

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 4 March 2013

PRESENT

Richard Holland (Chairman)

Jim Parker (Vice-Chairman)

- School Members: Anne Bell Headteacher, Willow Nursery School
Paul Burrett Headteacher, Studham CofE Lower School and Pre-School
Shirley-Anne Crosbie Headteacher, Glenwood Special School
James Davis Governor, Leighton Middle School
Sue Howley MBE Governor, Greenleas Lower School
John Street Academy Middle School Representative
Stephen Tiktin Governor, Linslade Lower School
Rob Watson Headteacher Stratton Upper School
- Non-School Members: Caroll Leggatt PVI Early Years Providers Representative
Sarah Stevens Church of England Diocese Representative
- Observer: Cllr M AG Versallion Executive Member for Children's Services
- Apologies for Absence: David Brandon-Bravo
Mr M Foster
Angie Hardy
Sharon Ingham
- Substitutes: Lesley Gilson (in place of Martin Foster)
Peter Haddon (in place of David Brandon-Bravo)
- Member in Attendance: Cllr Miss A Sparrow,
- Officers in Attendance: Mrs M Clampitt Committee Services Officer
Mr P Dudley Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning)
Mrs E Grant Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
Ms D Hill Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
Miss H Redding Head of Learning and School Support

CBSF/12/86 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman advised the meeting that Item 10 - Watling Lower School Licensed Deficit would be considered first followed by the late Item 11 - Capital Allocations 2013/14 and 14/15. The agenda would then be taken in order beginning with Item 4 - PRU - Transfer of Revenue DSG to Capital.

CBSF/12/87 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 24 January 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters arising :-

1. The Forum has asked if it is possible to co-opt members to the Forum due to the difficulties recruiting for the two vacancies?
2. CBSF/12/82 - The Senior Finance Officer clarified that the 2 year old funding was now contained within the DSG however it was still distributed in the same manner through the EYRG.

CBSF/12/88 Watling Lower School Licensed Deficit

The Forum considered a request from Watling Lower School to write off their deficit of £264,424.

The Chair of Governors for Watling Lower School and Forum Member provided an overview of how the deficit had been acquired at the Lower School in 2009. In addition, the Forum were advised of the steps which had been taken to reduce the deficit since her joining the school in 2011.

The Forum acknowledged the work which had resulted in the £800k+ deficit being reduced to £264,424. One of the creditors had written off their portion of the debt whilst the second creditor refused to do so.

It was also acknowledged that whilst the school had ratified a balanced in year budget for the second year there was not any surplus to pay towards the deficit.

Watling Lower School had been subject to a thorough review which included a new head and deputy head being appointed.

The Forum were wanting to help the School but were concerned that a precedent would be set allowing other schools to approach the Forum. The Forum discussed what options were available besides the Schools Contingency being used to write off the debt. The Chair of Governors for Watling Lower School and Forum Representative confirmed that no other options had been found following in depth searching.

It was agreed that the circumstances were unique and that the controls much stricter from the Finance department within the Council. It was felt that this circumstance was less likely to occur in the future.

It was also agreed that the Schools Contingency Budget would be greatly reduced next year to £100k and therefore there would not be the capacity to offer this kind of assistance to maintained schools.

RESOLVED

That the request from Watling Lower School to write off their licensed deficit of £264,424, be approved.

The Forum voted 10 in favour, 0 against and 5 abstentions.

CBSF/12/89 Capital allocations 2013/14 and 14/15

The Forum considered a late report which advised of the total Department for Education (DfE) capital allocations to schools and the Council for 2013/14 and 2014/15 for Basic Needs and to note the Council level allocations. The Forum noted that the information had only been released by the DfE on Friday 1 March 2013 and the report had been written for members consideration at the 4 March meeting.

The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning, Children's Services advised the Forum that the figures that set out the allocation to the LA for devolved formula capital and schools capital maintenance had been reduced in proportion to the number of students no longer in maintained schools. Separate allocations will be made of DFC directly to Academies by the EFA and they will be able to apply for strategic capital maintenance through the established process.

It was noted that the monies provided were allocated for two different periods of time:-

- (a) 1 year allocation - Strategic Capital Maintenance, Devolved Formula Capital and for the Locally Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP);
- (b) 2 year allocation - Basic Need would be used by the Council to fulfil its statutory obligation of ensuring sufficient high quality school places.

It was noted that the DfE had provided a new Targeted Basic Need of £982m allocated by the Chancellor in December 2012. This funding was for locations which had significant basic need pressures that would be unlikely to be addressed through the Basic Needs funding announced as part of the main allocation. There was a bidding mechanism for these Local Authorities to apply for the additional funding. The Forum noted that Central Bedfordshire Council was in a good position and would be unlikely to need to bid for additional funding.

The Forum considered the detailed financial breakdown in Appendix A. It was noted that the LA Maintained Strategic Maintenance programme funded by £2,562,744 of grant would be focused on roofing, boilers, windows and addressing priority health and safety related issues.

The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning, Children's Services confirmed that the 2013/14 Strategic Maintenance programme would be brought to the June Schools Forum meeting providing more detail of how the funding would be allocated.

The Forum noted that the DfE had also announced the application process for its Post 16 demographic growth fund which the Local Authority will be publicising to all Post 16 providers.

Completed applications have to be with the DfE by end of April 2013. The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning, Children's Services' team would be working to get the applications in before the deadline.

RESOLVED

That the overall Department for Education allocations for 2013/14 and 2014/15 for Basic Need, be noted.

CBSF/12/90 PRU - Transfer of Revenue DSG to Capital

The Forum considered a report which set out the improvements of the PRU buildings to date, and recommended that the underspend in 2012/13 to be used to offset some of the capital costs to date.

The Head of Learning and School Support advised the Forum that the PRU was taken over in April 2011 and significant improvements had been made as the buildings had been in poor condition requiring health and safety works to be carried out.

It was noted that the significant remodelling of the area had been completed which provided improved quality for the students and staff.

To date £309,611.18 had been spent on improving the PRU. It was anticipated that there would be an underspend of £50k with possibly a few thousand pounds more at the end of the financial year. It was requested that the funding be transferred to fund additional capital works to continue to improve the buildings.

The Forum supported the request unanimously.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the current position of the PRU budget be noted and the use of the forecast underspend of £50,000 to offset costs of improving the PRU buildings on the Kingsland Site in 2012/13, be approved.**
- 2. that any additional balance in the PRU budget at the end of the Financial Year be transferred for the same purposes, be approved.**

The Forum voted unanimously to support both recommendation 1 and 2

CBSF/12/91 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

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

The DSG for 2012/13 is £173.915m. This is based on 37,336 (fte number of pupils at January 2012) multiplied by £4,658 (Guaranteed Unit of Funding(GUF)). The figure was based on 37 schools converting to Academy status as at January 2013 and £524k LACSEG transfer.

Unspent DSG reserves from 2011/12 of £920k has been added to the 2012/13 allocation for distribution as follows:-

£309k one-off payment based on degree of incidence of low level needs

£442k an additional amount per statutory pupil

£169k termly headcount of Early Years.

The School Forum had agreed to pay £550k to contribute 50% to the expected reduction in DSG due to LACSEG in 2012/13, however; due to conversions taking place in 2013/14 the full amount will not be used in this financial year resulting in £288k being returned to School Contingency.

The Forum noted that the new funding reforms required a pro forma to be submitted to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) by Local Authorities. The EFA confirmed that Central Bedfordshire Council had met the deadline and the Council's adherence to the finance regulations and pro forma met the required criteria.

School budgets had been issued on 12 February 2013, one month early.

A request was made for two Forum members to be part of the panel that would consider 'Growth Fund' applications. It was agreed that there should be one maintained school representative and one academy representative. The Church of England Diocese Representative was also a lower school headteacher volunteered to represent the maintained schools and the Upper school Academy headteacher volunteered to representative should no other Academy representative be available. There were no Lower School Academy representatives in attendance at the meeting.

The Department for Education (DfE) announced a consultation document regarding the Replacement of the Education (Inter-authority Recoupment) Regulations. The consultation was a technical consultation and did not alter what was being asked of Schools. The consultation began on 4 February 2013 and closed on 25 February 2013.

The DfE published a review of 2013/14 School Funding Arrangements document on 12 February 2013. A briefing note was attached at Appendix A to the report. The Senior Finance Officer requested a meeting of the Technical Sub-Group be called on Thursday 14 March to discuss the document. It was envisioned that only one meeting would be required due to the tight timeframe. Views are sought by 26 March 2013.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as at 31 January 2013, be noted.**
- 2. that the Technical Sub Group be convened to prepare a response to the 2013/14 School Funding Arrangements review before the 26 March 2013 response deadline.**

CBSF/12/92 School Specific Contingency Budget

The Forum received a report which provided an update on the use of the Schools Contingency Budget for 2012/13.

At the Schools Forum meeting held on 5 March 2012, the following budgets were agreed:-

- £500,000 General Contingency
- £275,670 SEN Contingency

The total budget agreed for 2012/13 was £775,670. There was also a carry forward from 2011/12 of £898,917, which was split £818,999 (General) and £79,918 (SEN). The opening balances for 2012/13 were £1,318,999 (General) and £355,588 (SEN).

It was noted that there had been redistribution of unspent DSG of £1,779,125 during the current year. There would be a carry forward at the end of the year of approximately £120k once the Watling Lower School deficit of £264,424 had been paid.

The SEN Contingency budget allowing for known commitments would be fully spent by the end of the financial year.

Any unspent balances will be carried forward to 2013/14.

RESOLVED

That the School Contingency spend as at 31 January 2013, be noted.

CBSF/12/93 Schools Forum Budget

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the Schools Forum Budget for 2012/13.

The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that at the date of the meeting the remaining balance for the year was £1,102. It was noted that any unspent budget would be carried forward to the next year. It was anticipated that the budget for 2013/14 would be £3,000.

Members of the Forum were reminded that they could submit travel claims for attending the Forum meetings.

RESOLVED

That the Schools Forum Budget position statement as at 31 January 2013, be noted.

CBSF/12/94 Review of the Forum's Constitution and Terms of Reference

The Forum considered a report provided a first stage review of the Constitution and Terms of Reference of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.

The Forum considered the track changed version of the document and agreed with the proposed changes which had been requested by both Officers and the Forum Members.

The Forum requested two further items be investigated:-

- (1) Can the Chairman exercise his casting vote on a phased voting situation, where he is not eligible to vote?
- (2) What provisions are possible for absentee voting?

Forum representatives, who represent Governors expressed concern about having to pass on information to other Governors. Officers agreed that the information from and about Schools Forum meetings would be circulated though the monthly Governors Essentials. In addition, Officers would investigate other ways to support the process.

RESOLVED

That the revised draft Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum Constitution and Terms of Reference, compliant with the Regulations issued in 2012, be approved subject to clarification of the Chairman's Vote during phased voting and absentee voting.

CBSF/12/95 **Briefing Note from Schools Asset Management Planning sub group**

The Forum received a briefing note which provided an update, from the Schools Asset Management Planning sub group, regarding Schools Capital, Schools Premises Regulations and Carbon Reduction Energy Efficiency Scheme.

The Forum agreed the circulation of the briefing note via the Council's publication Central Essentials.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the contents of the Briefing Note be noted.**
- 2. that the circulation of the Briefing Note via the Council's publication 'Central Essentials', be approved.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 7.30 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated