

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands on Monday, 12 March 2018

PRESENT

Miss K Hayward (Chairman)
Mrs S Howley MBE (Vice-Chairman)

School Members:	Mrs A Brabner	Governor
	Mr D Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher
	Mr P Burrett	Headteacher
	Mr O Button	Principal, Queensbury Academy
	Mr P Cohen	Executive Headteacher
	Mrs L Davies	Headteacher
	Mrs L Leonard	Head of School
	Ms A Moyle	School Business Manager
	Mr J Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Mr S Tiktin	Governor, Beaudesert Lower School
Observer:	Cllr K Ferguson	Chairman of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Apologies for Absence:	Mrs A Challis	
	Cllr S Dixon	
	Mr M Foster	
	Mrs S Mortimer	
	Ms S Rymell	
	Mrs S Tyler	
Officers in Attendance:	Mr P Ball	Senior Finance Manager, Children's Services
	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs S Harrison	Director of Children's Services
	Ms D Hill	Head of Financial Support
	Mr G Jones	Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help
	Mr L Jones	Assistant Director for Education and Transformation
	Mr C Kiernan	Interim Head of School Improvement
	Ms F Nnanyere	Interim Head of Service

CBSF/17/19. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on the 20 November 2017 and 29 January 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

20 November 2017

Mr P Cohen be added to the attendance.

29 January 2018

CBSF/17/8 Schools Forum and Technical Sub Group membership
Mr D Brando-Bravo be amended to Mr D Brandon-Bravo.

Matters Arising / Actions from Schools Forum

9 January 2017

CBSF/16/18 High Needs Block DSG update report

Alternative Ways to fund the ACB – considered by the High Needs Technical Sub Group – to be removed.

CBSF/16/29 Dedicated Schools Grant

An update on the DSG funding costs requested for the Schools Admissions team had been provided at the meeting on the 20 November 2017 – to be removed.

6 March 2017

CBSF/16/46

- Inclusion for High Needs – an update would be provided at the June meeting of the Forum.
- Special Schools Outreach work was ongoing.
- DSG contribution to Central Overheads had been flagged as a Children's Services Pressure as part of the MTFP process for 2018/19– to be removed
- Special Schools banding – an update would be provided at the June meeting of the Forum.

12 June 2017

An update on the review of Special Needs and Inclusion spend carried out in Early Needs would be provided at the June 2018 meeting of the Forum.

18 September 2017

CBSF/17/13

An explanatory note about LAG funding had been sent to all schools in the Sandy area – to be removed.

CBSF/17/14 Chairman of the Sub-Groups of the Schools Forum

An update of the review of the membership of Schools Forum and sub-groups would be provided at the March meeting of the Forum – to be removed.

CBSF/17/17 Vacancies, training and Terms of Reference

An update on the Terms of Reference would be provided at the March meeting of the Forum. The training needs of members of the Forum would be revisited when the review of membership of the Schools Forum had been completed – to be removed.

CB/17/19 Growth Fund Responses

A review of the pilot year of the Growth Fund payment arrangements would be added to the work programme – to be removed.

CBSF17/20 School Finance update

An update on the excess surplus balances held by schools would be provided at the March meeting of the Forum – to be removed.

CBSF/17/21 DSG update

- A briefing note explaining the process for reviewing and consulting on the pre-16 funding formula 2018-19 had been sent to all schools – to be removed
- The proposed response to the consultation had been reported at the November meeting of the Forum – to be removed.
- A survey about the consultation on the pre-16 funding formula 2018-19 had been sent to all schools and stakeholders – to be removed.

CBSF/17/22 Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets

An update had been provided at the Forum meeting on the 29 January 2018 – to be removed.

CBSF/17/24 High Needs Block, budget monitoring and next steps

An update would be provided at the March meeting of the Forum – to be removed.

20 November 2017

CBSF/17/30 Membership of Schools Forum

An update would be provided at the March meeting of the Forum – to be removed.

CBSF/17/31 - update on the National Funding Formula

The three options for Blocks had been presented to schools – to be removed.

CBSF/17/35 Schools Admissions Team

An annual report on the work delivered by the School Admissions team, performance nationally and changes in demand volumes would be added to the work programme.

29 January 2018

CBSF/17/8 Schools Forum and Technical Sub-Group membership

An update would be provided at the March meeting of the Forum – to be removed.

CBSF/17/11 Early Years Block

An update would be provided at the June 2018 meeting of the Forum.

CBSF/17/14 High Needs Block spend and proposed 2018/19 budget

An update would be provided at the June meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED

that an appendix indicating the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and associated year groups be added as a standing item to the High Need Block update reports (Interim Head of Service).

CBSF/17/20. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The following announcements and communications were made:

Mr D Brandon-Bravo was stepping down from the membership of the Forum after eight years. Thanks were given to Mr Brando-Bravo for his dedication and for the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Schools Forum.

Mr G Jones, Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help would be leaving Central Bedfordshire Council to take up the role of Director of Children's Services at Leicester City Council. The Chairman thanked Mr Jones for the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Schools Forum and wished him success in his new appointment.

CBSF/17/21. Schools Forum powers and responsibilities

NOTED

The Schools Forum powers and responsibilities summary document issued by the Education Funding Agency in September 2017.

CBSF/17/22. Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum and Technical Sub Group membership, elections and Terms of Reference

The Schools Forum considered a report setting out the proposed Constitution and Terms of Reference for the Schools Forum, consistent with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2002 and subsequent regulations and statutory guidance.

Points and comments included:

1. Annex 3 of the report included the proposal that the representation of School Members of the Forum was open to all school sectors (lower, primary, middle, secondary or upper).
2. The inclusion of the descriptor 'middle school' in the proposed constitution of the Forum reflected the view of the working group that it was important

- for the membership to include representation from middle schools as some areas of Central Bedfordshire operated a 3 tier education system.
3. The membership of the Forum should include the flexibility to allow a Business Manager to attend meetings on behalf of a Head Teacher when necessary.
 4. The membership of the Forum should include representation from each sector / group, including Special School Academies.
 5. What was the rationale of the increase from two Lower Schools head teachers and two Lower School Governors in the current constitution to three Primary maintained school head teachers or representatives in the proposed constitution as school numbers had not changed?
 6. The current Non-school membership needed to be revisited to ensure regular attendance at meetings of the Forum.
 7. An effective mechanism for the dissemination of information from the Schools Forum to all school sectors needed to be identified.

RESOLVED

1. **that the Constitution of the Schools Forum as set out in Annex 3 of the report be agreed subject to the amendments:**
 - 3 primary maintained school governors (lower or primary)
 - 1 special school academy head teacher
 - Maintained 1 upper and 1 x middle
 - Academy – 1 x upper 1 x middle
2. **that the role of the Chairman of the Children's Overview and Scrutiny be amended from observer to Non-School Member.**
3. **that the appointments process as set out under paragraph 2.5 and in paragraphs 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9 of the report be agreed.**
4. **that the Terms of Reference and powers of the Schools Forum as set out in section 3 of this report, specifically in paragraphs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.7 be agreed.**
5. **that the role of the local authority as set out in paragraphs 3.5, 3.6 and 3.8 be agreed.**
6. **that the Interim Head of School Improvement would arrange for the the current membership vacancies of the Schools Forum to be advertised in Central Essentials.**
7. **that the Interim Head of School Improvement would circulate a spreadsheet separating schools into maintained and academies.**

CBSF/17/23. Dedicated Schools Grant update

Members considered an update on the 2017/18 DSG and Individual School Budgets for 2018/19.

Points and comments included:

- The main fundamental change for 2018/19 related to the distribution of funding via the deprivation factor which had now been combined with Free School Meals (FSM) and FSM6.
- The lump sum for 2018/19 was £110,000 (a reduction of £10,000 in comparison to 2017/18 funding)
- The rate revaluations had resulted in a reduction in the 2018/19 AWPU rate of £14.40.

NOTED

the update to the 2017/18 Dedicated School Grant (DSG) and Individual school budgets for 2018/19.

CBSF/17/24. School Contingency

Members considered an update on the use of the School Contingency Budgets for the financial year 2017/18.

Points and comments included:

- The School Contingency balance as at 26 February 2018 was £219,574.
- The total Early Year Contingency balance was currently £458,264. It was anticipated that following the January 2017 census adjustment and costs from the additional 15 hours free childcare that this balance would be spent.

NOTED

The Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Contingency spend for the financial year 2017/18.

CBSF/17/25. Schools Forum Budget

Members considered an update on the use of the School Forum Budget for 2017/18.

Points and comments included:

- The current balance of the School Forum Budget as at 31 January 2018 was £6,893.
- Further costs were expected prior to the end of the financial year.

NOTED

The Schools Forum spend to 31 January 2018.

CBSF/17/26. Update on Surplus Balances

Members received an update on the outcomes of the review of schools with high levels of balances at the end of 2016/17 and the intended use of these balances.

Points and comments included:

- The schools finance team had reviewed the returns from maintained schools and excess budgets committed against agreed criteria and had been challenged as appropriate.
- Acceptable responses had been received from all schools concerned showing how their balances would be used for capital and revenue funding.

NOTED

the report providing Schools Forum with the outcomes of the review of schools with high levels of balances at the end of 2016/17, and the intended used of these balances.

RESOLVED

that an appendix summarising the name of the school and the reason for the excess uncommitted balances be provided at the June meeting of the Forum.

[the meeting was adjourned 16.15]

[the meeting was reconvened 16.25]

CBSF/17/27. High Needs Block 2018/19 budget and investment proposals

The Schools Forum considered an update on the current projected spend against budget for the current financial year for the High Needs Block, the initial projections of the spend for 2018/19 and the proposals regarding the investment of 0.5% into the High Needs Block to support early intervention.

Points and comments included:

1. The report contained some very helpful scenarios and proposals but none were short term and there were no associated costings.
2. Further modelling was needed in order for members of the Forum to ratify the proposed recommendations about funding.
3. In response to the question raised of how the forecast overspend this year was going to be addressed, the Deputy Director for Education and Transformation explained that once the investment and key principles had been agreed, work would take place to cost areas where impact could be made in this and the next financial year and to identify in year indicative savings.

4. Because of budgetary pressures and having to target certain areas, some of the proposed investments such as clusters might not be possible for all schools. Work undertaken needed to include the recognition that any investment needed to benefit all schools.
5. Members of the Schools Forum had been made aware of the pressures on the High Needs block at least 12 months ago. At what stage did the Council's Executive become involved in order to mitigate the shortfall?
6. In response to concern expressed about some services being decommissioned, the Deputy Director for Education and Transformation explained that the review of current commissioned services being undertaken by the Commissioning Team linked in with the proposed work to try and mitigate the pressure on the High Needs Block.
7. Areas of work included identifying more innovative ways of the funding services, where the most impact could be made with the funding available and where earlier intervention could take place to prevent needs escalating.
8. Some representatives felt that family support workers were key in addressing the duplication of some service areas with the same small group of families in terms of the provision of early intervention and signposting. A possible solution could be to set up clusters and share pupil premium funding for the provision of family support workers.
9. The content of the tables on pages 6 and 7 of report were not consistent making it difficult to compare the lines of expenditure and figures.
10. In response to the question where would savings be made taking into account that the figures in table on page 7 of the report showed an Indicative Budget of £500,000 for 2018/19 for EHC Plans in comparison to the forecast spend of £561,000, the Interim Head of Service explained that a number of Plans had been underfunded and that some Plans were funded low level pre 16. Forecasting showed that a number of EHC Plans would be ceased in 2018/19.
11. Concern was expressed that the outturn forecast did not include the figures for Individual Schools Budget.
12. Some members of the Forum felt that the recommendation of the transfer of 0.5 per cent of the Schools Block into the High Needs Block in the financial year 2018/19 was in direct contrast to paragraphs 20 and 21 of the High Needs report presented at the Schools Forum meeting on the 29 January, which set out the proposal of allocating approximately half of the investment from the High Needs Block into immediate support to schools that could help to reduce some of the spend areas for 2018/19 and the other half of this investment being held initially, in contingency, given the existing known pressure of the overall block.

NOTED

- 1. the update on the High Needs Block spend for the financial year 2017/18.**
- 2. the potential pressures and actions to mitigate such pressures for 2018/19 against budget.**

RESOLVED

1. to move forward with the proposed investment proposals following the Head teacher review detailed in Appendix A of the report with regular updates provided to the Forum.
2. that costs for the proposed 0.5% investment would be reported at the June meeting of the Forum.
3. that the lines of expenditure be aligned in the table indicating the Initial budget for the centrally retained High Needs Block, actual expenditure and forecast expenditure and the table indicating Forecast spend for 2017/18, indicative budget for 2018/19 and projected spend without mitigating action being taken.
4. that the High Needs Technical Sub Group would meet in April 2018 to discuss the options to take this work forward and priorities.

CBSF/17/28. Work Programme

The Forum considered its Work Programme.

RESOLVED

that the Work Programme for the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum be agreed subject to the addition of the following:

- **an update on Early Years spend, the impact of the potential 15 hours additional places be provided at the June meeting of the Forum.**

CBSF/17/29. Date of the Next Meeting

Monday 12 June 2018.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 3.05 p.m. and concluded at 5.26 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated