

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, 19 September 2011

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
	Sue Howley MBE	Governor, Greenleas Lower School
	Sharon Ingham	Headteacher, Hadrian Lower School
	Vaughan Johnson	Governor, Edward Peake Middle School
	Mrs A Kentish	Head Teacher Kensworth Lower School
	Ray Payne	Headteacher, Henlow Middle School
	Rob Robson	Headteacher, Samuel Whitbread Collegiate
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Linslade Lower School
Non-School Members:	Bill Hamilton	Roman Catholic Diocese Representative
	Caroll Leggatt	PVI Early Years Providers Representative
Observer:	Cllr Mark Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
Apologies for Absence:	Jeff Conquest	
	Mrs E Grant	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
	Ian Greenley	
	Ali Hadawi CBE Richard Holland	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs M Clampitt	Committee Services Officer
	Mr P Dudley	Assistant Director Learning and Strategic Commissioning
	Dawn Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr R Parsons	Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning
	Helen Redding	Head of SEN and Inclusion

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

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 20 June 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of a letter 'a' to the word 'are' in the last sentence of the 6th paragraph of minute CBSF/11/7.

Matters arising from the Minutes:-

1. It was noted that the request for volunteers in Minute CBSF/11/8 had been overtaken by events and the consultation meeting held on 7 September 2011.
2. A request had been made for a change to the date of the next meeting of the Schools Forum. The original date was Monday 31 October 2011. It was noted that the meeting was to discuss responses to the consultation on the National contribution. The Forum noted that the consultation submission was 11 October and it was not expecting to hear from Central Government by 31 October. Instead an alternate date of Monday 28 November had been agreed. The meeting will be held at Priory House at 5.30pm for a 6.00pm start. The next meeting on 23 January will be held at Watling House in Dunstable at 09.30am.

CBSF/11/12 Schools Specific Contingency

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the Schools Specific Contingency Budget for 2011/12 and a proposal for the distribution of unspent funds.

At the Schools Forum meeting held on 7 March 2011, the following budgets were agreed:-

- £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. There was also a carry forward from 2010/11 of £1,061,537 which was split £845,708 (General) and £215,839 (SEN).

The Forum were advised that Bedford Borough Council had been billed for the Central Bedfordshire sole PRU pupils registered on the January 2011 census. This amounts to £48,000 per quarter. It was proposed that this amount be transferred to the Central Bedfordshire PRU budget for 2011/12.

It was noted that the £1,000,000 would not be required for the redundancies for 2011/12. It was therefore proposed that a one off payment of £25 per statutory pupil registered in the January 2011 census (34,284) be transferred to Central Bedfordshire Schools. It was noted that this payment was for maintained schools as at September 2011.

The SEN Contingency budget allowing for known commitments would not be fully spent by the end of the financial year. It was therefore proposed that the balance of the budget to be set aside to contribute to the cost of Central Bedfordshire children attending other Local Authority schools (Out of County Placements) for 2011/12. It was noted that the cost of pupils attending Bedford Borough schools had increased. The costs per pupil ranged between £5,796.50 (mild learning difficulties) to £18,143.05 (severe learning and behavioural difficulties plus additional needs). These students were not able to be schooled within Central Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the DSG received from Bedford Borough Council for sole PRU pupils registered on the January 2011 census be transferred to Central Bedfordshire's PRU budget for 2011/12.**
- 2. that an additional £25 per statutory pupil registered on the January 2011 census be transferred to schools be agreed.**
- 3. that the balance of SEN contingency be set aside to contribute to the cost of Central Bedfordshire children attending other Local Authority schools for 2011/12 be agreed.**
- 4. that the Schools Specific Contingency position statement as at 31 August 2011 be noted.**

CBSF/11/13 Virtual School

The Forum received and considered a report which requested an agreement to additional funding for the Virtual School to cover the work supporting vulnerable learners. The ending of both the Area Based Grant and the Standards Fund had resulted in a shortfall on the budget. It was noted that £95,000 was requested from the unallocated DSG for 2011/12.

It was noted that the responsibility of the Virtual School was raising the attainment of children and young people looked after and for ensuring vulnerable children and young people make progress. In addition the remit of the Virtual School had been expanded to assist schools in reducing the gap in performance between different groups of learners. The groups included:-

- pupils eligible for free school meals
- children from service families
- pupils learning English as an additional language
- pupils from black and minority ethnic backgrounds
- pupils with special educational needs
- pupils whose behaviour and/or attendance would be a cause of concern.

The Forum were assured that the funding was being reviewed along with the processes being used by other Local Authorities.

RESOLVED

that the allocation of £95,000 from the unallocated DSG to meet the shortfall in the budget for the Virtual School be agreed.

CBSF/11/14 Reallocation of DSG following the discontinuation of the Dyslexia Provision based at Priory Middle School

The Forum received and considered a report which requested the reallocation of DSG to support Out of Authority placements.

The Executive at its meeting held on 23 May 2011 approved the discontinuation of the dyslexia provision at Priory Middle School from 1 September 2011 (please refer to Minute E/11/11).

The annual budget for the dyslexia provision was £57,960 and during the 2011/12 year would deliver a part year savings of £33,810. This is due to the budget being allocated April to August and five months of the budget would have been spent by the time the provision was stopped.

The Forum noted that the £57,960 savings for the 2012/13 budget should be reallocated to the Out of Authority Placement budget. The Out of Authority Placement occurred only when Central Bedfordshire Schools were unable to meet the needs of the pupil. As of 1 September 2011 there were 18 pupils in Out of Authority independent special schools. No additional students were placed in Out of Authority placement during the 2010/11 academic year. It was noted that three students had been brought back to local placement during the same time period.

The Forum noted that there were staff who were trained over the last eight years to be Dyslexia and SENCO qualified. The Forum were unaware of this information and asked that the information be included in a future Central Essentials to bring the information to all Schools attention.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the £33,810 saving of Direct Schools Grant (DSG) be reallocated to support Special Educational Needs (SEN) Out of Authority placements in 2011/12 be agreed.**
- 2. that the £57,960 be allocated to the out of Authority Placement Budget in 2012/13 be agreed.**

CBSF/11/15 Use of DSG for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport

The Forum received and considered a report which requested a £400k contribution from DSG for the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport in 2011/12.

The Forum noted that the School Finance (England) Regulations 2011, Schedule 2, paragraph 37(e) allows for expenditure on special educational needs transport costs.

During 2010/11 the total spend for SEN Transport to schools was £3,383,000 with an additional £329,000 on transport to post school provision in colleges.

It was noted that the Home to School Transport Policy 2010/11 and the Post 16 Transport Policy 2011/12 were in the process of being implemented and would provide the eligibility criteria for pupils with SEN. It was noted that the implementation was taking time and that other areas of the SEN transport costs were being reviewed.

The Forum whilst understanding the needs requested that additional supporting information be provided before a decision would be taken. Concerns were expressed about setting a precedent. It was agreed that Officers would provide additional supporting information in a report to the 28 November 2011 meeting.

RESOLVED

that the use of the £400k Headroom in 11/12 to contribute to the SEN transport costs be deferred to the 28 November 2011 meeting to allow Officers to provide additional information.

CBSF/11/16 DfE Consultation

The Forum received and considered three reports which were linked and sought the views of the Schools Forum on the DfE consultation on capital, the Council's draft School Organisation Plan 2011 – 16 and guidance and supporting documents that had been developed to provide a mechanism by which proposals to extend age ranges in Local Authority maintained schools would be managed.

The DfE Consultation on the 'Implementation of the 2010 – 11 Review of Education Capital (The James Review)'

The Forum were reminded that they had received an overview of the consultation document at the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 20 June 2011 (Minute CBSF/11/6 refers) to which the Government published its response on 19 July 2011. The Government's response focussed on three specific recommendation areas that are now subject of further consultation.

- Use of Basic Need and condition data to determine local budget allocations
- Flexible Capital Budgets with Local Decision Making
- National Contracting and Procurement

It was noted that the Government would be preparing to tender a national survey of schools to obtain consistent school condition data.

In addition, proposals to enable local prioritisation of a flexible capital allocation to meet the challenge of new school places and priority maintenance are included in the consultation. This may be a phased implementation starting with ringfenced funds held at local authority level for VA, Academy and maintained school condition issues, plus basic need for new school places.

Options for national, versus local contracting and procurement are being considered.

The consultation concludes on 11 October 2011. The DfE have invited views from Local Authorities, Academies, Diocesan bodies and other responsible bodies.

Draft Central Bedfordshire Council School Organisation Plan 2011-2016

The statutory requirement for the Local Authority to produce a School Organisation Plan (SOP) are no longer in place although the rationale is still valid as outlined in the report.

Central Bedfordshire will be facing significant housing growth over the coming 10 - 15 year period. The SOP attached at Appendix B to the report would ensure that future provision of school places were planned and delivered to match the planned growth.

The Forum noted that the Education Vision referred to in the document was now out of date and that a refreshed vision had been created and will be circulated shortly.

Guidance on statutory consultations on proposals for Schools' change of age range

As a result of the outcome of the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area review there was a need to develop guidance for maintained schools who were considering proposals to make changes to age ranges. Local guidance, mirroring DfE published statutory guidance has been produced. A copy of the guidance was attached to the report at Appendix C.

The guidance also includes a process by which the Local Authority, as decision makers for proposals of this nature, can undertake an initial evaluation against the key factors that it must have consideration of in any decision. The process was detailed at Appendix D attached to the report and a quick reference guide to the statutory provisions for these proposals were included in the flowchart at Appendix E to the report.

The national consultation on the admission code may also greatly impact the Council's ability to undertake strategic evaluations of proposals in future.

The Forum questioned the layout of the forms and why they had to be completed by each individual school rather than one form for each group. It was noted that the forms were part of the statutory process and as such each school had to confirm its intention to change their age range and identify specific issues.

The Forum confirmed that they wanted schools to think of what was best for the students.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the recently announced consultation that has arisen from the DfE sponsored 'James Review' of schools capital, originally reported to Schools Forum on the 20 June 2011, be noted.**
- 2. that the Central Bedfordshire's draft School Organisation Plan 2011 – 2016 and its use as a planning tool for the future prioritisation and allocation of Basic Need funding to the Council be noted.**
- 3. that the guidance document and supplementary documents adapted from the DfE Decision Makers Guidance for making alterations to the upper and / or lower age limit of a maintained mainstream school.**

CBSF/11/17 School Finance Update

The Committee received and considered the report which provided an update on the License Deficit Schools and the Schools Finance Risk Register.

As at 31 August 2011 there were 125 Schools in Central Bedfordshire excluding Academies. The total DSG for Central Bedfordshire for 2011/12 was £151m of which £137m was delegated to Schools.

Each school must submit a budget plan approved by the Governing Body or a Committee of the Governing Body by 31 May to the Local Authority. An approved revised budget Plan must be received by 31 October each year.

Schools may plan for a deficit budget for no more than three years. Unlicensed deficits would be reported to the Department for Education as part of the School's Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) return.

The Forum noted the criteria for allocation of a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating as detailed at Appendix A to the report. The RAG rating assists the Section 151 Officer in exercising his duties under the Local Government Act that every LA makes arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs.

No new 'Notice of Concerns' had been issued during 2010/11 and two were issued in 2009/10 of which one remains under review. It was noted that 8 schools were amber and 1 school was red. All red and amber schools would receive a visit from their School Financial Adviser during the autumn term.

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/11/18 Dedicated School Grant

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The estimated DSG for 2011/12 was £172.564m. This was based on 37,046 (fte number of pupils at 01/11) multiplied by £4,658 (Guaranteed Unit of Funding (GUF)). The LACSEG unit per pupil fee for 2011/12 was £37.33 for Primary and £76.09 for Secondary schools which amounts to a total recoupment of £393k for 11 schools as at July 2011.

It was anticipated that a further 24 schools would convert by the end of this financial year which would require a further £276k from Headroom.

RESOLVED

1. that the deployment of the 2010/11 Dedicated School Grant be confirmed.
2. that the application of the 2011/12 Dedicated School Grant be noted.

CBSF/11/19 Verbal update on the 'Consultation on School funding reform'

The Forum received an update on the 'Consultation on School Funding reform'.

The first session to discuss the consultation document was held on Wednesday 7 September 2011. All of the 40 questions had been reviewed and preliminarily answered. The minutes of the session were circulated to members of the Forum.

The second session was to be held on Friday 30 September 2011. This session would be used to provide more detailed discussion of the more contentious questions.

The final response would be submitted to Central Government on Tuesday 11 October 2011.

CBSF/11/20 School Forum Budget

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the School Forum Budget for 2011/12.

It was agreed at the meeting of the Forum held on 7 March 2011 that the annual budget for the administrative costs be £3,000 and that a further £2,000 be set aside for the commissioning of consultancy and administrative support for the National Funding consultation.

The Forum noted that a carry forward of £3,650 from 2010/11 would be applied to the consultancy and administrative support which was estimated to be £5,000 at the end of the consultation process.

The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that the budget was expected to be fully spent by the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED

that the School Forum position statement as at 31 August 2011 be noted.

CBSF/11/21 Correspondence to and from the Forum

The Chairman drew the Forum's attention to a letter received from Andrew Selous MP and the response received from Lord Hill the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools relating to the school funding in Central Bedfordshire. The Forum noted the contents and the fact that the MPs for Bedfordshire would continue to liaise with Education Ministers.

CBSF/11/22 Close

The future meeting dates are as follows:-

Monday 28 November 5.30pm – Priory House, Shefford – sandwich buffet
 Monday 23 January 9.30am – Watling House, Dunstable – coffee/tea/biscuits
 Monday 5 March 5.30pm – Priory House, Shefford – sandwich buffet
 Monday 25 June 9.30am – Watling House, Dunstable – coffee/tea/biscuits

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 8.10 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated