

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 21 November 2016

PRESENT

Mr D Brandon-Bravo (Chairman)
Mrs S Howley MBE (Vice-Chairman)

School Members:	Mr P Burrett	Headteacher
	Mr P Cohen	Executive Headteacher
	Mrs SA Crosbie OBE	Headteacher
	Mrs L Davies	Headteacher
	Miss K Hayward	Headteacher
	Mrs S Ingham	Headteacher
	Ms A Moyle	School Business Manager
	Mr J Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Mr S Tiktin	Governor

Apologies for Absence:	Mrs A Brabner
	Mrs A Challis
	Mr M Foster

Officers in Attendance:	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr L Manning	Committee Services Officer
	Miss H Redding	Assistant Director School Improvement

CBSF/16/15. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 19 September 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

Minute CBSF/15/1, paragraph 5

In the first sentence delete 'discrepancies' and insert 'differences'. The sentence to now read 'Special School top-ups still have additional work to be done to **differences** in funding levels in different schools against the same descriptors'.

Matters arising:

CBSF/15/7 The Forum was advised that the Terms of Reference for the Technical Sub-Group had been included in the agenda pack for discussion at the meeting today (Item 4).

CBSF/15/7 The Forum noted that a response had still not been received to the request for the refund from the conference Forum members and officers had attended. **Action: Assistant Director School Improvement**

CBSF/15/7 A Member commented that the Growth Fund criteria was set in 2012/13. She queried what proportion of applications were successful and whether it was timely for a review of the criteria and publication. The meeting was reminded that the Interim Head of Service had been asked to carry out a review for 2017/18. It was not possible to review for 2016/17. Officers advised that an update on Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be given at the March 2017 meeting. **Action: Interim Head of Service, Planning, Schools Admissions**

CBSF/15/12 A Member referred to the Early Years Block and the issue of growth funding for statutory provision only and that pre schools had to apply for the Pre-School Panel for funding. Further detail was needed about Early Years funding. She felt this to be unfair. **Action: Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention to follow up with the Early Years Reference Group.**

The Chairman commented that more detail was still needed on funding streams.

CBSF/16/16. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman formally welcomed Alexia Moyle and Ali Challis as new members of the Forum.

The Forum considered the document circulated at the meeting which detailed the following vacancies on the Forum as at 16 November 2016:

- Academy Upper School Governor
- Middle School Headteacher
- Middle School Governor (maintained or academy)
- Upper School Governor
- Academy Lower School (Governor or Headteacher)
- Church of England Diocese Representative

Members were asked to promote and encourage applications to fill these vacancies.

Mr Burnett explained that the Church of England Diocese had written to the Council advising that he could represent this sector. Officers advised that dual representation was permitted but that some restrictions would apply to the voting procedure i.e. some issues could only be voted on by maintained schools.

Discussion took place on the absence of any information on the meeting or debate conducted by the Forum's sub groups with the exception of the High Needs Technical Sub-Group.

RESOLVED

1. **that a list of the Forum's current vacancies be set out on the Forum's agenda sheet.**
2. **that a standing item be added at Item 4 on the Forum's agenda, setting out the sub-groups that had met, the dates of such meetings and any minutes/notes available.**

CBSF/16/17. Terms of Reference - Early Years Block Technical Sub-Group

The Forum received and considered the Terms of Reference for the Early Years Block Technical Sub-Group.

During discussions the following was noted:

- The Sub-Group had contributed to the draft Terms of Reference
- Contracting for children's centres, Early Years funding and the allocation of monies such as s106 were crucial areas of responsibility
- The Terms of Reference needed to include a fuller reference to the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities document issued by the Education Funding Agency.

RESOLVED

1. **that a revised Terms of Reference would be submitted to the January meeting of the Schools Forum;**
2. **that the issues raised about Early Years funding would be referred back to the Early Years Block Technical Sub-Group for discussion.**

CBSF/16/18. High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Update Report Regarding Pressures on the High Needs Block

The Forum received a report which provided an update on the pressures on the status of the work regarding the High Needs Block and identified in year pressures on it. A revised Appendix A to the report was circulated at the meeting.

Points and comments included:

1. At the last meeting the issue had been raised that the pressures on the High Needs Block had been forecast for some time and would come into effect in 2016.
2. High Needs Block was not consistent across other local authorities; some had contingency budgets whilst some top sliced funding.
3. It was expected that the second part of the High Needs consultation would be published early December and would be important in terms of indicating funding details about Schools Block and High Needs Block.

4. As agreed at the last meeting, further work had been done to differentiate the top up values to correspond with different levels of need of students attending the ACB using a similar model to the special schools banding levels. The details of the preferred model were given in Appendix A.
5. Paragraph 24 sets out the current overspend of the High Needs Block, additional costs, the potential pressure and the impact on overspend should the view of Schools Forum be to support proposed model.
6. The current spending in schools had been considered and the historical factors that impacted on funding levels had been reviewed.
7. Due to historical factors there were differences with funding levels in different schools against the same descriptors.
8. It was recognised that there had been a staffing increase for all schools.
9. If a school place was available when a request was received from another local authority, this place would have been given even though Central Bedfordshire might need the place in-year.
10. One of the aims of the SEN strategy was for local provision for local children to be achieved. It was recommended that this aim was included as part of the feedback for second part of consultation.
11. In 2016 there had been a move to three way tripartite funding for health, social care and education.
12. Commissioning contracts i.e. medical needs and an increase beyond contracted hours was an element of pressure.
13. The level of High Needs Block the local authority was allocated does not reflect the significant demand in places that had been seen.
14. The issue of significant pressure on special schools places had been included in the annual return to Education Funding Agency (EFA).
15. Further work could be undertaken by the Technical Sub Group to look at the capacity forecast in the Education, Health and Care Plan budget, including a breakdown of the elements of High Needs Block and what funding was used for.

In response to questions, the Forum noted the following:

1. A number of schools had been identified that met the criteria for group 1 places which was an area of pressure and concern.
2. A second piece of work was taking place to look at alternative ways to fund the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB), i.e. charging for group 1 places or moving funding between blocks; however other local authorities use the High Needs Block to fund group 1 places. Clarification was also needed whether there was the provision to fund the schools at level needed for pupils.
3. Recommendation 4 was for a further piece of work to take place to determine the options for 2017/2018 once the outcome second part consultation was known.
4. In terms of the impact for new free school, the proposal was that pupils with the most complex needs would move to that this provision and lower cost places would be given in ACB. The alternative would be to place pupils out of authority which would result in similar or higher costs. The Technical Sub Group needed to look at work to be done to identify pupils with complex needs as early as possible in order for a graduated response to be put in place and the focus to the targeted.

5. Enabling a child to manage transition is important and is a collective responsibility in terms of the provision of the right support at the right time.
6. It was noted that there were reservations to the options to be considered should there be deficit in the High Needs Block at year end in terms of some blocks or all blocks.
7. Reassurance was given that the decision being requested to offset overspend was for this year only. There had not been any debate about future years in terms of whether any blocks need to be moved.
8. It was suggested that 2 Technical Sub Groups meetings were arranged in the spring term and a paper presented at the March meeting of Schools Forum.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the proposed model of funding for the Academy of Central Bedfordshire for 2016/2017 was supported;**
- 2. that the in year adjustment to special school budget in 2016/17 to support increased staffing costs in line with those already agreed for mainstream schools and provisions was supported.**
- 3. that the recommended option to offset any overspend in 2016/2017 against in year underspend in all blocks was supported.**
- 4. that further discussion at the Schools Forum to determine the options for 2016/2017 once the closing balance and the outcome of the second stage of the consultation is known was agreed.**

(Note: the Forum adjourned at 4.34pm and reconvened at 4.41pm)

CBSF/16/19. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Update

The Forum received a report which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Growth Fund allocation for 2016/17 and funding arrangements for 2017/18.

Points and comments included:

- The agreement of the Schools Forum was required for both the central spend on and the criteria for allocating the Growth Fund.
- The deadline for the submission of the 2017/18 final APT had changed to 20 January 2017.

RESOLVED

- 1. the update to the 2016/17 DSG allocations, update to 2016/17 Growth Fund and 2017/18 funding announcement were noted and commented on;**

2. **the Assistant Director School Improvement, Senior Finance Manager – Children's Services and the Committee Services Officer meet to arrange provisional dates for additional meetings of the Forum to discuss and collate responses to the High Needs Block and Schools Block consultations.**

CBSF/16/20. Dedicated Schools Grant Contingency Budgets

The Forum received a report which provided an update on the use of the School Contingency Budgets for 2016/17.

NOTED

the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Contingency spend to 31 October 2016.

CBSF/16/21. School Forum Budget

The Forum received a report which provided an update on the use of the Schools Forum Budget for 2016/17.

Points and comments included:

1. As at 31 October 2016 there was a current balance of £5,697. The possibility of using some of this money for training any new members of the Forum was raised.
2. A significant number of the existing membership of the Forum did not attend its meetings. A key part of the induction should be to understand the powers and responsibility of Schools Forum. An annual development day could be held for members which raised awareness of the role, remit and responsibilities of the Forum, terminology and current issues.
3. Previous attempts at recruitment had not been markedly successful. Targeted recruitment was suggested though the membership needed to be a balance of head teachers, governors and business managers who could all contribute to the debate.
4. It needed to be made clear to new members that there were papers to read prior to meetings as there was the danger of members not understanding the implication of any decisions to be made. Some members commented on the time it took to fully understand the work undertaken by the Forum.
5. The balance of how the Forum works, the direction of travel, the desired outcomes, how to utilise the expertise of members and any training requirements needed to be discussed. It was suggested that an effective use of Schools Forum funding would be a half day training course facilitated by an external representative.

NOTED

the Schools Forum spend to 31 October 2016.

RESOLVED

that areas of training be discussed at the next meeting of the Schools Forum.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m. and concluded at 5.20 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated