

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 24 June 2013

PRESENT

Richard Holland (Chairman)

Jim Parker (Vice-Chairman)

School Members: David Brandon-Bravo Headteacher, Parkfields Middle School
Paul Burrett Headteacher, Studham CofE Lower School and Pre-School
Shirley-Anne Crosbie Headteacher, The Chiltern School
James Davis Governor, Leighton Middle School
Angie Hardy Headteacher, Clipstone Brook Lower School
Sharon Ingham Headteacher, Hadrian Lower School

Non-School Members: Mr M Foster Trade Union representative
Caroll Leggatt PVI Early Years Providers Representative
J Reynolds Church of England Diocesan Representative
Sarah Stevens Church of England Diocese Representative

Observer: Cllr M AG Versallion Executive Member for Children's Services

Apologies for Absence: Anne Bell
Sue Howley MBE
Robert Shore
John Street
Stephen Tiktin
Rob Watson

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Mrs S A Goodchild,

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
Mrs S Tyler Acting Assistant Director, Operational Services, Children's Services

CBSF/13/1 Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2013/14

The Forum were invited to make nominations for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.

Richard Holland was the only candidate nominated and seconded. He was therefore appointed Chairman.

Jim Parker was the only candidate nominated and seconded. He was therefore appointed Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED

1. that Richard Holland be elected Chairman of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum 2013/14.

2. that Jim Parker be elected Vice-Chairman of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum 2013/14.

CBSF/13/2 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 4 March 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CBSF/13/3 Schools Specific Contingency Budget

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the Schools Specific Contingency Budget spend and carry forward for 2012/13 and the relative spend to date for 2013/14.

The Senior Finance Officer confirmed as at 31 March 2013 the carry forward from the 2012/13 School Contingency was £851,821 which was split as follows:-

- £778,963 General Contingency
- £72,858 SEN Contingency

The Forum noted that from 2013/14, the Dedicated Schools Grant would be split into three notional blocks: Early Years, High Needs and Schools. Each block would hold its own contingency budget.

Early Years Contingency

The budget allocation for 2013/14 is £352,450. Following the January 2013 census there is an additional £44,200 due to the initial estimated budget being higher than required and the funding returned to the contingency budget. The

balance of the Early Years Contingency for 2013/14 is £396,650 as at 31 May 2013.

High Needs Contingency

The budget allocation for 2013/14 is £348,528, which includes the carry forward from 2012/13 of £72,858. The funding has been set aside to continue the funding of the extended role of a school such as Outreach and other services. There has been a payment of £345 for outreach work. The balance of the High Needs Contingency for 2013/14 is £348,183 as at 31 May 2013.

Schools Contingency

The budget allocation for 2013/14 is £878,963, which includes the carry forward from 2012/13 of £778,963. There has been a DSG adjustment of £3,320 for an additional pupil. The balance of the Schools Contingency for 2013/14 is £882,283 as at 31 May 2013.

The Forum noted that the school's contingency budget would assist schools where expenditure has been incurred which would not be funded from the normal budget. The four areas are as follows:

- (i) schools in financial difficulty
- (ii) the writing-off of deficits of schools which are discontinued, excluding any associated costs and overheads
- (iii) new, amalgamating or closing schools, or
- (iv) other expenditure where such circumstances were unforeseen when initially determining the school's budget share.

Age Range change Schools

The Senior Finance Officer informed the Forum that a number of schools had changed their age range and the result was that funding had not been available to these schools as the budgets for 2013/14 had already been allocated and based on the October 12 census.

There would be a shortfall for a number of schools who had kept Year 5 when it would have normally transferred to a Middle School. The schools in question had contacted the Local Authority (LA) requesting assistance from the Growth Fund. The LA contacted the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to confirm that the criteria agreed with School Forum for Growth Funding distribution was in line with requirements and was not available for schools choosing to change age range.

The EFA further confirmed that for 2013/14 the schools would need to apply to the Schools Forum for funds held in School Contingency as a school facing financial difficulty. In future years the Council would need to apply to the Secretary of State for a variation of the operation of Regulation 13 of the School and Early Years Finance Regulations (pupil numbers).

The LA cannot make adjustments to their formulae after the funding period has commenced, which is why an adjustment for 2013/14 cannot be made.

The Forum were asked to consider how to assist the schools which have been unable to receive funding following age range changes and the government regulations for 2013/14. There were two options presented and the Forum were asked to vote on their preferred choice for the following:-

1. fund the schools from School Contingency for the expected pupil numbers in year group five in September 2013 as a school facing financial difficulty; or
2. support the Schools by way of a Licensed Deficit with no additional funding.

The Forum did not agree with giving Schools a Licensed Deficit when it was not of the schools making.

The Forum were advised that should option 1 be selected the carry forward from 2012/13 would be reduced by approximately £298,555, which equated to a per pupil amount of approximately £8.60.

The Forum voted and chose Option 1.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Schools Contingency position statement as at March 2013 be noted.**
- 2. that the DSG Contingency spend at 31 May 2013 be noted.**
- 3. that Option 1 be applied to provide support to the schools with age range changes for the funding period 2013/14.**

CBSF/13/4 Two Year old funding

The Forum considered a report which proposed the transfer of the DSG funds allocated by Government for the extension of Two Year Olds to be allocated and managed by the Early Years Childcare Panel and a proportion to be allocated as capital to support the required extension.

The Acting Assistant Director Children's Services informed the Forum that in September 2009, Central Bedfordshire introduced the Funding for free provision for two year olds offer of 10 hours a week, term time only, for 57 children from amongst the 15% disadvantaged two year olds.

In November 2011, Central Government announced the extension to the funding to support 20% of the disadvantaged two year olds (500) and increasing from September 2014 to 40% (1000) for 15 hours a week, term time only.

The hours of provision have increased from 22,230 (2009), 292,500 (2013) and 585,000 (September 2014).

Additional funding has been allocated to Local Authorities to support the delivery. Central Bedfordshire Council has been allocated £348,738 capital funding and £505,547 trajectory funding within the DSG. The Early Intervention Grant had been reduced by a greater amount.

The Forum were asked to agree that the trajectory funding grant to be used for capital projects to provide space for the additional children. The Childcare Funding Panel would allocate the funding as previously.

RESOLVED

That the transfer of authority of £505,547 identified in the DSG notification as Trajectory Funding for the extension of Two Year Old places to the Early Years Childcare Panel, be agreed.

CBSF/13/5 Reimbursement of Maintained Schools Redundancy Payments

The Forum received a report which advised of changes to how redundancy payments would be reimbursed by the Council for Foundation including Trust and Voluntary Aided Schools. It was noted that this change did not apply to Community, Voluntary Controlled or Special Schools where the Council is the Employer.

The Forum were informed that from 1 April 2013, the Schools Finance regulations had changed and the reimbursement of Schools redundancy pay costs must now be met from the Corporate Redundancy Reserve, in accordance with the 2002 Education Act.

Payments from a central fund which schools contribute to cannot be held for redundancy payments.

With effect from 25 June 2013, the Council will no longer reimburse redundancy pay based on calculations using actual weekly pay for Foundation including Trust and Voluntary Aided (VA) Schools. The calculation would now use the statutory maximum weekly pay (currently £430 per week) instead of the actual weekly pay.

The Schools would need to decide as the Employer if they wish to 'top up' the statutory pay to equal the individual's actual weekly pay. Should a School wish to 'top up' the amount would be paid directly from the school's budget as DSG cannot be used to fund this. It is suggested that the decision be taken at a School Governing Body meeting.

It was emphasised in the meeting that this change did not affect Community Schools, Special Schools or Voluntary Controlled (VC) Schools where the Council was the Employer. They would continue to be calculated based on the individual's actual weekly pay.

The Council's decision was made because the Council cannot maintain reimbursing redundancy payments based on actual weekly pay for all Maintained Schools. It was also determined by the Children's Services Management Team that the Council should not fund discretionary payments to non-employees from its reserves.

RESOLVED

1. that the information be noted and ensure that it is disseminated at school level.

2. that Foundation Schools including Trust Schools and VA Schools will each need to decide as individual employers whether they wish to 'top up' statutory redundancy payments so the calculation is based on an individual's actual weekly pay be noted.

CBSF/13/6 Dedicated Schools Grant

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). From 2013/14, the DSG would be split into three notional blocks: Early Years, High Needs and Schools.

The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations defined the local authority education budgets for the 2013/14 financial year only. The Regulations provided simplified local formulae, greater delegation to schools and new arrangements for funding pupils with high needs.

The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) was set at negative 1.5% **per pupil** for 2013/14.

It was noted that the Chief Finance Officer (CFO), annually signed two statements: the Actual deployment (out-turn) and Budgeted Allocation of the DSG, which confirmed it had been fully deployed in support of the School's Budget in accordance with the condition of the grant and the School Finance Regulations.

Deployment of DSG 2012/13

The final DSG for 2012/13 is £173.915m. This is based on 37,336 (fte number of pupils January 2012) multiplied by £4,658 (Guaranteed Unit of Funding (GUF)). The figure was based on 39 schools converting to Academy status as at March 2013 and £524k LACSEG transfer.

The Forum had agreed that unspent DSG reserves from 2011/12 be distributed to schools as follows:-

- A one-off payment based on degree of incidence of low level needs (£309k)
- An additional amount per statutory pupil (£442k)
- Termly headcount of Early Years (£169k)

The sum of £920k had been added to the 2012/13 DSG allocation.

The Forum noted that the Central Expenditure Limit (CEL) had not been breached during 2012/13.

DSG Budget Allocation 2013/14

The Forum noted that on 19 December 2012, the Department for Education (DfE) announced the Funding settlement for 2013/14. DSG allocations were included along with illustrative allocations for the Pupil Premium of £900 and Service Premium of £300 per pupil. The final allocations would be confirmed in the summer 2013 due to the Pupil Premium being based on the January census.

The DfE announced the Education Services Grant, which replaces the LA Block element of LACSEG for Academies and the corresponding LA revenue funding for 2013/14.

The DSG will continue to be based on the 'spend plus' methodology for 2013/14 but has been shown in three spending blocks (Early Years, Schools and High Needs), as shown in paragraph 14 of the report.

Growth Fund 2013/14

The Forum noted that the Growth Fund was available for two purposes:-

- Expenditure to be incurred due to a significant growth in pupil numbers as a result of the local authority's duty under section 13(1) of the 1996 Act to secure that efficient primary education and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area, but only where the authority has set criteria for determining the circumstances in which the expenditure can be incurred and the basis for calculating the amount of any such expenditure.
- Expenditure to be incurred in order to make provision for extra classes in order to comply with the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 (b).

The Forum nominated two members to sit on the panel who reviewed the funding applications. Two meetings had been held (i) considered growth fund bids and (ii) considered infant class size funding applications. The table contained at paragraph 24 of the report detailed the expenditure as at 31 May 2013.

Review of 2013/14 Funding Arrangements

The Review of 2013/14 School Funding Arrangements had been published on 12 February 2013 and views were sought for 26 March 2013 on specific issues. This was followed by the 2014/15 Funding arrangements being announced on the 4th June 2013 which will require a further consultation with Schools. It is proposed the consultation period runs between 4 – 27 September 2013. It was agreed that the consultation would be carried out when schools were in term.

The Technical Funding Group were being asked to convene for two meetings on 16 and 31 July to consider the funding arrangements to inform the consultation process.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) report be noted.**
- 2. that the Technical Funding Sub Group meet on 16 and 31 July to consider the funding questions.**

CBSF/13/7 Schools Forum Budget

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the Schools Forum Budget for end of year 2012/13 and to confirm the spend to date for 2013/14. The Forum noted that the £870 balance for 2012/13 had been transferred to the School Contingency budget and carried forward.

The Forum agreed at its meeting on 5 March 2012 (minute no. CBSF/11/46 refers) that a budget of £3,000 of which £1,000 be used to pay for our continuing membership in the F40 group.

The Forum has asked that the Senior Finance Officer apply for an increase to the budget level. It was noted that the last request had been refused but the Forum asked for another request to be made.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the School Forum position statement as at March 2013 be noted.**
- 2. that the School Forum spend to 31st May 2013 be noted.**

CBSF/13/8 Revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum received a report which detailed the directed revisions of the Scheme for Financing Schools.

The Forum noted that if the Local Authority wanted to make alterations to the Scheme for Financing Schools, the Local Authority would need to consult. However, if the Department for Education (DfE) issued directed revisions, no consultation would be required as Local Authorities must incorporate in or remove from, their schemes the specified wording.

On 1 April 2013, the DfE notified LAs that with immediate effect the following changes were required:

- introduction - update the reference to regulations
- section 1.2.1 - confirmation that legislation has already been amended to put maintained Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in coverage

- section 1.4 - Only schools forum members representing maintained schools should now approve scheme changes
- section 3 - clarification that place led funding is included in arrangements for payments by instalment
- section 3.1 - clarification that top up payments should be made monthly unless otherwise agreed
- section 4.7 - funding to support schools in financial difficulty can only come from a de-delegated contingency for mainstream schools, or a central budget for special schools and PRUs
- section 5.5 - clarification around bought in meals service, not centrally retained
- section 6 - clarification that schools forum can agree de-delegation
- section 6.2.15 - amended wording in relation to charging the school budget share if appropriate support has not been made for a High Need pupil
- section 8.1 - restriction to existing commitments for redundancy / PRC payments and removal of reference to non-provision of LA services where funding has been provided to some schools only
- section 11.7 - deletion of references to optional delegated funding
- section 12.4 - removal of provision for LAs to retain centrally money for R&M of school kitchens where funding for school meals has not been delegated
- clarification that school detail budgets are no longer included in S251 collection
- restriction of termination of employment costs funded from central schools budget to value of previous year and existing commitments, clarity that contingency for schools in financial difficulty will need to be de-delegated.

RESOLVED

That the amendments to the Central Bedfordshire Scheme for Financing Schools in line with the Department for Education's directed revisions be noted.

CBSF/13/9 School Finance Update

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the Schools out-turn position for 2012/13.

Central Bedfordshire had 98 schools (excluding Academies) as at 31 March 2013.

The Forum, at its meeting held on 7 March 2011, had resolved that there would be no balance control mechanisms from 2011/12 onwards (minute no. CBSF/10/122 refers). However the Local Authority (LA) would continue to monitor reasons for holding excessive surplus balances.

The Forum noted that the 2012/13 Earmarked Reserves would not be known until after the CFR returns had been filed by schools. The Forum noted that increase in revenue balances were believed to be from 'in year' increases to Individual Schools Budgets (ISB) paid from unspent DSG and preparation for the further changes and impacts of the School Forum Reforms.

For 2012/13 two secondary schools did not submit the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) returns due to issues within their own senior management arrangements. It was noted that the LA would offer assistance to the schools.

RESOLVED

That the Schools out-turn position for 2012/13 be noted.

CBSF/13/10 Outline Forward Plan

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the likely programme for the next year.

The Forum noted that the programme would be flexible to take account of both national and local policy issues.

The Head of Learning and School Support informed the Forum that the PRU would no longer be in existence from January 2014 but that a report on the alternative provision free school would be brought instead.

RESOLVED

That the forward programme be noted;

CBSF/13/11 Future meeting dates for 2013/14

The Forum noted the following future meeting dates for the 2013/14 municipal year:

- 16 September 2013 at 9.00am in Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable
- 25 November 2013 at 6.00pm in Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford
- 20 January 2014 at 6.00pm in Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford
- 24 March 2014 at 9.00am in Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 7.10 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated