, as at 31 August 2016, of £655,962 (which contains the £500,000 ring-fenced) is split between de-delegated ring-fenced funding for maintained schools only of £671,572 and £104,555 for all schools.

High Needs Contingency

The balance, as at 31 August 2016, of £581,849. It is anticipated that all of the balance will be spent.

Early Years Contingency

The balance, as at 31 August 2016, of £584,180.

RESOLVED

that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Contingency spend to 31 August 2016 be noted.

CBSF/15/10. School Forum Budget

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the Schools Forum Budget for 2016/17.

The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that as at 31 August 2016, the remaining balance for the year was £5,618 of which £5,253 had been carried forward from 2015/16. It was noted that any unspent budget would be carried forward to the next year. It was noted that the budget for 2016/17 was £3,000 with the continued membership of F40.

The Forum asked that the request for a refund for the four people (2 officers and 2 members) who attended the conference on the national formula be followed up.

RESOLVED

that the Schools Forum Budget spend to 31 August 2016 be noted.

CBSF/15/11. High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Update report regarding review of top-up element of high needs places and EHC Plans/Statements

The Forum considered a report which set out the work agreed by the High Needs Block Technical Sub Group regarding reviewing Top-up payments for high needs placements and EHC plans/statements.

The Assistant Director School Improvement informed the Forum that there had been no change to the top-up payments since Central Bedfordshire Council began in 2009.

A bench marking exercise was carried out and a percentage increase was determined to be the best way forward as an interim arrangement until the second phase of High needs Block national consultation clarified future arrangements. Models were created at 2% and 3% and it was determined that given there had been no change for many years 3% would be the appropriate increase for A to E for EHC plans. The in-year impact would be approximately £64,350 (this figure was based on statements and EHC Plan costs as at July 2016) and the annual impact would be £110,314.

It was noted that for the Top-up for specialist provisions was amended in 2014 to account for the removal of the AWPU from provision places. This led to different top up values in different phases for the same type of provision. The Forum were asked to agree a change to the top up elements in the Austistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and the Hearing Impairment (HI) provisions on the average and then an increase by 3% in line with mainstream top-ups. This lead to an increase for all schools except for the secondary/upper ASC Provisions, where this led to a small reduction of £657 per place. The annual cost would be £15,405. The Forum agreed to leave the Upper Schools at their current rate and to average out the remaining schools whilst including the Upper Schools in the calculation.

Special School top-ups still have additional work to be done due to discrepancies in funding levels in different schools against the same descriptors. However it was noted that the top-up once agreed would be implemented from September 2016.

Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB) had 100 places which receive the £10k place element and an additional £8,005 per place paid by the Local Authority.

The Executive Head of the ACB had drafted descriptors for needs as with special schools which were shared with the Forum, and would bring further information linking these to costs to the next meeting of the Forum in November.

It was noted that a Free School Bid was currently being developed by Oak Bank School and the ACB for a smaller Alternative Provision Free School

that would focus on pupils with higher levels of need which the ACB currently finds difficult to accommodate.

The growing demand on places and an increase in EHC Plans, the SEN Contingency budget is anticipated to be utilised and fully spent in 2016/17.

CBSF/15/12. Early Years Funding Streams

The Forum received a report which provided information regarding the Early Years and related Funding. The Forum had requested the information at their meeting on 13 June 2016.

The Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention provided the history on how the funding had emerged. This included the funding for two-year olds which was not part of the DSG but paid to providers at a nationally agreed rate.

The Early Years Block funds the following:

- Funding for three and four year olds
- Funding for two year olds
- Pupil premium for three and four year olds only

The report set out how the funding for each block was determined.

The Forum noted that within the section, What is funded in Early Years from High Needs Block, the holiday funding was able to be requested but in reality it was not available. In particular it was noted that during the holiday period it was not available. The Assistant Director School Improvement that the current format of 38 weeks may not be the right model. Parents would need to be available to help but cost implications would be present.

The report detailed the other funding areas associated with Early Years:

- The Development Team
- The Business Support Team
- Information on childcare, other services, facilities or publications for parents, prospective parents, children or young people
- A brokerage service for advice and assistance for childcare
- To meet the local need for sufficient high quality integrated early years provision and childcare

The Forum noted that there was no formal Growth Fund in Early Years. Requests are made to the Childcare Funding as detailed in 3.e.i of the report.

Extended School Funding ceased in 2010 and was not replaced. Pupil premium had replaced some of the work previously funded by the Extended Schools Grant.

The table on page 11 of the report provided the Forum with a clearer understanding of the Early Years financial makeup.

The Forum thanked the Officers for the clarification and felt that it would be a great starting point for the Technical Sub Group.

The Forum noted the Early Years Block Consultation and Future Funding as detailed in Section 7 of the report. The consultation had been launched on 11 August and runs until 22 September. The Forum discussed the consultation as detailed in minute CBSF/16/13.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the various funding streams contributing to Early Years be noted.**
- 2. that the information on Early Years National Funding Formula Consultation be noted.**

CBSF/15/13. Early Years Consultation

The Forum received an overview of the responses which would be submitted by Central Bedfordshire Council to the DfE consultation on the Early Years National Funding Formula.

The Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention provided the Forum with the rationale behind the responses. The Forum agreed with the proposed responses and thanked Officers for their work.

The Forum were requested to provide any additional responses to the Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention by Wednesday 21st September as the deadline for submissions is Thursday 22 September 2016.

It was noted that the DfE had issued the consultation in the middle of the Summer Holidays and requested the responses within 2 weeks of schools returning. The Forum felt that this was poor timing.

CBSF/15/14. Any Other Business

The Forum discussed the continuing issue of vacancies and the difficulties in filling the places.

It was suggested and agreed that the meetings would be held within normal business hours and therefore from November 2016 the meetings would begin at 3.00pm. Refreshments would be adjusted to reflect the time of day.

It was appreciated that the new time may cause issues for some members but it was hoped that it would attract new members and that where some members may find the new time more challenging occasional attendance would be possible.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 8.00 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated