

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Room 14 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday, 20 September 2010

### PRESENT

Jim Parker (Chairman)

School Members:	Anne Bell	Headteacher, Willow Nursery School
	Mr D Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher, Parkfields Middle School, Toddington
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie	Headteacher, Glenwood Special School
	Sharon Ingham	Headteacher, Hadrian Lower School
	Mr R Robson	Headteacher, Samuel Whitbread Collegiate

Non-School Members:	Bill McCarthy	Teachers' Union Representative
	Chris Vesey	14-19 Partnership Sector Representative

Apologies for Absence:

- Ian Greenley
- Bill Hamilton
- Richard Holland
- Sue Howley MBE
- Mr R V Johnson
- Caroll Leggatt
- Ray Payne
- Stephen Tiktin

Member in Attendance: Cllr Mrs Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Officers in Attendance:	Ms J Abbott	Head of School Improvement
	Mrs M Clampitt	Democratic Services Officer
	Mrs E Grant	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
	Dawn Hill	Finance Manager - Schools
	Ms M Peaston	Interim Committee Services Manager
	Mrs C Piotrowski	Educational Data Management Consultant
	Mr N Turner	ICT Consultant
	Mrs G Yates	Advisor PE - Children's Workforce Development Team

**CBSF/10/85 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising****RESOLVED**

**that the Minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 29 June 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Justine Abbott, Head of School Improvement who was present at the meeting.**

**CBSF/10/86 School Surplus Balances**

The Committee received and considered a report which outlined the proposals of the Surplus Balance Sub Group for the treatment of surplus balances arising in relation to budget shares. It was noted that the Council is required to produce a financial plan to reduce the surplus below the threshold. The Sub Group could allow the surplus to remain provided the funds would be used appropriately for the benefit of the school.

The Technical Funding Sub Group were invited to attend the meetings as there was not a specific sub group for Surplus Balances. The Sub Group met on 22 July 2010 to consider the surplus balances of 35 schools out of a total 138 schools.

It was noted that in previous years schools have had the option of a further allowance of £10,000 or 1% of the School Budget Share (SBS) in addition to the 8% (Nursery, Lower and Special Schools) and 5% (Middle and Upper) allowable threshold. 17 schools were removed from consideration. It was proposed this allowance be applied to the 2009/10 balances but explain to the relevant schools that it would not be available for the 2011/12 financial year. It was agreed that all schools will receive a letter explaining the balances arising beyond 2009/10 will not be allowed the additional allowance.

The Sub Group had reviewed supporting documentation for each school and recommended that nine schools should not be subject to clawback. The extenuating circumstances had been noted for an additional school which had received significant support from the Local Authority. The Forum noted the recommendation that this school should not be subject to clawback.

Of the remaining eight schools, the deadline for additional information to be provided was 30 September 2010 and the Sub Group would re-convene in early October to consider their cases. The recommendations on these eight schools would be brought to the Forum at their meeting to be held on 1 November 2010.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. that the latest update from the Surplus Balance Sub Group, be noted.**

2. **that the 17 schools holding balances in accordance with the additional criteria of £10,000 or one percent of the School Budget Share (SBS) be allowed to retain their surplus balances;**
3. **that a letter be sent to all schools advising that the additional allowance will not be in place for balances arising beyond 2009/10;**
4. **that the nine schools where the Sub Group accepted the information supplied in support of the Schools excess balance be permitted to retain the surplus balance, be approved.**
5. **that further information be requested from the remaining eight schools with 'minded to' clawback recommendation subject to an appeals meeting, be approved. The results would be brought back to the 1 November 2010 Schools Forum meeting.**
6. **that the school with extenuating circumstances and heavily supported by the Local Authority (LA) would not be subject to clawback, be approved.**

#### **CBSF/10/87 Harnessing Technology**

The Committee considered a report which sought to mitigate the impact of the reduction/removal of the Harnessing Technology Grant. This was a three-year funded grant which began in 2008 and was administered by Becta. The Forum meeting held on 13 March 2010 had resolved that each year 60% of the grant would be retained by the Local Authority and 40% would be devolved to schools. Becta provided annual guidance on the acceptable uses of the grant to support learning and teaching with ICT. The Harnessing Technology Grant in the last two years had been used for the following:-

- funding support for broadband revenue costs
- funding support for implementing learning platforms
- funding resources for use within the learning platform e.g. Encyclopaedia Britannica, espresso.

The new Coalition Government cut the grant firstly by 25% and then again by an additional 25% making a 50% overall cut. The Local Authority had originally expected to receive £1,121,341 for April 2010 – March 2011 but would now receive £560,670 for the same period. It was noted that the reduction in the amount of grant had been spread evenly between the LA and schools.

#### **Web Based MIS**

It was noted that 93 schools had transferred during the summer 2010 term, in addition 7 middle schools transferred to G2. The actual cost of funding was approximately £200k. The reduction in the grant has resulted in the Local Authority (LA) having funds to support only 50% of the costs.

It was noted that the LA would cover 50% of the migration costs but an annual charge will only be charged after this year.

### **Broadband**

The broadband network has been subject to a renewal process to ensure all schools have a greater bandwidth. Central Bedfordshire Council covered the significant excess charges through use of the Harnessing Technology Grant carry forward from 2009/10. Schools will be expected to cover a 40% increase to their average costs from April 2011.

### **Learning Platforms**

The LA was negotiating the annual maintenance charge for learning platforms, currently £4.00 per registered pupil per year. It was noted that the full impact of the reduction of the Harnessing Technology Grant would not be known until next year.

### **RESOLVED**

- 1. that a reduction by 50% of the contribution for web MIS system be agreed.**
- 2. that broadband costs be charged in full to schools;**
- 3. that there be no change to the current charging methodology for broadband;**
- 4. that the impact of the grant reduction from July 2011 on the implementing Learning Platforms and software resources be noted.**
- 5. that reduction of the 40% devolved allocation to schools by 50% be agreed.**

### **CBSF/10/88 Educational Visits and Journeys - EVOLVE**

The Forum considered a report from officers which provided an update on the use of EVOLVE and to seek agreement for the funding of the system. It was noted that EVOLVE is a system which allows schools to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in relation to risk management and monitoring, as set out in Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers – December 2001 DfES. It was noted that fifty five local authorities are provided with support for the safeguarding of pupils and staff offsite through EVOLVE.

The Forum noted that the former Bedfordshire County Council had not recharged schools for EVOLVE and this could not continue. It had been agreed that Central Bedfordshire would charge schools for the cost of the licence and that this would be taken from the total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as a top slice rather than a charge on individual schools.

It was noted that the costs would need to be reviewed in due course and if it became necessary to apply a charge to individual schools for use of the system then a sliding scale would be considered.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1) that the continued use of the EVOLVE system for the approval, monitoring and evaluation of Educational Visits and Journeys, be agreed; and**
- 2) that from 2010/11 the annual costs of £5,000 should be centrally held as a legitimate Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) expense.**

#### **CBSF/10/89 Early Years Single Funding Formula**

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the progress towards the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) for April 2011. The EYSFF was to be introduced by all Local Authorities by April 2011 for all free flexible early years entitlement (FFEE) providers.

A consultation document had been created which provided a breakdown of the costing into three groups which best reflected the needs of schools and the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.

Officers agreed to provide Forum members with a copy of the final consultation document, which is attached to these minutes at **Appendix A**. It was noted that two consultation evenings would be held on 3 and 8 November 2010. The consultation period concludes on 19 November 2010 and the results of the consultation would be brought to the January 2011 School Forum meeting.

Officers explained the formula was fee x per child x per hour. In response to a question, officers confirmed that nurseries were funded on the same basis as lower schools.

#### **RESOLVED**

**that the progress towards the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYFF) for April 2011, be noted.**

#### **CBSF/10/90 Dedicated School Grant**

The Forum considered the report of the Finance Manager which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Individual School Budgets (ISB) were issued in March 2010 for the year 2010/11, in advance of the amount of DSG to be received by Central Bedfordshire from the Department of Education (DfE), which was issued in July 2010.

In September 2006, the Schools Forum agreed that any shortfall would be met through the School Specific Contingency. The shortfall for 2010/11 was estimated at £309k.

It was noted that schools with foundation status are entitled to 80% mandatory relief on rates. Central Bedfordshire is actively working with the 15 foundation schools to ensure that all claims are filed which would enable a release of funds through the ISB to the Special Contingency. It is estimated that approximately £390k additional funding would be raised thus covering the shortfall.

## **RESOLVED**

**that the update on the 2010/11 Dedicated School Grant be noted.**

### **CBSF/10/91 School Contingency Budget**

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the use of the Schools Specific Contingency Budget for 2010/11. Forum members recalled at the 8 March 2010 meeting of the Schools Forum the Specific Contingency Budget had been set at £980,728. The School Contingency carried forward from 2009/10 £873,843 which was split between General (£585,638) and SEN Contingency (£288,205).

The Forum was advised that whilst the budget showed a large balance, it had already been committed for 2010/11 and was fully committed. Approximately £800k had been allocated for anticipated redundancy costs.

It was also noted that the Local Authority was funding more out-of-area placements than was optimal. An explanation was given about the pressures on local SEN schools.

It was noted that a review of transportation requirements for students attending SEN provision would be undertaken as there could be changes in needs over a child's school career. It was noted that Bedford Borough Council was carrying out a similar review.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. that the School Specific Contingency position statement as at Period 04 be noted;**
- 2. that an update on the Specific Contingency position statement be brought to a future meeting.**

**CBSF/10/92 Schools Forum Budget**

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the School Forum Budget for 2010/11. At the 8 March 2010 meeting of the School Forum it was agreed that a £5,000 budget would be established to meet the costs associated with the operation of the Forum. The budget would be reviewed annually.

It was noted that there had been an underspend during the 2009/10 budget of £2,694 which had been carried forward to the 2010/11 budget.

The Forum agreed an annual subscription of £2,000 to remain a member of the F40 Group, representing the lowest funded Local Authorities.

**RESOLVED**

**that the School Forum Budget be noted.**

**CBSF/10/93 Outline Forward Programme**

The Forum noted that its November meeting would be of considerable length due to the work agreed to be addressed.

It was noted that the School Asset Management Sub Group had invited a member of the Schools Forum to sit on their panel and be responsible for reporting any decisions taken back to the main Forum. It was agreed that a letter would be sent out to all Headteachers asking for volunteers.

It was also noted that a separate canvas for membership on the Technical Funding Sub Group would be carried out for Lower and Middle Schools as there was a lack of representation from both areas.

The Forum was advised that a Technical Funding training course would be held on 24 September 2010. It was noted that there would be no Lower School representation due to prior commitments.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. that a letter be sent to all head teachers asking for a volunteer to sit on the School Asset Management Sub Group.**
- 2. that a letter be sent to the Lower and Middle Schools asking for a representative from each phase to sit on the Technical Funding Sub Group.**

**CBSF/10/94 Correspondence to and from the Forum**

The Chairman reported that no correspondence had been received since the last meeting of the Forum on 28 June 2010.

**CBSF/10/95 Future meeting arrangements**

The Forum noted that the next meetings of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum would be as follows:--

- 1 November 2010 at 6.00pm in Room 15, Priory House
- 24 January 2011 at 9.00am in Committee Room 1, Dunstable Offices
- 7 March 2011 at 6.00pm in Room 14, Priory House
- 21 June 2011 at 9.00am in Room 15, Priory House

**RESOLVED**

**that the meeting dates and times set out above be agreed.**

**CBSF/10/96 Close**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 7.05 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated ..... ..