

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Wednesday, 22 March 2017

### PRESENT

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

School Members:	Mr P Burrett	Headteacher
	Mr O Button	Principal, Queensbury Academy
	Mr P Cohen	Executive Headteacher
	Mrs SA Crosbie OBE	Headteacher
	Mrs S Ingham	Headteacher
	Ms A Moyle	School Business Manager
	Mr S Tiktin	Governor, Beaudesert Lower School
Non-School Members:	Mrs A Challis	
Apologies for Absence:	Mrs A Brabner	
	Mrs L Davies	
	Cllr S Dixon	
	Mr M Foster	
	Mr J Street	
Observers:	Mrs J Mudd, Ivel Valley School	
	Mr J Selmet, Weatherfield Academy Special School	
	Mr P Green, The Academy of Central Bedfordshire	
	Mr P Banwell, Oak Bank School	
Officers in Attendance:	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs S Harrison	Director of Children's Services
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr G Jones	Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr S Powell	School Improvement Consultant
	Mrs S Tyler	Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention

**CBSF/16/49. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

Members of the Forum were advised the following:

Ms J Mudd, Ivel Valley School, Mr J Selmes, Weatherfield School, Mr P Green, the Academy of Central Bedfordshire, and Mr P Selmet, Weatherfield Academy Special School were attending today's meeting as observers.

Mr R Watson, Stratton Upper School had stood down from the Forum. Mr O Button, Queensbury Academy, was welcomed to the meeting as the Upper School Academy Head Teacher representative.

**CBSF/16/50. Schools Forum powers and responsibilities**

The Forum received a report setting out the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities which had been re-issued by the Education Funding Agency in December 2016.

**NOTED****the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities report.****CBSF/16/51. Dedicated Schools Grant**

Members of the Forum received a report setting out the High Needs Block spend for 2016/17 and proposed spend for 2017/18.

Points and comments included:

1. Work had taken place to look at aligning spend to the most appropriate budget heading (High Needs Block or Early Years Block).
2. The High Needs Block is a difficult budget to manage in any local authority and presents the most challenges due to pressures and resources. There are pressures on every budget line and historically there has been an overspend in the High Needs Block partly to do with financial pressures and partly with the way the spend is monitored and coded. The monitoring procedure needs to be sharpened including a more rigorous approach of tracking budgets line by line, evidence behind funding decisions, and for the spend coded against each service to be looked at in further detail.
3. There is further work to be done around ways to increase the efficiency of the system in future, the streamlining of processes and the provision of metrics.
4. As part of the transformation process the restructure of Children's Services includes a review of the SEND service and the possibility of bringing the 3 teams together to increase capacity and the move towards the provision of more seamless support.
5. The Early Years team support pre-school early years education and care settings on a wide range of issues; the Centrally Funded team provide

advise to settings as SENDCOs. There is room for rationalisation going forward.

6. Paragraph 9 – the proposal does not include an increase in the thresholds for assessment and there will not be a cap on the number of children with new EHC Plans. The number of children will be monitored to ensure the proposed savings are made which can be reported back to the Schools Forum.
7. High Needs Post 16 (paragraph 14) – the local authority used to receive Dedicated School Grant (DSG) separately for post 16 and pre 16 pupils. The High Needs Block is now received as a single payment.
8. DSG contribution towards Central Overheads (paragraph 18) – the regulations around DSG allow an element of overhead costs to be used towards the funding of costs such as HR and Legal costs. This process will be flagged as a Council pressure and can be reviewed going forward.
9. The reality is that once a child reaches statutory school age, the previous provision is no longer available. Discussions need to take place with Early Years settings and providers about how support can be provided to meet the needs of the children.
10. The rationale behind the historic charging of Early Years to the High Needs Block is that the team were originally funded through the Sure Start grant to support Private, Voluntary and Independent providers (PVIs) and special needs.
11. The rationalising of costs needs looked as part of the process of balancing a budget.
12. Members of Schools Forum previously expressed concern about monies in the High Needs Block and Early Years Block. It was felt that these blocks needed to be looked at separately.
13. A meeting recently took place with parents to discuss the level of therapy support provided by NHS partners as the level of services in special schools and from partners has reduced over the years and thresholds have increased. It would be beneficial to consult with these parents.
14. What is the thinking around the proposed reduction to the budget set in 2016/17 to £500,000 in 2017/18 for Special Schools Outreach and High Cost pupils, how will this work in practice and is the proposed reduction realistic?
15. The details behind proposed reductions to the budget for Statement/EHC Plans and Special School Outreach and High Cost Pupils are needed based on accurate costs and the projection of pupil numbers.
16. There are some costs around exclusion that need to be reduced. Early intervention is the key to preventing exclusion.
17. It is unclear what impact the proposed reduction to the budget for Special School Outreach and High Cost Pupils will have on budget of those Special Schools responsible for delivering this service.
18. A review is needed of the Outreach Service in terms of the gatekeeping and referral process and implications if the service was no longer available.
19. It was reiterated that the budget given for Additional Pupil Support (paragraph 13) is a reduction on actual spend. It is difficult to employ staff to support those at risk of exclusion. A reduction in this budget will add to the risk for the school.

20. One reason that the budget for Additional Pupil Support appears to be underspent is that schools are required to provide the first 12 hours funding themselves. Specialist staff need to be retained even though the child is on a part time timetable.
21. Medical Needs Service (paragraph 23) – the difficulty in getting support from this service needs to be taken into account as part of the review.
22. The quality control factor of commissioned services is a wider issue that needs to be considered.

**The meeting was adjourned at 10.30am**

**The meeting resumed at 10.45am.**

23. There has been a reduction in the demand for places at the Academy of Central Bedfordshire due to mainstream schools not taking up the number of places as in the previous year.
24. Model D is based on the number of children in schools in the age range that the ACB currently caters for.
25. The proposed short term funding allocation for the ACB is a stop gap scenario in order to allow time for the funding mechanism to be changed and a more sustainable model to be put in place.
26. The brand descriptions for 1a and 1b students are still only in draft. Modelling has not been carried out to identify how many pupils fit into each banding.
27. The funding model for the ACB was discussed 2 years ago including the associated risks.
28. The local authority has commissioned 100 Group 1 places for the year 2017/18. It is the commissioning of Group 2 places by schools going into September that is of concern as only 6 places have currently been commissioned.
29. A significant increase has been seen in Year 7 & Year 8 exclusions. Ways of incentivising middle and upper schools to purchase Group 2 places at the ACB needs to be explored.
30. A process is needed to support the process of commissioning and allocating places at the ACB.
31. Special Schools (paragraph 30) - the table on page 11 of the report indicates a slight decrease in the banding for Weatherfield school but the banding for other Special Schools remains the same.
32. Would the budget of £400k required for 2017/18 for the proposed centrally retained top up for Special School's empty places (paragraph 35), cover the costs if all of the empty places were filled?
33. The future of the High Needs Technical Sub-Group, its role and remit needs to be clarified.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. that the use of the centrally retained High Needs Block in 2016/2017 to support high needs provision and the pressures reported in November 2016 was noted.**
- 2. that on the basis of discussions during the meeting, model D is supported by the Schools Forum and a letter is sent to all schools**

**from the Director of Children's Services outlining the importance of the ACB and the continuation of this provision.**

- 3. that the transfer of costs of some of High Needs features to the Early Years Block was noted.**
- 4. that a list of actions would be compiled and circulated to members of the Schools Forum (a copy is attached to these minutes).**

#### **CBSF/16/52. Early Years Funding 2017/18**

Members of the Forum received a report setting out the Early Years Funding for 2017/18.

The Chairman advised that the Early Years Funding 2017/18 report would be accepted under Special Urgency rules as detailed in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 as this report needed to be considered in conjunction with the High Needs Block report in order for members of the Forum to make an informed decision on the funding proposals.

Points and comments included:

1. The Early Years National Funding Formula comes into effect from April 2017.
2. Following discussion at the January meeting of Schools Forum, a short consultation has been carried out with Early Years providers from all sectors on the basis of Model 4 as the recommended operating model moving forward.
3. Model 4 is not affordable in 2017/2018 following the transfers of costs of some High Need features to the Early Years Block.
4. Very little information has been received from the DfE on modelling for the Disability Access Fund.
5. The original report aimed to close the gaps between school settings and PVI's via the continuation of the old formula.
6. Concern was reiterated about the base rate being equalised in 2019 and the associated financial pressures on Early Years providers.
7. There is further work to be done around the support provided to settings and children and the passporting of funds in order to avoid duplication.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. that the existing model of funding for Early Years will be continued for 2017/18 was noted.**
- 2. that a full review of Special Needs and Inclusion spend will be carried out in the Early Years as part of the bigger review of High Needs spend.**
- 3. that the Early Years SEND linked funding strands would be defined as part of the review.**

**4. that the remaining balance in the Contingency Fund would be confirmed after the financial year end.**

**CBSF/16/53. Date of the Next Meeting**

Monday 12 June, 3pm, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.20 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated ..... ..