

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at The Warrenfield Room, The Rufus Centre, Steppingley Road, Flitwick, MK45 1AH on Thursday, 14 December 2017

PRESENT

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

School Members:	Mrs A Brabner	Governor
	Mr P Burrett	Headteacher
	Mr O Button	Principal, Queensbury Academy
	Ms A Moyle	School Business Manager
	Mr J Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Mr S Tiktin	Governor, Beaudesert Lower School
Non-School Members:	Mrs A Challis	Cleverkidz
Apologies for Absence:	Mr D Brandon-Bravo	
	Mrs L Davies	
	Cllr S Dixon	
	K Ferguson	
	Mr M Foster	
	Mr G Jones	
	Mr L Jones	
	Mrs L Leonard	
	Mr S Powell	
	Mrs S Tyler	
Substitutes:	Mr S Barnard, NASUWT	
Officers in Attendance:	Mr P Ball	Senior Finance Manager
	Mrs J Edwards	Head of Virtual School
	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs S Harrison	Director of Children's Services
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services

CBSF/17/1. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman congratulated Ms D Hill on her promotion to Head of Service - Financial Support and welcomed Mr P Ball, Senior Finance Manager, to the meeting.

CBSF/17/2. **Schools Forum powers and responsibilities**

The Forum received a report setting out the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities which had been re-issued by the Education Funding Agency in December 2016.

NOTED**the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities report.****CBSF/17/3. National Funding Formula consultation**

Members of the Forum received a presentation on the responses to the Proposed School Funding for 2018/19 Consultation.

During the update the following key points were noted:

29 responses (22% of schools) had been received to the on-line consultation relating to 2018/19 Schools Block funding which took place between the 10 November and 8 December 2017, of which 8 had stated that they did not agree with any of the substantive changes (lump sum, deprivation or High Needs transfer).

Of the 4 models shared with schools to help them in considering their responses to the consultation, Model 2 was the local authority's recommended option:

- Lump sum was reduced to £110k
- Deprivation Funding was in line with NFF
- Removed the LAC factor
- Transferred 0.5% to the High Needs Block
- MFG 0%

The initial model presented to the Forum in November, was based on the same changes as above but with a -1.5% MFG which would have left some schools (mainly lowers) receiving a lower amount than in 2017/18 based on the October 2016 census and characteristics.

The Director of Children Services confirmed that the proposed transfer of 0.5% which equated to approximately £817k (based on the indicative school block allocation) would be ring-fenced to represent a one year investment to provide dedicated hands on support to all mainstream schools (Maintained and Academy alike) in earlier identification and intervention for children with additional needs. In terms of filling additional posts, one possibility could be to recruit as a secondment or fixed term post.

In January and February a full budget breakdown of this spend would be developed with a focused task and finish group of schools. The proposals would be reported to the clusters and to Schools Forum in March 2018.

The Director confirmed the ring-fenced funding would be for new initiatives and would not be used for any deficit. Any unspent funding would be brought back to Schools Forum to decide on reallocation.

Guidance was still awaited from the DfE relating to the recoupment for places at the ACB that would impact the High Needs Block.

It would not be possible to transfer between blocks once the National Funding Formula had been introduced.

The Head of Virtual Schools advised members of the Forum that the consultation provided the opportunity to be creative and innovative in partnership with school, to link in with some of health strategies such as mental health in schools and the impact on exclusions and work with specialist provision on outreach rather than backfill.

The proposed Model 2 would see no school receive less funding than it did last year (assuming pupil number and characteristics remain the same). MFG would be zero and would be paid for by capping.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that she had not approached the council regarding the possibility of LA funding the issues of the High Needs Block.

The deadline for submission of disapplication requests to the DfE was the 30 November 2017. The Secretary of State had been advised that the Schools Forum for Central Bedfordshire were unable to meet the application deadline due to the timings of the Forum meetings.

Points and comments included:

1. The lack of responses to the consultation was a concern. Was this because of a lack of understanding or were schools happy for the decision to be made on their behalf?
2. The consultation had been promoted in Central Essentials and Governors Essentials and a letter had been sent from School Forum setting out the proposed models on which to base a response. In terms of future consultations on the NFF, there was more work to be done to consider all factors proposed in the NFF, mainly those that the Department were still considering. Future consultations could include attending cluster meetings to explain the impact of the Formula across a locality. It was hopeful that this approach would increase the number of responses.
3. From the point of view of lower schools, an area for consideration was the large increase in the demand of number of SEN pupils which put extreme pressure on the school's budget and looking at ways how this could be addressed.
4. The Forum had been advised that the pressure on the High Needs Block was a national issue; the root cause being insufficient funding to meet the current need. The High Need Strategic grant is enabling additional resource to investigate the way forward.

5. The Forum was being asked to agree the movement of 0.5% of the Schools Block into the High Needs Block for 2018/19. This was a one year proposal whilst new ways of working were explored.
6. Was there an outline plan and had costings taken place on how the £817k would be spent as it was difficult to accept and endorse a blanket 0.5% movement without a real understanding of the risks and outcome.
7. Recruitment of specialist teachers and staff was difficult at the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB) and Oak Bank. Where would this level of staff be attracted from?
8. Clarity was requested of the nature of some of the proposed spend in terms of directing individual support and resources in school as it would be very difficult to measure the impact of this spend in a meaningful way.
9. Lower schools were already struggling to make their budgets work. They were now facing a reduction of £10,000 being taken from the lump sum and a reduced AWPU which added to existing budgetary pressures.
10. If members of the Forum decided in favour of the proposal, this would be contrary to outcome of the consultation where one in three of the schools who responded disagreed strongly with the proposal to move the funding.

On being put to the vote 3 Members voted for approval, 6 voted against and 0 abstained. The movement of 0.5% of the Schools Block into the High Needs Block was not approved (Model 2).

RESOLVED

that the Secretary of State would be advised of the outcome of the School Funding Consultation.

[NOTE

At the request of the Chairman, the votes from those members who sent apologies were counted alongside those who were present.

The resolution was subsequently amended as follows:

6 members voted for approval
6 voted against
0 abstained

The Secretary of State would subsequently be advised that the movement of 0.5% of the Schools Block into the High Needs Block was approved].

CBSF/17/4. **Date of the Next Meeting**

Monday 29 January 2018, 3pm, Room 15, Priory House, Shefford.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 1.30 p.m. and concluded at 2.50 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated