

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 1 November 2010

PRESENT

Jim Parker (Chairman)

School Members:	Anne Bell	Headteacher, Willow Nursery School
	David Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher Parkfields Middle School
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie	Headteacher, Glenwood Special School
	Richard Holland	Governor, Harlington Upper School
	Sue Howley MBE	Governor, Greenleas Lower School
	Sharon Ingham	Headteacher, Hadrian Lower School
	Vaughan Johnson	Governor, Edward Peake Middle School
	Ray Payne	Headteacher, Henlow Middle School
	Rob Robson	Headteacher, Samuel Whitbread Collegiate
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Linslade Lower School
Non-School Members:	Ian Greenley	Church of England Diocese Representative
	Bill Hamilton	Roman Catholic Diocese Representative
	Caroll Leggatt	PVI Early Years Providers Representative
Apologies for Absence:	Cllr Mrs A M Lewis, Portfolio Holder Children's Services	
	Chris Vesey, 14-19 Partnership Sector Representative	
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	Senior Finance Manager – Children Services

CBSF/10/97 **Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 20 September 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Forum asked Officers to provide an update to the next meeting on the following issues:-

- Harnessing Technology and Learning Platforms – details of the annual maintenance resource implications
- Whether schools have been advised of the broadband rate.
- The updated Schools Forum Work Programme. (This would also be circulated with the Minutes.)

What was the benefit of being a member of the F40 Group – the Chairman that it provided the Forum with a voice for equity in pupil funding. The Forum along with forty other underfunded Local Authorities worked together to challenge Central Government on issues. The Forum responded to Consultations, discussions with Ministers and also invited to Saturday morning forum meetings.

CBSF/10/98 School Surplus Balances

The Forum received and considered a report setting out the recommendations of the Surplus Balance Sub Group following its consideration of further information received from the remaining eight schools with “minded to” clawback recommendation as agreed at the 20 September 2010 Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum meeting (minute no. CBSF/10/86 refers).

It was noted that all eight schools had provided sufficient explanation to support the surplus balances and it was recommended that no surplus balances be clawed back. The information could be placed under two broad headings:-

- (i) clarification of capital projects and repairs and maintenance;
- (ii) clarification regarding payment of redundancies and/or safeguarding and sustainability of staffing structures funded by surplus balances.

The Forum requested that all schools be reminded of the requirement that information be provided in a timely manner. Officers confirmed that a letter had been sent to every school.

RESOLVED

to approve the Surplus Balance Sub Group’s recommendation that there be no surplus balance claw back in respect of the eight schools.

CBSF/10/99 Feedback from Technical Funding Sub Group

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update of the work of the Technical Funding Sub Group and proposed formula changes for the funding period 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012.

The Forum noted that the Technical Funding Sub Group had met on 24 September 2010 for a training session on current methodologies which related to DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) and S251 (Statutory Children's Services Statement) and to discuss the way forward on the current funding consultation. The minutes of the meeting were attached at Appendix A to the submitted report.

It was also noted that the Department for Education (DfE) had launched a consultation on the new School Finance (England) Regulations 2011 and requested responses by Friday 10 December 2010. It was the opinion of the Sub Group that as little change as possible should be proposed until all consultations had been completed and clearer guidance received from the DfE.

Officers explained that Standards funds would be merging with the DSG. The monies would remain but reporting would need to be clear. It was proposed that a line be added to the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to show the separate amounts. It was noted that monetary values would not be available until December. The factors which make up the formulas would be reviewed once the government funds were known.

The Forum was advised that the methodology for Special Schools would not be changed for 2011/12.

It was noted that small school protection would be reviewed as this was deemed a relative factor for calculations and had not been reviewed for some time.

The AWPU (Age Weight Pupil Unit) value would be adjusted relative to the amount per pupil should there be a shortfall or increase in DSG funding for 2011/12.

The Forum agreed to delay the review of the following factors to a future meeting:-

- Floor area
- Threshold
- PFI
- Lump sum
- AWPU
- Small Schools Protection.

RESOLVED

- 1. that no changes would be made to any of the formula funding factors for 2011/12;**
- 2. that should other grants merge with the DSG following the School Funding Consultation, these grants should be clearly shown as a separate factor in the formula budget;**

3. that no changes would be made to the current methodology for funding Special Schools;
4. that the review of the factors detailed below following the introduction of the new funding methodology from Government be deferred to a future meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum:-
 - floor area
 - threshold
 - pfi
 - lump sum
 - AWPU
 - Small Schools Protection
5. that should there be a shortfall or increase in DSG funding for the period 2011/12, the AWPU value relative to the amount per pupil be consequently adjusted.

CBSF/10/100 Revision to Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum received and considered a report which provided feedback from schools following the consultation on the proposed revisions to the Scheme for Financing schools, and which sought the Forum's approval of the proposed changes.

Formal consultation on the revision to the Scheme for Financing Schools was agreed at the Schools Forum meeting held on 28 June 2010 (minute no. CBSF/10/76 refers). The consultation period ended on 6 October 2010.

The main changes proposed were as follows:-

- a revised budget plan to be submitted by 31 October each year (following census day).
- reduce the Surplus Balance thresholds arising from balances for 2011/12 onwards from 8% and 5% of the Schools Budget Share (SBS) to 5% and 3% (Nursery, Lower and Special – Middle and Upper respectively).
- re-define the classification of Earmarked Funds to exclude unspent School Development Grant and School Standards Grant as these are effectively annual allocations.

It was noted that Central Bedfordshire Council had consulted with thirty two other authorities regarding their operation of a balance control mechanism. Eleven responses had been received with no authority having reduced their thresholds and one authority allowed an assumed licensed deficit to the value of one percent of the SBS. Officers confirmed that twenty-seven schools in Central Bedfordshire had an approved Licensed Deficit at the end of the 2009/10 financial year. If a scheme to allow a deficit of 1% of SBS prior to a submission for approval being required, no school would have met the criterion and no applications would have been submitted. Fourteen schools currently

hold a licensed deficit for 2010/11 of which three would not be required to apply under the scheme as they are within 1% of SBS.

RESOLVED

1. to approve the proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools requiring:-
 - (a) a revised budget plan; and
 - (b) the re-definition of the classification of Earmarked Funds.
2. that the surplus balance thresholds remain at 8% for Nursery, Lower and Special Schools, and 5% for Middle and Upper Schools;
3. that for the financial year 2010/11 onwards, schools be allowed a tolerance level of 1% of their individual school budget share before an application for approved License Deficit would be required;
4. that a letter be sent to all schools advising them of the changes as outlined in resolutions 1-3 above.

CBSF/10/101 Presentation - Impact of Council Budgets

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services gave a presentation on the Impact of Council Budgets. A copy of the presentation slides are attached to these minutes at **Appendix A**.

CBSF/10/102 License Deficits and Risk Register for Schools

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on License Deficit Schools. The annual report provided an update on the RAG (red, amber, green) identification system. The following table provides details of the figures for the 2010/11 year which were reported orally at the meeting.

Phase	No. of Schools	Green	Amber	Red
Nursery	4	4		
Lower	94	33	5	2
Middle	24	9	3	1
Upper	9	2	3	
Special	5	2		
Total	136	50	11	3

It was noted that fourteen schools had deficits. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for Central Bedfordshire for 2010/11 was £146.9m of which £133.6m was delegated to schools. 8 schools have yet to provide an agreeable recovery plan for the 2010/11 financial year.

It was noted that the Scheme for Financing schools allows one third of their revenue balances to be used to finance deficit arrangements. The Revenue balance for the financial year 2009/10 is £7.9m.

It was noted that every school had received a letter which outlined where they had been ranked. School Improvement were looking at the recategorisation of schools which would be a combined classification. A school would not be given a clean bill of health if the financial element raised concern.

The figures for the 2009/10 year were as follows:-

Total schools 139 of which 8 were red, 19 were amber and 49 were green. The balance of the schools were not categorised to be of concern.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the update on the License Deficit Schools be noted.**
- 2. that the update on the Schools Finance Risk Register be noted.**

CBSF/10/103 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. The Forum noted that the commitments as detailed at the 20 September meeting (minute no. CBSF/10/91 refers) had been incorporated.

The adjustment made to budgets following the pupil head counts would be identified shortly.

The Forum expressed concern about redundancy payments and the decreasing budget from which they were to be paid. Clarification was requested of what requirements had to be met for the Local Authority to be responsible for the redundancy payments. Clear guidance was requested between the post and TLR (Teaching Learning responsibility). Officers were asked to provide feedback from Human Resources on the process for redundancies and the protection of Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments.

It was noted that where schools had surpluses, redundancies could not be paid for by the Local Authority. It was also noted that if redundancies occurred schools were not expected to recruit new employees.

Officers reminded the Forum that the DSG could be used to cover the redundancies but only to a finite amount. Overspends would be permitted but would impact on the first payment taken from the next years DSG thus making a reduction in the amount available to all schools.

The Forum asked Officers why budgets were not available until April 2011. Officers explained that the statutory date for issuing the Schools Budgets is 31 March however the Local Authority (LA) are looking to issue budgets by the 18 March 2011. The census data was not returned until 4 February 2011 at which point it had to be cleansed to ensure that no child is counted in two areas. This process takes several weeks due to the volume of data collected.

Officers confirmed that they would be unable to give actual financial figures until the Government provided information. It was agreed that draft figures would be provided at the January meeting.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Schools Contingency Budget be noted;**
- 2. that clarification on the process for redundancies and the protection of Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments be provided at the earliest opportunity.**

CBSF/10/104 School Forum Budget

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the School Forum Budget for 2010/11. The available balance was £3,848 having carried forward the underspend from the 2009/10 budget, consultancy DSG review and the F40 subscription as agreed at the 20 September 2010 meeting (see Minute No. CBSF/10/92).

RESOLVED

that the balance of £3,848 of the School Forum Budget be noted.

CBSF/10/105 Correspondence to and from the Forum

The Chairman reported that no correspondence had been received since the last meeting of the Forum on 20 September 2010.

CBSF/10/106 Future meeting arrangements

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

- 24 January 2011 at 9.00am in Committee Room 1, Dunstable Offices
- 7 March 2011 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Priory House
- 21 June 2011 at 9.00am in Room 15, Priory House

Other meetings are to be held as follows:-

- 11 November 2010 – School Forum Network Group
- 15 January 2011 – F40 Executive Committee meeting from 11.00am at Amerton Farm, Staffs.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 8.05 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated