

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 15 September 2014

PRESENT

Jim Parker (Chairman)
(Vice-Chairman)

School Members:	David Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher, Parkfields Middle School
	Paul Burrett	Headteacher, Studham CofE Lower School and Pre-School
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie OBE	Headteacher, The Chiltern School
	James Davis	Governor, Leighton Middle School
	Angie Hardy	Headteacher, Clipstone Brook Lower School
	Sue Howley MBE	Governor, Greenleas Lower School
	John Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Beaudesert Lower School
Non-School Members:	Mr M Foster	Trade Union representative
Observer:	Cllr M AG Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
Apologies for Absence:	Richard Holland	
	Sharon Ingham	
	Mrs M Morris	
	Mrs S Mortimer	
	Sarah Stevens	
	Rob Watson	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs M Clampitt	Committee Services Officer
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr G Leka	Finance Manager - Schools
	Miss H Redding	Assistant Director School Improvement

CBSF/14/14 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman welcomed the Forum members to the first meeting of the new academic year.

CBSF/14/14 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

(b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None.

CBSF/14/1 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 23 June 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

1. The Forum agreed that a breakdown of attendance will be provided to the next meeting on 24 November 2014.
2. Minute reference CBSF/14/5 – it should be noted that areas of deprivation can exist within new housing developments but these can be missed as postal codes are not recognised by some indices. It has been recommended that this information be forwarded to the Early Years Reference Group.

CBSF/14/1 Dedicated Schools Grant

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the 2014/15 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation and Growth Fund for 2014/15. In addition, the funding arrangements for 2015/16 were provided for noting.

From 2013/14, the DSG was split into three notional blocks: Early Year, High Needs and Schools.

The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations defines the Local Authority education budgets for the 2013/14 financial year only. The Regulators 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 2014/15.

It was noted that the Chief Finance Officer (CFO), is required to only submit an annual outturn statement confirming the full deployment of the DSG. However there are two additional documents now required:

Non Maintained Special School (NMSS) statement – requires confirmation by the authority that all students identified as high needs students were not incorrectly identified.

Fraud cases statement – requires confirmation of the number and value of fraud cases in schools, the number investigated and the action taken where appropriate.

The Forum noted that a question has been raised with the DfE regarding the Council paying the deduction for CRC. It was felt that ,as CBC had not joined the scheme at the point Schools were withdrawn from CRC, there was a query as to the validity of the deduction from DSG.

2014/15 DSG Budget Allocation

The Schools Block is based on a per pupil unit of funding of £4,144.47 multiplied by 35,148 pupils as reported on the October 2013 census.

The Early Years Block is based on a unit of funding of £3,979.80 multiplied by 2,587 full time equivalent number of pupils as reported on the January 2014 census. In April 2015, the block will be updated for 7/12ths of the January 2015 pupil numbers to cover the period September 2014 to March 2015.

The High Needs Block is a single block for high needs pupils / student age 0-24. For 2014/15 the block is split into two parts, pre-16 and post-16 (ages 16-24). The Forum noted that since August 2013, the post-16 funding has combined three previous budgets: SEN block grant, specialist placements funding and the cost of high needs student in Further Education (FE).

The 2014/15 funding for early education places for 2 year olds from lower income households is to fund Statutory Places (£2,218k) and 'trajectory building' (262k) to create non-statutory places in preparation for the increased entitlement.

The distribution of the 2014/15 DSG based on the 48 Academy conversions at August 2014 was £183.049 (of which £83,790 went to Academies). Direct payments to Academies included in Central Spend = £4,308k. Paragraph 14 provided a breakdown of the centrally retained DSG of £18.824m.

Growth Fund 2014/15

The Growth Fund is for significant pre-16 growth in schools. Funds are available to both maintained schools and academies. Where a school has elected to expand they are not eligible for the Growth Fund.

The amount for 2014/15 was set at £1m. It was noted that this amount has already been exceeded as detailed in paragraph 20 of the report. It was confirmed that none of the funding was provided for Infant Class Size growth.

Fair Schools Funding in 2015/16

The Fair Schools Funding in 2015/16 consultation began in March 2014 by the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE had allocated an additional £350m to increase the per pupil budgets for the least funded local authorities. On 17th July the DfE announced the final methodology to be used to distribute funding to LA's in 2015/16. The Senior Finance Officer informed the Forum that the allocation for CBC had been increased to £5.3m.

The Technical Sub Group met on 9 September to consider the outcome of the consultation document and possible models for distribution of funding for 2015/16. The group requested that the Forum as a whole consider some of the points prior to the consultation document being issued to schools for their views.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the update on the 2014/15 DSG allocations be noted.**
- 2. That the update on the 2014/15 Growth Fund be noted.**
- 3. That the 2015/16 funding arrangements be noted.**

CBSF/14/1 Schools Finance Update Sept 14

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the 2013/14 Schools out-turn position and 2014/15 Risk Register.

Central Bedfordshire had 89 maintained schools and 47 Academies as at 31 March 2014. Paragraph 10 provided a breakdown per phase of the out-turn position for 2013/14 for both Revenue and Capital. An appendix was provided detailing balances for each school.

The criteria used to allocate schools into a rating of risk for 2014/15 was provided in paragraph 12. There was 1 lower school with an agreed license deficit with a total value of £54k for 2014/15 and 1 middle school closed 2013/14 with an unlicensed deficit of £49k. The School has been sent a letter outlining the Local Authority's concerns regarding the school's financial management.

The categorisation of schools in the risk register was carried out in July 2014 and determined the following:-

No Rating – 61 schools
Green – 17 schools
Amber – 6 schools
Red – 4 schools**

The Forum noted that red and amber schools will receive a visit from the School Finance Adviser during the Autumn Term. All schools will be sent a

letter advising of their RAG category and the use of criteria following the School Forum update.

**Related to 3 middle schools under statutory notice for closure due to reducing numbers and financial viability. In addition, there is 1 Upper school, which could not set a balanced budget within the 3 year agreed recovery period..

RESOLVED

That the Finance Update for Schools be noted.

CBSF/14/10 Dedicated School Grant Contingency budgets

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the School Contingency Budgets, as at 31 August 2014, which had been split into three notional blocks: Schools, High Needs and Early Years with each block holding its own contingency budget.

Schools Contingency

It was agreed at the School Forum meeting on the 14 October 2013 that the de-delegated contingency budget for 2014/15 would remain at the 2013/14 per pupil level of £5.63.

The balance as at 31 August 2014 for the Schools Contingency is £176,050.

High Needs Contingency

It was agreed at the Schools Forum meeting of the 20 January 2014 that unallocated 2014/15 High Needs Block funding would be held in contingencies until funding issues resolved, unspent funding will be redistributed to schools in 2015/16.

The balance as at 31 August 2014 for the High Needs Contingency is £1,284,495.

Early Years Contingency

The balance of unspent funds of £117,746 from 2013/14 had been carried forward to 2014/15. The balance, as at 31 August 2014, for the Early Years Contingency is £343,653.

RESOLVED

That the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Contingency spend as at 31 August 2014 be noted.

CBSF/14/15 School Forum Budget

The Forum received and considered a report which provided the spend, as at 31 August 2014, from the Schools Forum Budget for 2014/15.

The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that as at 31 August 2014, the remaining balance for the year was £3,433. The subscription to the F40 group had been renewed. It was suggested that possible training be arranged for new members and existing members. The new members would be in line with the proposed changes to the School and Early Years Finance Regulations, amendments to the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012. The purpose of these changes is to strengthen the representation on the forum of special provision and AP. The proposed changes will come into force in January 2015 and shall be applied to the financial year 2015/16.

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

RESOLVED

That the Schools Forum spend as at 31 August 2014 be noted.

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

Chairman

Dated