

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 15 June 2015

### PRESENT

Jim Parker (Chairman)

David Brandon-Bravo (Vice-Chairman)

School Members:	Ali Brabner	Governor, Cranfield Academy
	Paul Burrett	Headteacher, Studham CofE Lower School and Pre-School
	Shirley-Anne Crosbie OBE	Headteacher, The Chiltern School
	Sue Howley MBE	Governor, Greenleas Lower School
	John Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Stephen Tiktin	Governor, Beaudesert Lower School
	Rob Watson	Headteacher Stratton Upper School

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

Apologies for Absence: James Davis  
Mr M Foster  
Sharon Ingham  
Mrs M Morris  
Mrs S Mortimer

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs M Clampitt	Committee Services Officer
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mrs H Knox	Acting Team Leader, Childcare Development
	Mr R Parsons	Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning
	Miss H Redding	Assistant Director School Improvement

### CBSF/15/1. **Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2015/16**

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

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

David Brandon-Bravo was the only candidate nominated and seconded. He was therefore appointed Vice-Chairman.

**RESOLVED**

1. **that Jim Parker be elected Chairman of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum 2015/16.**
2. **that David Brandon-Bravo be elected Vice-Chairman of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum 2015/16.**

**CBSF/15/2. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new municipal year and the last meeting before the school holidays.

Page 8 of the minutes were asked to be expanded to contain more information requested for contingencies. More information of the discussion without naming the schools would be raised under Matters arising.

Page 14 that the terms of membership on the Forum be staggered so that the entire Forum is not up for re-election at the same time.

**CBSF/15/3. Members' Interests****(a) Personal Interests:-**

There were none made.

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

There were none made.

**CBSF/15/4. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising****RESOLVED**

**That the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 26 January 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to further detail being provided regarding minute no. CBSF/14/27 and Contingencies.**

CBSF/14/27 – Contingencies

The Forum were asked to consider a funding request for de-delegated services in relation to deficits of three closing schools which would exceed £1m. The amount requested was £30.82 per pupil per school for school contingencies.

The Forum expressed concerns over the request and the fact that other schools and their pupils would be losing funding to cover the deficits for the three schools. The Forum ask for clarification on a number of issues including: capping of deficits, sale of land to offset deficits, alternatives available before top slicing DSG, possibility of other schools falling into similar situations. The Senior Finance Manager and the Assistant Director Schools answered the questions as follows:

1. One school has received a “Notice of Concern” and the Council has placed the Senior Finance Manager on the governing body to help the school control their spending. Prior to closure the school would have received a licensed deficit as their original deficit was quite small only £50k. Due to falling numbers of pupils the deficit has increased to continue to provide the full range of education.
2. The land for all three sites is not able to be sold to offset the deficits. There are very clear regulations regarding the land. One plot of land is not in the council’s ownership. The future use of the land will be subject to an Executive Report.
3. The three schools are committed to providing a good education for their remaining pupils until they transition to their next school.
4. Maintained schools through de-delegation, support deficits arising from closing maintained schools. Academies are dealt with by the EFA.

The Forum were understanding of two schools deficits and their efforts to manage their deficits, keeping them as small as possible. The Forum wanted to know if the agreement to pay could be considered on a school by school basis? It was clarified that this must be done as a collective process.

The Forum when put to the vote did not support the proposal and requested that alternatives be considered and if necessary a special meeting be called.

#### **CBSF/15/5. High Needs Block Technical Sub Group - Draft Terms of Reference**

The Forum received and considered the Draft Terms of Reference for the High Needs Block Technical Sub Group of the Schools Forum.

The Forum were asked for volunteers to sit on the Technical Sub Group and the following agreed:

Shirley Ann Crosbie OBE

Sue Howley MBE

Sarah Mortimer

Peter Cohen

John Street

David Brandon-Bravo

Ali Brabner

The Assistant Director School Improvement will arrange for a meeting date to be set and the draft document will be considered at that meeting.

**CBSF/15/6. Early Years Reference Group Forum Representation**

The Forum considered the request for Forum representation on the Early Years Reference Group.

The Forum were asked to provide 1 or 2 nominees to attend four meetings a year representing the Schools Forum. Sue Howley MBE and Paul Burrett volunteered to represent the Forum.

**CBSF/15/7. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Update**

This item was considered as part of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Update and 2015/16 Funding Allocations item (Minute no. CBSF/15/12 refers).

**CBSF/15/8. DfE capital allocations 2015/16 to 2017/18**

The Forum considered the report which advised of the total Department for Education capital allocations to schools and the Council for 2015/16 and for 2015/16 – 2017/18 for Basic Need and Schools Capital Maintenance and invited the Forum to note the Council level allocations.

It was noted that for the first time the allocations cover more than a single year.

**School Capital Maintenance Funding**

The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning, Children's Services advised the Forum that the figures set out the allocation to the LA for its strategic programme of schools capital maintenance, having been calculated via a new methodology that uses pupil numbers (weighted to take account of phase and also schools that have been subject to significant modernisation) and the condition of schools based on the results of a national property data survey commissioned by the DfE.

It was also noted that for non VA schools the Council had developed a draft programme for 2015/16, a refresh of the condition data held by the Council for its schools had also been instructed to maximise the opportunity for a multi year allocation and enable a three year programme to be created. A draft Locally Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP) had been agreed for 2015/16.

## **Basic Need**

The 2017/18 allocation of £21m for Basic Need had previously been anticipated to equal the 2015/16 (£6.2m). It is currently anticipated to be reduced to £3.5m for 2017/18, this figure was based on current assumptions and the 2014 School Organisation Plan.

The Total Basic Need grant provided to our immediate Local Authority neighbours for the period 2011 – 18 is as follows:

Luton BC: £44m  
Bedford BC: £22.5m  
Central Beds: £68.4m

A breakdown of the allocations to Central Bedfordshire, including Schools DFC was set out at Appendix A to the report.

The Forum expressed concerns at the amount of physical space to be provided for new schools and extensions to existing schools as a result of the Government's amended Building Bulletin guidance. There were concerns of shoehorning children in at some Schools within 4 to 5 years.

The Forum requested that Councillors be made aware of the space issues facing schools and the financial support required to comply. The Executive Member for Education and Skills advised that although there was a deficit in external funding for new school places, the General Fund would cover the shortfall. The cost of borrowing to fund the capital value of these works impacted on the revenue budget for the Council. It was noted it was a Local Authority problem and alternative funding would be looked at.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the overall Department for Education allocations for 2015/16 and for 2015/16 to 2017/18 for Basic Need, be noted.**

### **CBSF/15/9. Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets**

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the use of the School Contingency Budgets, as at 28 February 2015, 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 Schools 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 28 February 2015 for the Schools Contingency is £207,791.

### **High Needs Contingency**

It was agreed at the Schools Forum meeting held on 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 28 February 2015 for the High Needs Contingency is £1,284,495. At the Schools Forum meeting held on 26 January 2015 it was agreed that £1M would be transferred to the Schools Block and distributed to maintained schools and academies on a one off basis via the AWPU (age weighted pupil unit) for 2015/16. Any remaining balance would be transferred to support capital development in specialist provisions.

### **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 28 February 2015, for the Early Years Contingency is £1,021,731. The balance will be carried forward to 2015/16 and £500,000 will be added to the Schools Block and distributed to maintained schools and academies on a one off basis via the AWPU (age weighted pupil unit) and the remainder for the termly census adjustments.

### **RESOLVED**

**That the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Contingency spend to 28 February 2015, be noted.**

### **CBSF/15/10. School Forum Budget**

The Forum received and considered a report which provided an update on the Schools Forum Budget for 2014/15.

The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that as at 28 February 2015 the remaining balance for the year was £3,316 of which £1,444 had been carried forward from 2013/14. It was noted that any unspent budget would be carried forward to the next year. It was noted that the budget for 2014/15 was £3,000, with the continued membership of F40.

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 28 February 2015 be noted.**

## CBSF/15/11. **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2015/16 Funding Allocation for Early Years Block**

The Forum considered a report to note and approve the 2015/16 DSG allocation for Early Years Block including provision for two year olds and the early years pupil premium. In addition, they were asked to note and approve the early years contingency.

The Early Years Block has three defined areas:

- The three and four year old entitlement
- The early years pupil premium
- Funding for disadvantaged two year olds

The DfE confirmed on 17 December 2014 that the Early Years remains one of the funding blocks within the funding settlement for 2015/16. The Early Years Block includes:

- **The three and four year old entitlement**  
This is a continuing entitlement which has been set at the same per pupil rate as in 2014/15 (£2,587 for CBC). The rate is multiplied by the January early years census for a provisional allocation. The figure is revised in July 2015 with the January 2015 pupil numbers (to cover the April to August 2015 period) and 7/12ths of the January 2016 pupil numbers (to cover the September 2015 to March 2016 period). The Schools Forum approved a local Funding Formula in 2009 for Central Bedfordshire. The Formula includes the following:
  - A base rate or enhanced base rate for settings providing flexible attendance
  - An enhancement for staff qualified at a higher level
  - An additional enhancement based on areas of deprivation
- **The early years pupil premium (EYPP)**  
This new payment came into effect from April 2015 and pays an additional £300 per year per eligible child that takes up the full 570 hours to the provider. This is an hourly rate of 53p per child per hour. The estimated provisional allocation for Central Bedfordshire in October 2014 was £171k. The Department for Education will conduct a survey on take up of the EYPP in the Autumn 2015, any adjustments will be made following the survey in January 2016.
- **Funding for disadvantaged two year olds**  
The funding for this element has been predicted on an hourly rate, announced in October 2014, of £5.03 for Central Bedfordshire Council. The initial allocation will be made in July 2015 for 2015/16 and will be based on eligible children participating (not demographic

information) in early education as detailed in the January 2015 early years census and school census.

- The DfE will allow for an update of figures in the autumn term 2015 and any required adjustments will be made in January 2016
- From June 2016 the allocations will be based on the 5/12ths and 7/12ths formula used for the three and four old entitlement
- An Early Years contingency will be held in case of a pressure resulting from this change in allocation

The Senior Finance Manager confirmed that £2.8m had been initially allocated for 2015/16 subject to School Forum approval.

The Contingency as at May 2015 for the Early Years was £2.43m. This was comprised of:

£1.276m for two year olds

£1.154m for payment made for three and four year olds (including £118k 2013/14 Early Years contingency balance was rolled forward)

£0.5m has been used from the Early Years Block Contingency to contribute to the increase in the Schools Budget for 2015/16.

Following approval at the January 2015 Schools Forum meeting (minute no. CBSF/14/26 refers), the three and four year old payments have been subject to an increase of just 5p per hour for PVI's and 15p per hour for Lower Schools from April 2015. These increases will help utilise some of the contingency, the balance will mitigate any shortfall in funding available for two year olds. There is anticipated a shortfall of £785k due to possible take up. The summer term traditionally has the largest number of children.

The Contingency also covers Inclusion funding awarded for children with additional needs.

The Forum expressed concerns regarding the proposal for two year olds and the impact on schools. It was requested that the Early Years Technical Sub Group be established to consider termly reports and provide the Forum with updates on the uptake and financial impact. Forum members unable to attend the meeting would be contacted to be part of the sub group.

It was agreed that a further report would come to the next meeting to enable the Forum to give their approval.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the 2015/16 DSG allocation for the Early Years Block be noted.**
- 2. That the Early Years Contingency be noted.**

## CBSF/15/12. **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Update and 2015/16 Funding Allocations**

The Forum received a report which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Growth Fund outturn for 2014/15 and 2015/16 DSG allocation.

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

The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) was set at negative 1.5% **per pupil** for 2015/16.

It was noted that the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is no longer required to complete two statements annually instead the DfE have now requested one annual outturn statement, confirming that the DSG received by the Authority was fully deployed in support of the school budgets in accordance with the conditions of the School Regulations. In addition, it will also include a Non Maintained Special School (NMSS) statement and Fraud cases reported in school statement.

### **DSG Outturn 2014/15**

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 2014, the block was updated for 7/12ths of the January 2014 pupil numbers to cover the period September 2013 to March 2014.

The High Needs Block is a single block of high needs pupils/students 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 distribution of the 2013/14 DSG based on the 48 Academy conversions at December 2014 was £183,434 (£83,790 went to Academies ISB). Direct payments to Academies included Early Years = £716k and High Needs = £3.481k. Paragraph 13 of the report provided a breakdown of the centrally retained DSG of £19.3m

A technical sub group has been set up to deal with High Needs Funding.

There is a carry forward to 2015/16 of £3.393m. The table in paragraph 14 of the report details the underspends. The underspend has been used in part to increase the Schools' individual budget for 2015/16 by £1.5m (£1m from SEN Contingency and £0.5m from Early Years Contingency) and a

transfer to capital for Specialist Provisions of £855k (£726k from SEN and £129k from SEN Contingency).

### **Growth Fund Outturn 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 and has been overspent by £428,470. The Forum noted that any overspend would be the first call against the 2015/16 allocation for Growth Fund. An adjustment is due from the EFA of £248k in respect of a Growth Fund payment to Academies. The adjustment will be included in the 2015/16 Growth Fund

### **DSG Budget Allocation 2015/16**

The Forum noted that on 26 March 2015, the DfE announced the DSG for 2015/16 and that it would remain split into three notional blocks: school, high needs and early years.

The final DSG for 2015/16 is £192.587m. This is based on:

- Schools Block: £154.186m – which is based on the SBUF plus a cash transfer to bring non-recoupment academies into the LA's overall budget calculation. The CRC deduction of £7.51 made the revised SBUF £4,289.09, an increase of £144.62 from 2014/15. In addition, pupil numbers had increased by 718 to 35,866, based on October 2014 census.
- High Needs Block: £27.935m – which is based on the 2014/15 carry forward plus an increase in places for academic year 2015/16 and an additional top-up of £47m distributed based on the 2-19 aged population in each Local Authority.
- Early Years: £10.476m – which is based on the same rate as in 2014/15 £3,979.80 for three to four year olds. Also the early year pupil premium (eypp) £300 per year per pupil equating to £171k. Funding for disadvantaged two year olds at an hourly rate of £5.03. The allocation would be made in June 2015 and was not available at the time of the meeting.

The above Schools Block included a cash transfer (£341k) for CBC's University Technical College which is based on what the UTC would have received in the 2014/15 formula based on pupil numbers in the October 2014 census and uplifted by the Minimum Funding Level (MFL).

Paragraph 30 of the report provided a breakdown of the indicative DSG Revenue allocation of £192.587m for 2015/16.

Paragraph 34 provided a list of the single national licence managed by the Department for Education for all state-funded schools in England. The

Forum noted that four new licenses had been added. It is estimated that this will cost be £242k.

Paragraph 37 provided a breakdown of the centrally retained DSG of £20.62m for 2015/16.

### **RESOLVED**

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

### **CBSF/15/13. School Finance Update**

The Forum considered a report which provided an update on the Licence Deficit Schools and the Schools Finance Risk Register.

Central Bedfordshire had 88 maintained schools and 48 Academies as at 31 March 2015.

There were 3 lower schools closed 2014/15 with unlicensed deficits in uncommitted revenue balances. In addition there are 2 middle schools and one upper school currently causing financial concern. The 2 middle schools are subject to a statutory notice for closure due to reducing pupil numbers and financial viability and the upper school is unable to set a balanced budget within the prescribed 3 year period. The Upper School has been sent a letter of intended Notice of Concern under Section 2.15 of Central Bedfordshire's Scheme for Financing Schools in 2014/15 should certain steps not be followed.

The categorisation of schools regarding risk was carried out in March 2015 and determined the following:

No Rating: 57 schools  
Green: 22 schools  
Amber: 5 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.

### **RESOLVED**

**That the Finance update for Schools be noted.**

**CBSF/15/14. Work Programme**

This will be circulated with the minutes.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and concluded at 7.55 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated ..... ..