

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday, 28 June 2010

### PRESENT

Jim Parker (Chairman)

School Members:	Anne Bell	Headteacher, Willow Nursery School
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie	Headteacher, Glenwood Special School
	Richard Holland	Governor, Harlington Upper School
	Sue Howley	Governor, Greenleas Lower School
	Mr R V Johnson	Governor, Edward Peake Middle School
	Ray Payne	Headteacher, Henlow Middle School
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Linslade Lower School
Non-School Members:	Caroll Leggatt	PVI Early Years Providers Representative
	Bill McCarthy	Teacher's Union Representative
Apologies for Absence:	Neil Bramwell	
	Sharon Ingham	
	Ian Mitchell	
	Chris Vesey	
Members in Attendance:	Cllr Mrs A M Lewis	
Officers in Attendance:	Mr M Bowmer	Assistant Director, Finance
	Ms D Lester	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Mooring	Corporate Policy Advisor (Climate Change/Sustainability)
	O'Loughlin	HR Business Partner
	Mr R Parsons	Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning
	Mrs K Partington	Strategic Finance Manager
	Ms K Riches	Head of Audit
	Willoughby	

CBSF/10/70 **Minutes of 8 March 2010 and Matters Arising**

### RESOLVED

**the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

The Forum was updated on the following matters arising from the minutes:

L/04/51 – PVI 2010/11 Rate – Members queried the number of hours that Lower Schools would be receiving funding for the delivery of the Early Years Entitlement. It was agreed that clarification would be given at the next meeting of the Forum.

L/04/57 – A briefing note on PFI funding would be circulated to Members of the Forum after the meeting. Information showing relevant budget pressures and savings would also be circulated to Forum Members.

#### **CBSF/10/71 School Audit Strategy**

The Forum considered a report setting out a proposed School Audit Strategy for 2010/11-2012/13. The report outlined the background to the mandatory requirement that all schools be assessed against the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) and the need for a change as a result of revised guidelines issued by DCSF in April 2010. The proposed Strategy would enable Internal Audit to address the need for a considered risk based approach to FMSiS re-assessments together with a rolling programme of probity assurance work. Approval was also sought for the continuation of DSG funding to enable the work to be carried out.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. that the proposed School Audit Strategy as detailed in the submitted report be noted.**
- 2. that approval be given to top slicing DSG funding at the current level of £38,231 over the next four years to enable Internal Audit to deliver a programme of light touch FMSiS re-assessments.**

#### **CBSF/10/72 Vetting and Barring**

Item withdrawn from the agenda.

#### **CBSF/10/73 Surplus Balances**

The Forum considered a report updating members on 2009-10 Balances for Central Bedfordshire Schools and new guidance for local authorities on managing Surplus School Balances. It was noted that the proposal to set up a Surplus Balance Sub-Group to discuss surplus balances arising from the 2009-10 financial year would be considered later in the agenda as part of an overall discussion on membership (minute CBSF/10/83 refers).

**RESOLVED**

1. **that the update report on the 2009-10 Balances for Central Bedfordshire Schools and new guidance for local authorities on managing Surplus School Balances be noted.**
2. **that consideration of a Balances Sub-Group to discuss surplus balances arising from the 2009-10 financial year be deferred until item 15 on the agenda in context of the overall discussion on future meetings of the Forum and its Sub Groups (minute CBSF/10/83 refers.)**
3. **that should there be a need for a claw back arising from the 2009-10 review of Surplus Balances that the funds be re-cycled to the School Specific Contingency.**
4. **that revisions to the Scheme for Financing School be consulted upon to:**
  - **require a revised budget plan to be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> October each year**
  - **reduce the surplus balance thresholds for 2011-12**
  - **redefine the definition of Earmarked Funds.**

**CBSF/10/74 School Redundancies**

The Forum received a presentation on the process and financial support for school redundancies. The presentation covered the following areas:

- Existing policy
- Historical spend
- School Contingency Budget
- Redundancy process summary
- The way forward.

During the general discussion that ensued comments were made about the need for adequate forward planning. Whilst schools were currently required to contact the Authority 6 months in advance of an impending redundancy schools may be asked to come forward earlier than the current two terms.

The Forum, noting that to date funding for redundancies/early retirement for 2010/11 was £680K compared to £167K in 2008/09 and £190K in 2009/10, recognised schools needed to explore all possible options and actions that could be taken at an early stage for reducing staffing before looking at the redundancy route.

The Forum, in noting that the Authority was looking at alternative approaches for providing financial support for school redundancies, agreed that a report would need to be brought to a future meeting on what the new criteria for

supporting schools financially might be. Members were asked to pass any comments on the way forward to Dawn Hill.

**[NOTE: A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix A to the minutes.]**

#### CBSF/10/75 **School Asset Management**

The Forum considered a report updating members on the development of the Schools Asset Management Plan (AMP) which would form the basis for strategic decision making on the prioritisation of future schools capital programmes. The report also provided an update on the 2010/11 Schools Capital Programme.

As part of its deliberations the Forum received a presentation that provided an overview of the Carbon Reduction challenge (CRC) facing the Council and schools in Central Bedfordshire.

**(Note: A copy of the presentation is attached as Appendix B to the minutes.)**

The Forum discussed the challenges posed by the Carbon Reduction programme. Whilst acknowledging it was a challenge there were actions that when carried out would reduce energy consumption and carbon measures, as detailed in Appendix B of the submitted report.

The report also proposed the establishment of a schools Asset Management Planning Sub Group of the Schools Forum to oversee the further development of the AMP, and the development and delivery of a Schools Carbon Reduction Plan. The Forum agreed that this matter be deferred to later in the agenda as part of an overall discussion on membership (minute CBSF/10/83 refers).

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1. that progress made in developing a School Asset Management Plan (AMP) for Central Bedfordshire, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.**
- 2. that the update provided on the 2010/11 Schools Capital programme, attached as Appendix A to the submitted report, be noted.**
- 3. that the Carbon Reduction challenge facing the Council and schools in Central Bedfordshire, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.**
- 4. that consideration of establishing a Schools Asset Management Planning sub group, and membership, to oversee the further development of the AMP, the future prioritisation of various school capital programmes, and to take ownership for the development and delivery of a Schools Carbon Reduction Action Plan be**

**deferred to later in the agenda as part of an overall discussion on membership (minute CBSF/10/83 refers).**

**CBSF/10/76 Consultation on the future distribution of School Funding**

The Forum considered a report updating members on the consultation on the distribution to Local Authorities of the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) that finished on the 6 June 2010 together with the School Forum's response to the consultation. Members agreed that the proposal to establish a Technical Funding Sub Group to oversee any proposed formula change resulting from the review would be deferred to later in the agenda as part of an overall discussion on membership (minute CBSF/10/83 refers).

**RESOLVED**

- 1. that the report setting out the consultation of the distribution to Local Authorities of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and School Forum's response be noted.**
- 2. that consideration of establishing a Technical Funding Sub Group to oversee any proposed formula change resulting from the review and agree specific formula elements that require reconsidering be deferred to later in the agenda as part of an overall discussion on membership (minute CBSF/10/83 refers).**

**CBSF/10/77 Dedicated School Grant Out-Turn 2009 - 10 and Budget 2010 - 11**

The Forum considered a report which updated members on the deployment of the 2009/10 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the application for the 2010/11 DSG.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. that the deployment of the 2009-10 Dedicated School Grant be confirmed.**
- 2. that the application for the 2010-11 Dedicated School Grant be noted.**

**CBSF/10/78 14- 16 Practical Learning and Diploma Funding**

The Forum considered a report on the devolved funding of the DSG 14 -16 Practical Learning Options. It was noted that information had already been circulated to all head teachers explaining the way funding would be allocated for this financial year.

In response to noting that the 14 – 19 Partnership Strategy Group evaluated the effectiveness of current practical learning provision, assurance was given

that the strategy would be reviewed each year to ensure courses remained relevant to need.

## **RESOLVED**

**the Forum noted the following recommendations that were agreed at the 14-19 Partnership Strategy Group on 15 June:**

- (a) This information has already been shared with schools through a note to all head teachers explaining that the way funding is allocated will change for this financial year.**
- (b) The information has been planned by the Central Bedfordshire 14 – 19 finance sub-group (school and FE College representatives) and discussed by the Central Bedfordshire 14 – 19 Operational Group (May 2010)**

### **CBSF/10/79 School License Deficits**

The Forum considered an update report on License Deficit Schools. The report set out details of how the Scheme permits schools to plan for a deficit budget and the length of time (two years) over which schools could recover.

The Forum in noting the agreed criteria that had been set to assess schools on a case by case basis where a deficit beyond a two year period was required suggested that the criteria 'Plans to co-operate within two years with Trust, Federation or Partnerships' needed to be expanded upon to make clear the meaning.

## **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

### **CBSF/10/80 Good Practice and Future of the School Forum**

The Forum considered a paper from the Chairman setting out proposals from a Sub-Group meeting as to how the Schools Forum's business could be managed more effectively. Members discussed the suggestions, in particular noting the following matters:-

#### **Meeting structure**

Some members, whilst agreeing that increasing meetings from three to five would be beneficial in terms of scheduling business, commented that there could be difficulty for some members in attending day time meetings although acknowledging that day time meetings would be limited to two. It was suggested that there could be future scope for undertaking some of the sub group work within the main Forum meetings. The Forum supported the proposal that a pre-meeting be introduced to allow members to discuss

technical aspects of agenda items with officers but felt that it should be limited to a twelve month trial.

### **Communication**

The Chairman advised members that if the Forum was agreeable he would produce a newsletter to raise awareness of the Forum and to engage with stakeholders. As there was no clear mechanism to allow dialogue to take place with Lower Schools it was agreed that a report would be brought to a future meeting on how this could be facilitated to enable School Forum representation to be effective.

### **Administration Support and Training**

The Forum noted that the Sub-Group had discussed the area of administration support and training. It was felt that there was a need to provide greater administration support to the Forum as well as being more active in communication with the wider school community. The Forum felt that further investigations were needed to establish the scope of this issue.

### **RESOLVED**

- 1. that the number of Schools Forum meetings be increased to five per year and that two be held during business hours;**
- 2. that pre-meetings be held to allow Forum members to discuss technical aspects of the agenda with officers for a trial period of 12 months;**
- 3. that a newsletter be produced by the Chairman to raise awareness and to communicate the work of the School Forum;**
- 4. that a report be brought to a future meeting on how Lower School meeting structures might best allow School Forum representation to be effective.**
- 5. that an audit be undertaken to highlight training needs to enable a suitable training programme to be developed.**

### **CBSF/10/81 School Forum Regulations 2010**

The Forum considered a report setting out details of the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2010 which required changes to be made to the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum membership requirements of its Constitution and Terms of Reference. It was noted that the Regulations required the Forum to be reconstituted by 1 September taking into account the new requirements set out in the Regulations.

Members discussed the requirement that where there was at least one Academy in a local authority's area there must be at least one Academy

member on the Schools Forum. It was noted that if more Academies came into existence it would be necessary to review the number of places for Academy representation. This was because the Regulations required Academies, along with primary and secondary schools, to be broadly proportionally represented, having regard to the total number of pupils registered at them. In view of this members suggested a rider should be added to the Forum's Constitution and Terms of Reference to state that when more Academies are established a review would be carried out of the number of places available to them.

The Forum noted that if for any reason the Board of Governors of the All Saints Academy was unsuccessful in appointing a representative, for example if there was an election at which there was a tie, the local authority must take the decision, taking into account details such as individuals' previous membership and experience.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. that the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum Constitution and Terms of Reference be amended by:**
  - (a) deleting reference to the Learning and Skills Council as this body has ceased to exist;**
  - (b) adding provision for a representative of the Academy under the category of "School Members", bringing the number of School Members up to 13;**
  - (c) that a rider be added that when more Academies are established a review be carried out of the number of places available to them in accordance with the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2010; and**
  - (d) changing the number of meetings required by statute per year from 3 to 4 recognising the Forum's earlier decision to increase meetings to 5 a year (minute CBSF/10/80 refers).**
- 2. that the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum notes that arrangements will be put in place for the appointment of a representative of All Saints Academy to be a member of the Forum by 1 September 2010.**

#### **CBSF/10/82 Correspondence to and from the Forum**

The Chairman reported on the receipt of correspondence that had been referred to the School Finance Manager.



**CBSF/10/83 Future meetings of the Forum and Sub-Group Meetings**

In context of the Forum's earlier decision to increase meetings to 5 a year (minute CBSF/10/80 above refers) members discussed the increasing volume of work coming to the Schools Forum and that a number of Sub-Groups had already been established, as follows:-

Capital Group  
Early Years Reference Group  
Asset Management Group  
Technical Funding Group  
Terms of Reference and Procedure Group.

In view of the above the Forum suggested that there should be one larger main sub-group and that this should be the Technical Funding Group but with a wider membership of 5 members (Shirley-Anne Crosbie, Jim Parker, Richard Holland, Anne Bell and Bill Hamilton) which could be split into two if a need arose. It was noted that ad-hoc sub-group meetings could be held on other issues.

The Forum then considered recommendation 4 of agenda item 7 - School Asset Management, that a Schools Asset Management Planning sub group be set up to oversee the further development of the Asset Management Plan (AMP) (minute CBSF/10/75 above refers). In view of resolution 1 below it was agreed that officers should consult members on the development of the AMP. It was noted that the AMP, including future prioritisation of various school capital programmes and delivery of a Schools Carbon Reduction Action Plan could be taken to the General Heads meeting.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. that the Technical Funding Group be the main sub-group of the School Forum with a wider membership of 5 members (Shirley-Anne Crosbie, Jim Parker, Richard Holland, Anne Bell and Bill Hamilton) and if a need arises ad-hoc sub-group meetings be held on other issues.**
- 2. that the response to recommendation 4 of agenda item 7 - School Asset Management, that a Schools Asset Management Planning sub group be set up to oversee the further development of the Asset Management Plan (AMP) (minute L/04/75 above refers) be as follows:-**
  - that members of the Forum be consulted on the development of the Asset Management Plan, including future prioritisation of various school capital programmes and delivery of a Schools Carbon Reduction Action Plan.**
- 3. That the date of the next meeting of the School Forum be circulated to members of the Forum.**

**CBSF/10/84 Proposed Work Programme**

It was noted that a proposed work programme would be included on every School Forum agenda for the forward planning of business.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 8.28 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated ..... ..