

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 6 March 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
	Kim McCamley	Executive Head
	Ms A Moyle	School Business Manager
	Mr J Street	Academy Middle School Representative
	Mr S Tiktin	Governor, Beaudesert Lower School

Non-School Members:

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

Substitutes:	Mr N Martin
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Observers:	Mrs A Webb, Ivel Valley School
	Mr S Court, Ivel Valley School

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs Mr R Wenham
	Mr S Dixon

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
	Miss J Mortimer	
	Mrs S Tyler	Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention
	Mr V Wan	Senior Education Officer (Planning)

CBSF/16/36. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 9 January 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters arising:

CBSF/16/27 A further reminder about the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy would be placed in the Central Essentials bulletin and an update would be provided at the June meeting of Schools Forum.

CBSF/16/30 Members of the Forum were advised that Mr Stuart Powell, School Improvement Consultant would take the lead on the training for School Forum members as an interim measure until the recruitment process for the vacant post of the Assistant Director Transformation had been completed.

CBSF/16/37. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman advised the following:

- that the order of business for the meeting would be varied from the schedule shown on the agenda in order that item 12, Growth Fund payments and criteria would be considered as the first item of business.
- that a late paper had been tabled at the meeting for item 11, Dedicated Schools Grant. Members of the Forum would be given time to read the report prior to discussion.

CBSF/16/38. 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/16/39. Sub-Groups of Schools Forum

The Forum received an update from the Sub-Groups of Schools Forum on work being undertaken.

NOTED

the work being undertaken by the Sub-Groups of Schools Forum.

CBSF/16/40. Draft response to the High Needs Block consultation

The Forum received an update on the draft response to the High Needs Block consultation.

Points and comments included:

1. In response to question 1 'is the balance of the principles of fairness and stability correct', this might not be right for Bedfordshire which is growing considerably as using the historic spend further exacerbates historic inconsistencies and builds on unfair distribution.
2. Further clarification is needed about the reference to 2k, 4k and 6k in question 2b 'do you agree with the proposal of the basic entitlement allocation of £4k per pupil to each local authority?' The general feeling is that that proposed new system is more complicated than current.
3. It was felt that section 3 contained unnecessary duplication of factors such as deprivation and that a simpler approach is needed to the weightings factor.
4. During the last meeting of the Technical Sub-Group it was noted that information was not available about formula factors used by other local authorities for members to refer to.
5. The proposals in the consultation seem to suggest that a large amount of schools will receive less funding as a result of the National Funding Formula.

RESOLVED

1. **that the draft response to the High Needs Block consultation was noted pending further discussion at the next meeting of the High Needs Technical Sub-Group.**
2. **that the draft response would be circulated in the Central Essentials bulletin to enable schools to formulate their own view.**
3. **that the F40 would be contacted to request responses to question 3 from other local authorities and that any responses received prior to the deadline for the responses to the consultation would be circulated to Schools Forum members. If responses were not received the wording in the response would amended from 'unsure' to 'welcome clarity'**

CBSF/16/41. Draft response to the Schools Block consultation

The Forum received an update on the draft response to the Schools Block consultation.

Points and comments included:

1. There has been some confusing media in various publications and on websites around the Schools Block consultation which included assumptions about the shortfall to schools.
2. The response from Central Bedfordshire Council was about the Schools National Funding Formula only and included recognition that what is good for Central Bedfordshire is not necessarily good for other local authorities.
3. There was a typographic error in the response for question 7, 'do you agree with the proposed lump sum amount of £110,000 for all schools?'. The response to Secondary schools is to be amended to 'allocate a lower amount'.

Thanks were given to the Senior Finance Officer for undertaking the response to the consultation on behalf of the Forum.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the draft response would be circulated in the Central Essentials bulletin to enable schools to formulate their own view on the Schools Block consultation.**
- 2. that the response to question 8 'do you agree with the proposed amounts for sparsity funding of up to £25,000 for primary schools and up to £65,000 for secondary, middle and all-through schools would be clarified.**

CBSF/16/42. **Revised Terms of Reference for the Early Years Block Technical Sub Group**

NOTED

The revised Terms of Reference for the Early Years Block Technical Sub-Group.

CBSF/16/43. **Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets**

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

Points and comments included:

- The current balance of the School Contingency was £696,785; however £500k had been retained for closing maintained schools.
- The current deficit was £547,289; however there were still a few invoices outstanding.
- Any undistributed DSG from School Block would be added to the School Block for the following year.

NOTED**the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Contingency spend to 28 February 2017.****CBSF/16/44. Schools Forum Budget**

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

Points and comments included:

- The Schools Forum budget currently had an underspend of £5,609. The possibility of using some of the underspend for training of Schools Forum members has been discussed at a previous meeting.

NOTED**the School Forum spend to 28 February 2017.****CBSF/16/45. Dedicated Schools Grant**

Members of the Forum received a report setting out the High Needs Block spend in 2016/17 and proposed spend for 2017/18. A copy of the report is attached for information.

[Note: Mrs S Howley joined the meeting]

Points and comments included:

1. Concern was expressed about such a complex report being tabled at the meeting and the limited time available for Forum members to read the information to enable them to make an informed decision on the proposed spend for 2017/18.
2. Chiltern and Ivel Valley schools have not been advised of their placements for next year. The paper does not contain any information to make budgetary decisions on.
3. It was difficult to comment on the proposals being made in the report without the information to base a judgement on.
4. The High Needs Block spend and Early Years funding reports needed to be considered in conjunction to enable synergies to be identified and an informed decision to be made.
5. Concern was expressed about time constraints of when a decision needed to be made about the High Needs Block spend and deadline for the return of special schools budgets.

6. A review funding model needed to be carried out quickly as there was the potential that some schools may not be able to function in 2017-18. The issue of possible redundancies was also a critical element.
7. Paragraph 42 sets out the expectation of using Early Years funding as a contingency. Assumptions cannot be made across the board. All of the proposals being made need to be individually addressed.
8. The Schools Forum powers and responsibilities regulations include the requirement that Schools Forum approve the proposed overspend on central DSG. If the overspend is not approved by Schools Forum, it would become a local authority budget pressure or would be referred to the Secretary of State.
9. The membership of the High Needs Technical Sub Group is too small to make decisions of this magnitude. The decision about the proposed overspend should be considered by Schools Forum rather than debated by the sub-group, although it is recognised that High Needs Block is a local authority decision in consultation with the Schools Forum.
10. Concern was expressed about the proposed removal of the split site element from the top up in special schools and the ACB.
11. An earlier version of this report refers to the diminishing amount of funding for Early Years. Should the principle of propping up one pot from another therefore be used?
12. Funding for special needs was already a concern. Early Years settings are unable to access services from some providers such as the Jigsaw centre as the services are only available from year 1. Where can this support be accessed?
13. It would be useful for paragraph 41 to include a definition the service/team being referred to, the number of children each service supports and the number of out of authority placements to give a notion of the balance of social care requirements, payments and if the figures reflect the proportion of need for these young people.
14. The local authority wrote a letter of support for the permission to open 2 new Free Schools and a minimum of 100 places have been committed to. How can the High Needs Block cover this funding?

RESOLVED

- 1. that the current and additional school numbers (after Easter) for special schools would be sent to the Director of Children's Services.**
- 2. that an extraordinary meeting of Schools Forum would be arranged to discuss the High Needs Block in conjunction with the Early Years Funding report.**

- 3. that the Director of Children's Services with the support of the School Improvement Consultant would provide a updated High Needs Block report.**
- 4. that the Head of Early Intervention/Prevention would provide an Early Years Funding report for consideration in conjunction with the High Needs Block report.**

CBSF/16/46. Growth Fund payments and criteria

The Forum received a report which provided an overview of Growth Fund payments, criteria and set out the need to revise the allocation method.

1. Feedback received from some schools is that current process for Growth Fund applications was complex to understand and time consuming which could result in the delay of some payments.
2. A review of allocation figures had shown large variances in the sums requested by schools.
3. The allocation method for Growth Funding payments was being reviewed for equity and transparency purposes for all schools.
4. Work undertaken included looking at the levels and criteria used by other local authorities which would be used to inform the proposal for the revised allocation method of Growth Fund payments.
5. At the request of Schools Forum, a report was considered at the September 2016 meeting which covered what is funded from Early Years Block, what is funded in Early Years from High Needs Block and what other funding is used for Early Years or Early Help.
6. S106 monies are for additional school places commissioned by the local authority. Negotiations take place with the developer when new houses are built. The trigger points for release for s106 monies can vary depending on the development which includes early payments depending on rate of build. The current formula for the contributions was being reviewed.
7. Can all schools including Academies apply for Growth Fund payments?
8. The current membership of the Growth Fund Technical sub-group included representation from Schools Forum members from all phases of schools and from local authority officers.
9. Volunteers were sought to undertake a review of the draft Growth Fund criteria and process prior to the next meeting of Schools Forum on the 12 June 2017.

[Mr N Martin joined the meeting]

RESOLVED

1. that the content of the report on the Growth Fund element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was noted.
2. that the principle of the revised process, in lieu of the panel’s proposed payment amounts for the new financial year 2017-2018 was approved.
3. that the guidance for the use of funding for furniture, fixing and equipment (FF&E) would be recirculated to Schools Forum members.
4. that the Growth Fund allocation process would include a flow chart indicating how payments are allocated.
5. that an update on the review of the Growth Fund allocation process would be given at the June meeting of the Forum.
6. that Mr P Burrett and Miss K Hayward volunteered to be members of the Growth Fund Technical Sub-Group.
7. that Mrs S Howley, Ms A Brabner and Ms S Ingham who were not present at the meeting, would be consulted as to whether they would wish to become a member of the Growth Fund Technical Sub-Group. The outcome would be reported at the next meeting.

CBSF/16/47. Work Programme

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

NOTED

the work programme for the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.

CBSF/16/48. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 22 March 2017, 9am, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

(Note: The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m. and concluded at 4.45 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated