

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 9 January 2017

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
	Kim McCamley	Headteacher
	Ms A Moyle	School Business Manager
	Mr J Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Mr S Tiktin	Governor, Beaudesert Lower School
Non-School Members:	Mrs A Challis	
	Mr M Foster	Trade Union representative
Apologies for Absence:	None	
Officers in Attendance:	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Miss H Redding	Assistant Director School Improvement
	Mrs S Tyler	Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention
	Mr D Waller	Policy & Implementation Manager, Human Resources

CBSF/16/22. **Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 21 November 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

CBSF/16/16

Paragraph 4 - Mr Burnett to be amended to Mr Burrett.

Matters arising:

CBSF/15/7 Members of the Forum agreed that no further action should be taken regarding the request for a refund from the conference Forum members and officers had attended, as it would be an unproductive use of officer time.

CBSF/15/7 An update on the Growth Fund element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be added to the work programme for the March meeting.

Action: Interim Head of Service, Planning, School Admission / Committee Services Officer

CBSF/15/12 Members of the Forum were advised that growth funding was only available for statutory provision. It was not available for non-statutory provision.

CBSF/16/17 Members were advised that the Terms of Reference for the Early Years Block Technical Sub-Group had been accurate at the time of publication. The DfE had subsequently re-issued the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities document in December 2016. The revised Terms of Reference would be submitted to the March meeting of the Schools Forum.

Action: The Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention.

CBSF/16/18 A second piece of work was taking place to look at alternative ways to fund the Academy of Bedfordshire (ACB). This issue would be discussed by the High Needs Technical Sub Group and reported back to the Schools Forum. **Action: The Assistant Director School Improvement.**

CBSF/16/19 A draft response to the High Needs Block and School Block consultations would be submitted at the March meeting of the Schools Forum. **Action: The Assistant Director School Improvement and Senior Finance Manager Children Services, Resources.**

CBSF/16/23. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

None.

CBSF/16/24. Schools Forum powers and responsibilities

The Forum received and noted the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities document re-issued by the Education Funding Agency in December 2016.

RESOLVED

that the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities document re-issued in December 2016 would be updated to indicate the amendments and additions in comparison with the previous version.

CBSF/16/25. Sub-Groups of Schools Forum

The Forum was advised that the High Needs Technical Sub Group, Schools Block and Growth Fund sub groups had not met since the last meeting of the Schools Forum. An update from the Early Years sub group meeting on the 9 January would be given at the next meeting of the Schools Forum.

The lead officers for the sub groups advised the following:

- The High Needs Technical sub group were satisfied that membership included representation from the appropriate cross section of members from Schools Forum. The meetings were well attended.
- The Early Years Technical sub group had reasonable representation and was usually well attended. The sub group worked well and included representation from Head Teachers of lower schools and Early Years.
- The Growth Fund meetings were held based on the receipt of applications. It was noted that Infant Class Size applications were limited and were generally agreed via email.
- The Schools Block Technical sub group met when there was the requirement to discuss a consultation.

Points and comments included:

- Concern was expressed about the lack of awareness of the existence of the sub groups.
- The membership of each sub group should be included in the minutes of Schools Forum.
- Members of Schools Forum should be given the opportunity to express an interest in attending a sub group.

RESOLVED:

Membership of the Schools Block Technical Sub Group would reviewed once the School Block consultation had been undertaken and the results had been made available.

CBSF/16/26. Revised Terms of Reference Early Years Block Technical Sub-Group

This item was deferred to the March meeting of Schools Forum.

CBSF/16/27. Apprenticeship Levy

The Forum received a report which provided an overview on the Apprenticeship Levy and to understand the HR implications of the Levy.

During discussions the following was noted:

1. An apprenticeship levy of 0.5% of the employer's total pay bill will be in place from April 2017.
2. Schools where the local authority is the contractual employer will need to be included in the calculation for the Levy that will apply to Central Bedfordshire Council. This will therefore include, all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.
3. Those schools where the governing body is considered to be the employer (Foundation, Voluntary Aided schools and Academies) with a pay bill of over £3 million will be subject to the Levy and will have to calculate their own liability and make arrangements for payment.
4. The Levy can be used to support the funding of training for existing members of staff, in accordance with published criteria, for example, a Masters after a Degree as well as for apprentices. There would be a cap of 0.5% on the amount of the Levy schools can claim back to ensure that the levy is proportionately distributed between schools and the corporate structure of the Council.
5. The government will top up the digital account by 10% each month.
6. The Levy is non refundable. Any underspend would be returned to the Government.
7. Unknown elements of the Levy are the mechanism for accessing money and how the Levy will be paid. Clarification was also needed about the 15 bands of the new funding system.

In response to questions, the Forum noted the following:

1. For some schools, the 0.5% of the Levy costs they could claim back would be a very small amount and would not cover many training costs. The Levy is effectively is a flat tax that cannot be claimed back, if not used.
2. The introduction of the Levy could have a big impact on some schools.
3. It was important that schools in the categories subject to the Levy were aware that this was another payment that needed to be included in their budget.
4. When information about the Levy was disseminated to schools, it would be helpful to include the date of when the decision to introduce the Levy was made and to give advice on how Mainstream schools can access the funding.
5. Imaginative and collaborative ways of using the Levy were needed in order to ensure good use of funds.

NOTED

1. **the content of the report and its financial impact on Maintained Schools and in particular Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, Nurseries and Special Schools;**
2. **that the information provided in relation to accessing funding for training for apprenticeships in schools subject to receipt of further, more detailed information in the Spring Term;**

3. **that further information would be provided in the Spring term 2017 to Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in order to support financial planning;**
4. **that further information and guidance would also be provided when known through the Central Essentials bulletin and at a future meeting of the Schools Forum.**

CBSF/16/28. Trade Union and Professional Associations Facilities Time Funding

The Forum received an overview on the funding for facilities release time for Trade Union and Professional Associations for which the continuation of funding was being sought.

Points and comments included;

- The principles of the funding remained the same as previous years.
- The expected cost per pupil is less than previous years because of carry forward of the remaining balance from the 2015/16 and 16/17 funding periods and the subsequent off set of costs. The carry forward is due to Trade Unions not claiming against the fund, where at present they do not have a local representative, which has resulted in the spend being less.
- A maximum charge of £3.31 per pupil had been agreed by the Schools Forum.
- The brought forward monies from previous years had reduced the estimated cost per pupil to £2.54 for the Maintained Primary and Secondary phases with every school being charged the same amount per pupil.
- Academies currently had their own arrangements for the funding of Trade Union facilities time. However Trade Unions had asked about the possibility of Academies having a similar set up managed by the local authority to be explored. A number of Academies had shown interest in scheme depending on the cost. A report is to be provided to the Director of Children's Services by Human Resources for consideration of a Council managed scheme. There are no decision making powers for the Schools Forum in relation to this matter.

RESOLVED:

The Forum voted unanimously within their phases that:

1. **funding from the Lower/Primary School Phase for the use of Trade Union facilities time (£2.54 per pupil) should be de-delegated**
2. **funding from the Secondary School Phase (Middle and Upper) for the use of Trade Union facilities time (£2.54 per pupil) should be de-delegated.**

CBSF/16/29. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The Forum received an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Growth Fund allocation for 2016/17, funding arrangements for 2017/18 and information on stage two of the Government consultation on the Schools National Funding Formula and High Needs National Funding Formula.

Points and comments included:

- The funding announcement for 2017/18 included the ability of local authorities to centrally retain DSG to fund central services previously funded within the retained duties rate (for all schools) and to centrally retain DSG to fund services previously funded within the general duties rate (for maintained schools only) with the agreement of maintained school members of the Schools Forum. As a result of the delay of the second stage of the consultation and the receipt of the central block, the Education Services Grant (ESG) had been tipped into the DSG. Approval was needed from Schools Forum to retain DSG to fund central services.
- The introduction of an annual school improvement monitoring and brokering grant for local authorities from September 2017 and plans for a new £140M Strategic School Improvement Fund. Maintained schools and academies would be able to apply for this fund, with the support of a teaching school, local authority or Regional Schools Commissioner.
- An increase in DSG funding of £52,514k for the Schools Admissions team had previously been agreed by Schools Forum. As the application was subsequently refused by the Secretary of State, the Education Services Grant (ESG) had been used to fund the shortfall. The request for the same amount of funding was being re-submitted as the ESG was no longer available.

In response to questions, the Forum noted the following;

- Concern was expressed about the validity of the request for the identical amount of DSG funding for the Schools Admissions Team, given the increasing financial pressures schools and other providers were facing for example, changes in staffing costs and the increase in pension contributions. The Forum was advised that the funding requested covered the amount the Admissions Service costs the council and also took into account some changes to the process electronically, and the increase in services due to the rise in pupil numbers and the number of schools using the Admissions service. Other funding options and opportunities in relation to this were being explored.
- Any unspent funds at year end would be added back to the schools budgets in the following year.
- The consultation for stage two of the Schools National Funding Formula and High Needs National Funding Formula closes on the 22 March 2017.

RESOLVED

1. that the update to 2016/17 DSG allocations was noted and commented on;
2. that the update to 2016/17 Growth Fund was noted and commented on;
3. that the 2017/18 funding announcement was noted and commented on;
4. that the request for the 2017/18 DSG allocation for Growth Fund be set at £2M was approved;
5. that the request for the central retention of the “central budget for services” for 2017/18, previously funded by the retained rate of the Education Services Grant at £612,216 was approved;
6. that the request for the 2017/18 DSG allocation for Admissions be set at £313,004 was approved;
7. that the request for 2017/18 DSG allocation for School Forum to be set at £3k was approved;
8. that stage two of the Government consultations on Schools and High Needs National Funding Formula was noted and commented on.
9. that the DSG funding costs requested for the Schools Admissions Team would be re-explored.

CBSF/16/30. Training for Schools Forum members

The Forum considered areas of training for Schools Forum members.

Concern was expressed about attendance at all recent meetings, the need to urgently fill membership vacancies and how to address the issue of the recruitment of new members.

RESOLVED

That ideas for areas of training for Schools Forum members would be drafted by the Assistant Director School Improvement and Finance Manager, Children Services for consideration by a virtual task and finish group comprised of the following members;

- David Brandon-Bravo
- Paul Burrett
- Shirley-Anne Crosbie

- **Sue Howley**

CBSF/16/31. **Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets**

The Forum received an update on the use of the Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets for 2016/17.

Points and comments included;

- The final figure for the closing schools was yet to be confirmed as invoices were still being received from some schools. An update would be given at a future meeting of Schools Forum.
- The High Needs block is a 'needs led' budget. Assumptions have to be made on needs led provision and the number of children coming through the system who might need support. There were also additional costs to take into account such as out of county placements. Forecast spend was more difficult to ascertain. The budget figures are closely monitored.
- A mechanism for clawback for underspend from schools was now included in the Scheme for Financing Schools. It was noted that some schools had committed to use their underspend for capital. In the new regime there is the opportunity to claim for specialist provision and build. Central Bedfordshire Council were well placed to bid towards contribution for capital projects.
- Issues raised by Schools Forum members would be forwarded to the Technical Sub Group for discussion as it was important to have a full response to consultation.

NOTED

- 1. the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Contingency spend to 31 December 2016.**
- 2. that an update on the final figure for the closing schools would be given at a future meeting of Schools Forum.**
- 3. that the issues raised about the Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets for 2016/17 would be forwarded to the Technical Sub Group for discussion.**

CBSF/16/32. **Schools Forum Budget**

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

NOTED

the School Forum spend to 31 December 2016.

CBSF/16/33. Early Years consultation - changes to funding for 3- and 4-year-olds

The Forum received a report outlining the guidance issued on the new Early Years National Funding Formula.

During discussions the following was noted:

- Subsequent to the new guidance issued in December 2016, advice had been received about further changes to the calculations around nursery school supplements.
- The '30 hours allowance' would be rolled out nationally from September 2017.
- The information in the national press coverage was misleading. For Central Bedfordshire the formula paid to the local authority is at the national minimal funding rate of £4.30 per hour.
- New requirements of the Early Years Funding Formula included;
 - a local universal base rate for all types of provider, to be set by local authorities by 2019/20 at the latest, removing all differentials between types of providers
 - the establishment of a special educational needs inclusion fund by local authorities. This is already in place in Central Bedfordshire.
 - 93% pass through
- Model 1 is the model currently used by Central Bedfordshire Council. The four models include the advantages and disadvantages of each one.
- Following discussions and having taken into account the risk of a very small contingency sum, the Early Years Technical Sub Group recommends Model 4 as the operating model for consultation with Early Years providers.
- Initial discussions had taken place whether the sums in each block in Model 4 could be increased. The decision was made to leave the blocks as currently shown until the take up of the additional 15 hours entitlement was known rather than move funding on speculation.

Points and comments included:

- Had the Department for Work and Pensions predicted the take up of the additional 15 hours entitlement?
- Concern was expressed about the provision of the additional hours at the current rate which was not sustainable.
- Some settings could face closure and there could be the temptation to employ younger staff on a lower rate of pay which might result in a reduction in the quality of the service.
- There are the issues of a setting pricing itself out of market and if a setting doesn't offer the provision parents choosing to go elsewhere to be taken into consideration.

- One option of alleviating the pressure of the additional free childcare entitlement on school settings could be to work in conjunction with a day care setting or childminder to provide the 30 hours allowance.

RESOLVED

- 1. that a short consultation be carried out with all early years providers from all sectors on the basis of Model 4 as the recommended operating model moving forward.**
- 2. that a review of the current inclusion funding system within Central Bedfordshire would be carried out later in the year was noted.**

CBSF/16/34. Work Programme

The Forum received and considered the work programme for the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.

RESOLVED

that the work programme was considered and would be updated as required.

CBSF/16/35. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 6 March 2017, 3pm, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m. and concluded at 5.10 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated