

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 20 June 2011

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 MBE	Governor, Greenleas Lower 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
Observer:	Cllr M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
Apologies for Absence:	David Brandon-Bravo	
	Ali Hadawi CBE	
	Sharon Ingham	
	Vaughan Johnson	
	Tom Waterworth	
Member in Attendance:	Cllr A D Brown	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs M Clampitt	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs E Grant	Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
	Dawn Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr R Parsons	Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning
	Mrs S Tyler	Head Child Poverty and Early Intervention & Prevention

CBSF/11/1 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed the Forum that the election of a Lower School Head Teacher representative had occurred and Anne Kentish, Kensworth Lower School had been elected. She had sent her apologies for this meeting but would be at the September meeting.

In addition, Cllr Tony Brown was welcomed to the Forum as an observer.

CBSF/11/2 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 7 March 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. Subject to the inclusion of the missing sentence and correction to recommendation 2. from minute CBSF/10/123 as follows:-

The Forum considered the General Contingency to be set at £500,000 plus a further £1,000,000 in anticipation of the cost of redundancies in schools during 2011/12 and the SEN be £275,670 for the 2011/12 financial year.

2. that the 2011/12 General Contingency be set at £1,500,000 and SEN Contingency be set at £275,670 be agreed.

CBSF/11/3 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The Forum considered a report which provided an update and made recommendations on Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Pupil Premium.

The estimated DSG for 2011/12 is £172.564m. This is based on 37,046 (fte number of pupils at 01/11) multiplied by £4,658 (Guaranteed Unit of Funding (GUF). The figure was based on 7 schools (2 primaries and 5 secondary) converting to Academy status. The LACSEG unit per pupil fee for 2011/12 is £37.33 for Primary and £76.09 for Secondary schools which amounts to a total recoupment of £264k.

The Forum noted that should a further 22 schools convert to Academy status during 2011/12 and additional £440k LACSEG payment would be required.

The Forum agreed at the 7 March 2011 meeting that Headroom would be used up to £1m for funding LACSEG once this is exceeded it would be brought to the Forum for their consideration. The current estimated Headroom is £1.091k which had taken into account the initial LACSEG recoupment of £264k.

The Forum were asked to agree the allocation of £104k which had been included in the DSG but was specifically for new specialist status schools from September 2010. There were 5 middles and 2 specials entitled to the funds. The Forum agreed to the allocation.

Lastly the Forum noted that two consultations by the Secretary of State on 13 April 2011 and ending on 25 May 2011 for the following:-

- A consultation on school funding reform: Rationale and principles; and
- Academies Pre-16 Funding: Options for the 2012/13 Academic Year

A precise of the consultations and questions had been circulated with the agenda. It was noted that Forum Members had previous to the meeting been given the opportunity to provide comments before the 11 May response deadline.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the update on the estimated DSG funding and deployment be noted.**
- 2. that the estimated Headroom be noted.**
- 3. that the proposed use of Headroom to fund new specialist schools as of September 2010 be agreed.**

CBSF/11/4 Schools Forum Budget

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the School Forum Budget for 2011/12 and to propose a work session for the impending National Consultation.

The Forum at the meeting held on 7 March 2011 agreed that a budget of £3,000 be available to meeting the costs associated with the operation of the Forum e.g. venue hire, expenses and clerking costs, of which £2,000 be set aside and delegated to the Chairman of the Schools Forum to fund the commissioning of consultancy and administration support. At the same meeting the Schools Forum agreed to remain a member of the F40 Group, representing the lowest funded Local Authorities.

The School Forum had an under spend from 2010/11 of £3,650 which was carried forward to 2011/12.

The Forum agreed with the commissioning of consultancy for feedback on the National School Funding Consultation and a review of training requirements to be carried out during the new financial year.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the School Forum position statement as at 27 May 2011 be noted.**
- 2. that the School Forum budget be utilised for the provision of training and feedback to the National School Funding Consultation be agreed.**

CBSF/11/5 Extended Early years Offer in Schools

The Forum received a report which provided an update on the Extended Early Years offers in Schools. The Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention advised the Forum that the Flexible Free Extended Entitlement (FFEE) had since September 2010 become part of the universal offer for all three and four year olds.

It was noted that of the 96 Lower Schools only two were not fulfilling the 15 hours FFEE. It had been challenging for some schools to extend sessions from 2 ½ hours to 3 hours per day both in the morning and the afternoon. The Council is working with the remaining schools to discuss funding implications and teaching time and other impacts on the delivery of 15 hours through both morning and afternoon sessions.

It was agreed that should the number of schools offering the extended entitlement increase that the Schools Contingency fund would be used to fund the additional hours.

RESOLVED

that the situation regarding maintained schools offering the extended early years entitlement be noted.

CBSF/11/6 Summary of the findings & recommendations of the James Review

The Forum considered a report which provided information on the findings and recommendations of the recent review of school capital. In July 2010, Sebastian James (Group Operations Director of Dixons Retail plc) began an independent Review of Education Capital, the findings of which were published on 8 April 2011.

The review made 16 recommendations, if adopted, would lead to a fundamental change in the present system for building and maintaining schools. The first part of the results critiqued the current processes for capital allocation, Building Schools for the Future (BSF), devolved and targeted programmes, and the maintenance of 'the school estate'. In addition, ICT, energy use and purchasing, insurance and the planning system and impact of building regulations were considered briefly. The second part of the results were the recommendations as follows:-

1. Capital investment and apportionment should be based on objective facts and use clear, consistently-applied criteria. Allocation should focus on the need for high-quality school places and the condition of facilities.
2. Demand-led programmes, such as Free Schools, are most sensibly funded from the centre and a centrally retained budget should be set aside for them.

3. The Department should avoid multiple funding streams for investment that can and should be planned locally, and instead apportion the available capital as a single, flexible budget for each local area, with a mandate to include ministerial priorities in determining allocations.
4. Notional budgets should be apportioned to Local Authority areas, empowering them fully to decide how best to reconcile national and local policy priorities in their own local contexts. A specific local process, involving all Responsible Bodies (ie those which own and manage facilities), and hosted by the Local Authority, should then prioritise how this notional budget should be used.
5. The local prioritisation decisions should be captured in a short local investment plan. There should be light-touch central appraisal of all local plans before an allocated plan of work is developed so that themes can be identified on a national level and scale-benefits achieved. This must also allow for representations where parties believe the process has not assigned priorities fairly.
6. Individual institutions should be allocated an amount of capital to support delivery of small capital works and ICT provision. Wherever possible, this should be aggregated up to Responsible Bodies according to the number of individual institutions they represent, for the Responsible Body then to use for appropriate maintenance across its estate, working in partnership with the institutions.
7. The Department ensures there is access to clear guidance on legal responsibilities in relation to maintenance of buildings, and on how revenue funding can be used for facility maintenance.
8. That the Department:
 - gathers all local condition data that currently exists, and implements a central condition database to manage this information.
 - carries out independent building condition surveys on a rolling 20% sample of the estate each year to provide a credible picture of investment needs, repeating this to develop a full picture of the estate's condition in five years and thereafter.
9. That the Department revises its school premises regulations and guidance to remove unnecessary burdens and ensure that a single, clear set of regulations apply to all schools. The Department should also seek to further reduce the bureaucracy and prescription surrounding the use of BREEAM assessments (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method).
10. There should be a clear, consistent Departmental position on what fit-for-purpose facilities entail. A suite of drawings and specifications should be developed that can easily be applied across a wide range of educational facilities. These should be coordinated centrally to deliver best value.

11. The standardised drawings and specifications must be continuously improved through learning from projects captured and co-ordinated centrally. Post occupancy evaluation will be a critical tool to capture this learning.
12. As many projects as possible currently in the BSF and Academy pipeline should be able to benefit from the Review's findings to ensure more efficient procurement of high quality buildings. This should be an early priority to identify where this could be done.
13. That the Central Body should put in place a small number of new national procurement contracts that will drive quality and value from the programme of building projects ahead.
14. That the Department uses the coming spending review period to establish a central delivery body and procurement model, whereby the pipeline of major projects – to a scale determined by the Department – is procured and managed centrally with funding retained centrally for that purpose.
15. The Department quickly takes steps to maximise the value of money delivered through maintenance and small projects and puts in place a simple and clear national contract to make this happen.
16. That the Department revisit its 2004 Cap Gemini report (on school insurance) and implement proposals where they are appropriate.

The Head of School Organisation & Capital Planning explained that the review recommended that standardized design be used more widely for schools with further consideration given to the potential for modular designs rather than bespoke design. In addition the procurement and delivery of large schemes should be carried out by a National body, with greater use of framework contracts for similar work undertaken at a local level.

The review had criticised the lack of consistency applied to asset management and planning in schools use of DfC across the country. It was noted that a disproportionate amount of DfC had been spent on ICT instead of buildings.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that the School Organisation Plan was being worked on and would be available shortly. In addition, the Forum was asked to note that 18 months ago they had not looked at Capital spend and so considerable progress has been made. In addition, school improvement had reached a point where the market was starting to move.

RESOLVED

that the findings and recommendations of the James Review be noted.

CBSF/11/7 School Finance Update

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the Schools out-turn position and approach to Surplus Balances for 2010/11.

Central Bedfordshire had 137 schools (less 2 Academies) in 2010/11.

The 2010/11 Scheme for Financing Schools required Schools to report to the Surplus Balance Sub Group if their surplus balance had exceeded the prescribed thresholds (Upper/Middle – 5% and Nursery/Lower and Special – 8%). The Sub Group would review how the surplus would be spent and if the use was deemed inappropriate the surplus in excess of the threshold would be recycled. The Forum at the 7 March 2011 meeting had agreed that there should be no balance control mechanism for balances arising from 2011/12 onwards.

Prior to the declaration of committed balances (Earmarked Funds), 81 schools would have been referred to the Surplus Balance Sub Group for having exceeded the defined thresholds for 2010/11. This amount will reduce following the schools submission of their Consistent Financial Return due to the DfE in July.

- 17 schools held an agreed licensed deficit with a value of £635,751.
- one school has applied for a 1% deficit budget tolerance allowance.
- one school exceeded their agreed licensed deficit by £90,339 which was under review.

The Forum discussed possible causes for some schools having large surpluses. It was noted the uncertainty of the amount of money being received from Central Government over the next couple of years and the possibility that schools were being cautious in their spending to ensure funds would be there for the future.

The Director of Children's Services informed the Forum that the Executive Member for Children's Services would be speaking to School Governors and updating Ward Members about the current balances. The Executive Member for Children's Services understood the holding of budgets due to uncertainty but would be reminding schools that they need to ensure that they do not appear to affluent and thus not considered to be in need of help.

A letter will be sent to schools holding excess balances for 2010/11 stating that the balance exceeds the defined thresholds and should be spent on today's students. Due to the removal of the claw back mechanism for 2011/12 no claw back will apply to 2010/11 excess balances.

Schools are categorised into Red, Amber and Green (RAG) ratings of risk. The review is carried out twice a year in June following the financial year end and the receipt of the current budget plan, and January, following the Schools completion of the year end forecasts outturn. Updates occurred as circumstances changed.

The Forum also noted school budgets were due by 31 May 2011 and at the date of the meeting only 75% had been received. Applications for License Deficits are currently being reviewed.

RESOLVED

that the update on the School's out-turn position for 2010/11 and the approach to Surplus Balances be noted.

CBSF/11/8 Outline Forward Programme

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the likely work programme for the next year and a request for Sub Group membership. The programme indicated the standard reports and when they would be considered throughout the municipal year.

The Forum were asked to consider membership for a technical sub group to consider changes arising from the National Consultation on School Funding. Members of the Sub Group would review proposals arising from the consultation and bring back final options for consideration by the Forum.

It was noted that since the last technical sub group had met the membership of the Forum had changed. It was agreed that once officers had determined the commitment being asked of the Forum Members an email would be circulated asking for volunteers.

Members questioned the possibility of the entire Forum considering the proposals. The Director for Children's Services informed the Forum that Chairs of Governors, public schools and the Forum would be asked to speak on the proposals. The Forum would convene additional meetings as needed.

RESOLVED

that the programme and request for membership to a Technical Funding Sub-Group be noted.

CBSF/11/9 Schools Specific Contingency Budget

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the Schools Specific Contingency Budget for 2011/12. The Forum had approved the 2011/12 budget at the meeting held on 7 March 2011:-

- £500,000 General Contingency plus a further £1,000,000 in anticipation of the cost of redundancies in schools during 2011/12.
- £275,670 SEN Contingency

The total budget agreed for 2011/12 was £1,775,670.

The Senior Finance Officer confirmed as at 31 March 2011 the carry forward from the 2010/11 School Contingency was £1,061,547 which was split as follows:-

- £845,708 General Contingency
- £215,839 SEN Contingency

The Forum were reminded that the additional £1m had been agreed to cover the impact of redundancies at Schools. It was noted no figure was currently available from Human Resources but the Forum was reminded that in 2010/11 £600,000 had been spent on redundancies.

A question was raised regarding the payment to Bedford Borough in 2010/11 for the disaggregation of the Special Schools DSG. The Director of Children Services confirmed that the payment by Central Bedfordshire Council in 2009/10 would be the only payment for the transition to Unitary.

RESOLVED

that the School Specific Contingency position statement as at 27 May 2011 be noted.

CBSF/11/10 Proposed Meeting Dates for 2011 - 2012

The Forum noted the arrangements for the following meetings of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum:-

- Monday 19 September 2011 at 18.00 – Room 14, Priory House, Shefford
- Monday 31 October 2011 at 09.00 – Cttee Room 1, Watling House, Dunstable
- Monday 23 January 2012 at 18.00 – Council Chamber, Priory House, Shefford
- Monday 5 March 2012 at 18.00 – Council Chamber, Priory House, Shefford
- Monday 25 June 2012 at 09.00 – Cttee Room 2, Watling House, Dunstable

Note: It was not possible to receive refreshments for the evening meetings in Watling House which meant that only morning meetings could be arranged for Watling House. Apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m. and concluded at 10.15 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated