

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Room 15 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday, 18 September 2017

PRESENT

Miss K Hayward (Chairman)
Mrs S Howley MBE (Vice-Chairman)

School Members:	Mrs A Brabner	Governor
	Mr D Brandon-Bravo	Headteacher
	Mr P Burrett	Headteacher
	Mr O Button	Principal, Queensbury Academy
	Mr P Cohen	Executive Headteacher
	Mrs L Davies	Headteacher
	Mrs L Leonard	Head of School
	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	Clever Kidz
Apologies for Absence:	Cllr S Dixon	
	Cllr K Ferguson	
	Mr M Foster	
	Mrs S Mortimer	
Officers in Attendance:	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr G Jones	Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help
	Mr L Jones	Assistant Director for Education and Transformation
	Mr S Powell	School Improvement Consultant
	Mrs S Tyler	Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention
	Mr V Wan	Senior Education Officer (Planning)

CBSF/17/12. **Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on the 12 June 2017 be confirmed as signed by the Chairman as a correct record subsequent to the following minor amendment:

CBSF/17/2 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising are to be amended to show that Mr P Burrett joined the meeting after the resolution.

Matters Arising/Action points

The Chairman guided members through the matters arising from meetings of the Schools Forum held in the 6 March, 22 March and 12 June 2017 during which the following updates were received:

9 January 2017

CBSF/16/18

Work around alternative ways to fund the Academy of Bedfordshire (ACB) is ongoing. A update will be given at the next meeting of the Schools Forum Technical Sub-Group on the 3 October 2017.

CBSF/16/25

Membership of the Schools Block Technical Sub Group will be discussed under Item 4 of the agenda. Action completed.

CBSF/16/29

An update on the DSG funding costs for the Schools Admissions Team will be given at the November meeting of the School's Forum.

CBSF/16/30

Training for members of Schools Forum will be discussed under Item 4 of the agenda. Action completed.

6 March 2017

Point 1

The f40 had been contacted to request responses to question 3 from the other local authorities. The wording in the response from CBC had been amended from 'unsure' to 'welcome clarity'. Action completed.

CBSF/16/46 – Growth Fund Payments and Criteria

Points 2 & 3

The guidance for the use of furniture, fixings and equipment (FF&E) and a flow chart for the Growth Fund allocation process were tabled at the meeting
Action completed.

Inclusion for High Needs

Points 4 & 5

Clarification was given that the Early Years Team would support children with additional needs who become 5 in the Reception year 4 to the end of Year 5 in conjunction with the School SENCo where appropriate. This information would be included in Central Essentials.

Statements/EHC plans

Point 6

Monitoring of the number of children on Statements/EHC Plans to be put in place and reported to Schools Forum.

Point 7

The figures in this report and SEND forecast do not align. The pressures and risks to the Council are to be flagged with Finance.

Point 8

The outcome of the work undertaken to calculate the level of risk from the forecast rise in numbers of Statements/EHC Plans would be circulated to Members of Schools Forum.

Special School Outreach

Points 9 & 10

Funding decisions to be evidenced (accurate costs and projections) and reported to Schools Forum on a regular basis.

A review of the gatekeeping and referral process for Outreach services is to be undertaken..

DSG contribution to Central Overheads

Points 11,12,13

The DSG contribution to Central Overheads had been flagged as a Children's Services pressure as part of the MTFP process for 2018/19. An update on the MTFP process would be given at a future meeting of the Schools Forum.

ACB

Points 14 & 15

A Panel had been set up to determine the criteria for the allocation of Group 2 places at ACB and to provide advice on the application process. Action completed.

Letters had been sent to schools requesting participation in the contribution to places at the ACB. The contribution from schools was not as it might be. Action completed

Special Schools banding

Point 16

An update on the work being undertaken to look at banding values would be given at the October meeting the High Needs Technical Sub Group.

CBC allocation to Special Schools

Points 17, 18, 19

Clarification had been given on whether the figures reflect the predicted increase in numbers for Central Bedfordshire, the number of empty places, a

breakdown of bands funded in relation to the number of pupil for all Special Schools. Action completed.

Special Schools had confirmed their current number of pupils and their classification/banding in order for a comparison of the figures in this report with those in the School Organisational Plan to be undertaken. Action completed.

Work was ongoing to look at how the Early Years and High Needs funding risks (@£1.7m) would be met in the future.

Members of the Schools Forum advised that increased clarity would be welcomed about funding especially in forthcoming years.

Early Years Funding report

Point 20

Work around defining the Early Years SEND linked funding strands was ongoing as part of the review. An update would be given at the January meeting of Schools Forum.

12 June 2017

Matters Arising

Points 1, 2, 3, 4

An update on the membership and vacancies of the Schools Forum and the training of members will be given under Item 7 of the agenda. Action completed.

Point 4

The two upper school representatives, Mr O Button and Miss K Hayward had raised the issue of the lack of ACB places commissioned by secondary schools at the secondary heads meeting. Action completed.

Point 5

An update on the review of Special Needs and Inclusion spend carried out in the Early Years as part of the bigger review of High Needs spend would be reported back to the Schools Forum at the November meeting.

CBSF/17/3 Action Plan 6 March 2017

Point 6

The f40 had been contacted to request responses to question 3 from the other local authorities. The wording in the response from CBC had been amended from 'unsure' to 'welcome clarity'. Action completed.

CBSF/17/4 Growth Fund Payments

Point 7

The proposed advertising costs for lower and primary schools had been reviewed and the outcome circulated electronically to Schools Forum

members. An update would be given under Item 4 of the agenda. Action completed.

An update on how the modelling of the Growth Fund allocation process would be undertaken would be given under Item 4 of the agenda. Action completed

The revised proposals for the Growth Fund had been circulated electronically to Schools Forum members for comments and approval. An update would be given under Item 4 of the agenda. Action completed.

CBSF/17/7 High Needs Block – final 2017/18

Point 10

33 applications had been received for pupil admittance to schools in Central Bedfordshire under the Fair Access Protocol of which 30 were successful. Action completed.

Point 11

An update on the profile spend for May, June, July and August would be given under Item 14 of the agenda including an update on the effect of the higher monitoring procedures. Action completed.

CBSF/11/8 School Finance update

Details of those schools holding excess balances and the possible clawback process for excess funds would be discussed under Item 12 of the agenda. Action completed.

CBSF/17/11 Work Programme

The work programme for the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum would be updated to include the agenda items for future meetings raised during the meeting.

CBSF/17/13. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman advised the following:

Mrs S Crosbie, Mrs S Ingham and Mrs K McCamley were standing down as members of the Forum. Thanks were given for the work they had undertaken as members of the Forum.

Several schools in Sandy had asked for the issue of LAG funding to be raised at the Schools Forum. Members were advised that following the decision by a number of schools in the Sandy area, a meeting had taken place between officers and the individual Headteachers during which it was explained that LAG funding would not apply. This is because the schools in the areas were not moving at the same time or as a group and to deviate from the School census in October 2017 would not be possible.

When an age range change had taken place for a number of schools located in one particular area of Central Bedfordshire, the Department for Education

had previously agreed and DSG funding could be based on Admissions numbers and not the October Census. This was because the schools moved as a group and the middle schools were part of the discussion/agreement that funding would follow the pupil. A criteria was presented to the Department to explain how the funding would be applied.

Points and comments included:

- A major barrier to age range change is that the school has to take on all of the associated funding whereas if a school expands, it is a growth fund issue.
- Concern was expressed about the future consideration by Central Bedfordshire Council to move to a 2 tier education system and the associated funding pressures.
- The Local Plan has shown that there will significant growth in the number of school places required due to the increase of new housing developments in Central Bedfordshire. A piece of work has therefore been externally commissioned to help to understand the impact of this growth and options for how this could be met in existing schools and new builds. This work will take place with developers over the next 3-6 months to map out provision and the associate costs and will involve dialogue with all schools about their ambitions for the future including potential expansion, age range changes or other changes. Potential plans to meet this growth will then be developed, following which consultation will take place on the findings.

RESOLVED

that the School Improvement Consultant would send an explanatory note about LAG funding to schools in the Sandy area.

CBSF/17/14. Chairman of the Sub Groups of the Schools Forum

Members were advised that subsequent to the election of Chairman of the Sub Groups at the June meeting of the Schools Forum, the issue had been raised that the correct election process had not been followed.

It was proposed that a full review of the membership of the Schools Forum and its Sub-Groups and their purpose and remit be undertaken in consultation with the current Chairman and the outcome reported at the November meeting for approval by Members of the Forum.

Points and comments included:

- The Head of Early Intervention/Prevention explained discussions had taken place with the Chairman of the Early Years Technical group about the viability of the continuation of the Early Years Technical sub group as well as the Early Years Reference group.

- The Early Years Technical sub-group had been set up at the request of the Schools Forum as the Early Years Reference group could not have a wider remit over the sector.
- It was essential that there were no delays during the interim period of the review as there were some important decisions to be made by members of the Forum.

RESOLVED

- 1. that a full review of the membership of the Schools Forum and sub-groups and their purpose and remit would be undertaken in consultation with the current Chairman and that the outcome would be reported at the November meeting for approval by Members.**
- 2. that following the outcome of the review of the membership an election would take place for Chairman of the sub-groups as part of the process.**
- 3. that the current Chairman of the Sub-Groups would remain in place during the interim period.**
- 4. that the following officers would co-chair the Sub-Groups during the interim period:**
 - **High Needs Technical Sub Group – Mr L Jones, Deputy Director Transformation and Education**
 - **The Early Years Technical Sub Group – Mrs S Tyler, Head of Early Intervention/Prevention**
 - **The Growth Fund Technical Sub Group - Mr V Wan, Senior Education Officer (Planning)**

CBSF/17/15. Schools Forum powers and responsibilities

NOTED

the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities summary document issued by the Education Funding Agency.

CBSF/17/16. Sub-Groups of Schools Forum

NOTED

the minutes of the High Needs Technical Sub-Group held on the 14 July 2017.

CBSF/17/17. Vacancies, Training and Terms of Reference

Members were advised that officers had reviewed the membership of the Schools Forum, including clarification of the term of office of members.

As part of the review the membership had been aligned with the representation groups shown in the Schools Forum Structure document (Primary, Secondary, Special, Nursery and PRUs), which resulted in the identification of the following vacancies:

- 1 x Primary Academy Representative (either a Governor, Headteacher or representative)
- 1 x Church of England Diocese representative

With regard to training, analysis would be undertaken in order to obtain an understanding from members of their training needs and requirements. The possibility of an induction pack for new members of the Forum was also being discussed.

RESOLVED

- **that the update on the current membership of the Schools Forum and training for members was noted.**
- **that analysis would be undertaken in order to obtain an understanding from Members of their training needs and requirements.**

CBSF/17/18. Schools Forum Association

Members were advised that the Schools Forum Association has invited all 152 Schools Forums to join the 'The Schools Forum Association'.

The association will be independent and apolitical and could provide those involved with school funding with help and advice; a forum to share best practice; feedback on DFE consultations and proposals; a quarterly 'Funding Matters' newsletter; and help with policy campaigns.

NOTED

The update on the Schools Forum Association

CBSF/17/19. Growth Fund responses

Members of the Forum received an update on the responses to the proposed arrangements for the Growth Fund and forecast spend for 2017/18.

Points and comments included:

1. At the request of members of the Schools Forum, further modelling had been undertaken of the proposed advertising costs for Lower and Primary schools. The proposed costs had subsequently been increased for

Lower/Primary from £750 to £1,500 and Middle/Upper/Secondary from £1,500 to £2,000.

2. The Growth Fund Technical Sub-Group will review the pilot year for the new payment mechanism and recommend changes if required to the Schools Forum.
3. The understanding from the report is that the Growth Payment award now be paid to Academies on a monthly basis rather than an annual basis. This is a fundamental change for schools and sufficient notification is needed.
4. It was explained that there can never be a completely accurate picture of place requirements until all requests had been submitted by parents for school places as this gives the final numbers. The purpose of the School Organisation Plan is to use the best judgement possible to provide the most accurate forecast of places. First Preference rates for school admissions in Central Bedfordshire is one of the best in the country.
5. Concern was expressed that that the exact numbers of additional lower and middle school places will not be known until September which does not help with the issue of parental choice. Parents need to have the full picture when they make an application for a school place and the number of school places available needs to be made clear in the Admissions statement.
6. Given there have been changes in the economy in the school education system from three to two tier in some places and some schools in Central Bedfordshire contemplating this change, should the wording in paragraph 13 be amended to Lower, Middle and all Primary/Secondary schools?
7. Special schools have seen a significant growth in pupil numbers over the years but they do not receive Growth Fund payments. The expectation is that growth will be managed from AWPU.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the contents of the update to the new payments arrangements for the Growth Fund was noted.**
- 2. that the Growth Fund Technical Sub Group would undertake a review of the 'pilot year' of the Growth Fund payments arrangements.**
- 3. that all schools are advised in writing of the change in the payment of the Growth Fund award from an annual basis to monthly basis.**
- 4. that the wording in paragraph 13 of the report be amended to Lower, Middle and all Primary/Secondary school places.**

- 5. that the Admissions statement would include the number of school places available.**
- 6. that a review of the funding blocks for Early Years settings and Special Schools and how Infant Class Size applications are addressed will would be discussed at relevant Sub Group of the Schools Forum (Early Years Technical Sub Group and the High Needs Technical Sub Group).**

CBSF/17/20. **School Finance update**

Members of the Forum received an update on the closing 2016/17 balances, review of the surplus balances, the RAG rating of schools and the request to convene a Sub Group to discuss the schools potential clawback.

Points and comments included:

1. The School's Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) had been completed and the closing balances shown in Appendix A of the report. There were no significant changes from the balances given at the June meeting of the Forum.
2. Following the changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools in 2016 and due to funding uncertainty the Schools Forum took the decision to remove the clause which gave the local authority in consultation with Schools Forum the ability to clawback excess surplus balances from schools if the criteria wasn't met. This clause has now been reinstated.
3. Section 4.2 of the Scheme for Financing Schools for 2016/17 defines excess committee balances as 10% (Secondary and Special schools) and 15% (Nursery and Primary schools), of the current year's individual school budget share.
4. There are currently 20 schools in Central Bedfordshire with uncommitted revenue balances which exceed the allowable amount. The next step would be for a representative from each sector of the Schools Forum assist officers in agreeing the criteria for the retention of excess surplus balances, and to contact schools and report back the outcome at the November meeting of the Forum.
5. The criteria for the Schools risk register 2017/18 does not currently include surplus balances. If members of the Forum would like this added schools would have to be consulted on the change.
6. A published list of the criteria for retaining excess surplus balances is needed before further action is taken including the restrictions on what uncommitted funds can be spent on.

7. Some schools might have really good reasons for retaining excess surplus balances such as refurbishment of schools buildings which has been delayed by the contractors due to unforeseen circumstances.

RESOLVED

1. **that the School's outturn position for the financial year 2016/17 and Finance RAG was noted.**
2. **that a draft email to local authority maintained schools holding surplus balances would be sent to Members of the Forum for approval.**
3. **that the following members of the Schools Forum would meet to agree the criteria for the retention of excess surplus balances, contact schools currently retaining excess surplus balances and report back the outcome at the November meeting of the Forum:**

**Mr P Cohen
Mr P Burrett
Mr O Button
Mrs L Davies
Mr J Street**

4. **that an amendment of the criteria for the Schools risk register 2017/18 to include surplus balances would be discussed at future meeting of the Schools Forum.**

[The meeting was adjourned at 16.18]

[The meeting was reconvened at 16.28]

CBSF/17/21. DSG update

Members of the Forum received an update on the 2017/18 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and funding announcements for 2018/19.

A report was tabled at the meeting setting out the impact of the Schools National Funding Formula on schools in Central Bedfordshire.

Points and comments included:

1. There are a number of significant changes to the funding system including the creation of the central school services block (CSSB); the DSG therefore now comprises four block: schools, high needs, early years and the new central school services block. Each of the four blocks of the DSG will be determined by a separate national funding formula.
2. The local authority will be consulting will schools and stakeholders in the autumn term on the pre-16 funding formula 2018/19.

3. The Department has published the funding amounts Local Authorities will receive for 2018/19 before the fixed funding. These amounts are based on the current pupil numbers and characteristics which will be updated following the October census. Further modelling will take place once the technical note has been published.
4. Discussions need to take place at the High Needs Technical Sub-Group and will include whether the current lump sum payment remains at £120k or is reduced to £110k in line with the National Funding Formula.

RESOLVED

1. **that the 2017/18 DSG, funding arrangements for 2018/19 and the reviewing and consulting arrangements for 2018/19 were noted.**
2. **that a briefing note explaining the process for reviewing and consulting on the pre-16 funding formula 2018/19 would be sent to all schools.**
3. **that the following members of the Schools Forum would meet to discuss the proposed response to the consultation and provide an update at the November meeting of the Schools Forum.**
 - **Mr D Brando Bravo**
 - **Mrs S Howley**
 - **Mrs A Challis**
 - **Mrs L Leonard**
 - **Miss K Hayward**
4. **that a survey about the consultation on the pre-19 funding formula 2018/19 would be sent to all schools and stakeholders which would include an appendix showing the impact of the formula on schools in Central Bedfordshire.**

CBSF/17/22. Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets

The Forum received an update on the budget outturn for 2017/18.

Points and comments included:

- The current balance for the three Contingency blocks is as follows:
 - School Contingency £216,239
 - High Needs Contingency £319,997.
 - Early Years Contingency £693,081
- There are some invoices outstanding from Special Schools and the ACB for additional places to be deducted from the High Needs Contingency balance and adjustment to be made to the Early Years Contingency

following the payment of the additional 15 hours free childcare from September and the October census.

- Approximately 1,065 requests/enquiries have been made on the HMRC website about the additional 15 hours free childcare of which 963 are now verified and in places. If all of 1,065 requests take up the full additional 15 hours there will be a possible overspend of £1.5M by end March. The actual take-up will not be known until later in the term.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Contingency spend for the financial year 2017/18 was noted.**
- 2. that an update on Early Years funding would be given at the November meeting of the Schools Forum.**

CBSF/17/23. School Forum Budget

Members of the Forum received an update on the latest budget forecast for 2017/18.

Points and comments included

- A budget of £3,000 per annum is set aside from the Schools Block for costs associated with the operation of the Forum.
- The balance of the School Forum Budget currently stands at £7,453.

RESOLVED

that the School Forum spend to the 31 August 2017 was noted.

CBSF/17/24. High Needs Block - Budget Monitoring and next steps

The Forum received an update on the budget monitoring for the High Needs Block and the next steps.

Points and comments included.

1. Since the last meeting of the Schools Forum, increased scrutiny had taken place of budget areas in order to gain an understanding of the pressures and forecasting.
2. The forecast pressure mainly results from four key areas:
 - An increase in the number of places required in September 2017 at Special Schools Academies where recoupment is applied.
 - An increase in the number of children in academies subject to statements/EHC Plans from initial baseline assumptions

- High Needs Post 16 funding
 - Other authority top up payments
3. The forecast spend for High Needs Post 16 funding is approximately £200,000 more than anticipated. The service is reviewing some of the provisions and costings for this funding to try and mitigate the gap.
 4. Part of the challenge for this budget as it stands is that most of the spend is committed for the full year through provisions, recoupment or contracts which cannot be reduced. This means that once there is pressure on a budget, it becomes very difficult to mitigate other parts of the budget which have been agreed for the financial year.
 5. There is a much wider review to be undertaken to look the proportion of spend, more accurate forecasting of spend, contingency and the efficiency of service delivery.
 6. The Forum expressed concern about the increase in the overspend despite this having been discussed at a previous meeting of the Schools Forum.
 7. Further work needs to take place to look at the DSG and at reducing costs to ensure that the model put in place is affordable.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the update on the High Needs Block spend for the financial year 2017/18 was noted.**
- 2. that the proposals to mitigate the current forecast pressure were considered.**
- 3. that the pressures on the High Needs Block would be discussed at the High Needs Technical Sub Group and reported at the November meeting of the Schools Forum.**

CBSF/17/25. Work Programme

The Forum received and noted the Work Programme for the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.

NOTED

The Work Programme for the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum

CBSF/17/26. Date of the Next Meeting

Monday 20 November 2017, 3pm, Room 14, Priory House, Chicksands.
(Note: The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m. and concluded at 5.10 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated