

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday, 20 November 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
	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:	Mr M Foster	Trade Union representative
Observer:	Cllr K Ferguson	Chairman of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Apologies for Absence:	Cllr S Dixon Kim McCamley	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs S Harrison Ms D Hill	Director of Children's Services Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr G Jones	Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help
	Mr L Jones	Deputy Director for Education and Transformation
	Mr L Manning	Committee Services Officer
	Ms F Nnanyere	Interim Head of Service
	Mrs S Tyler	Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention

CBSF/17/27. **Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 18 September 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

CBSF/17/12 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising
ACB Points 14 & 15
Delete "2 places" and insert "1 place".

CBSF/17/21 DSG update
Resolution 3
Delete “Mr D Brando Bravo” and insert “Mr D Brandon-Bravo”
Add “Ms A Moyle” to the list.

Matters Arising/Action Points

9 January 2017

CGSF/16/18 High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)
Update Report regarding Pressures on the High Needs Block
The budget was being reviewed each month and an update report would be submitted to the Forum in 2018.

CBSF/16/29 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)
This issue was ongoing and would be considered by the Forum in January/February.

6 March 2017

CBSF/16/46 Inclusion for High Needs
Clarification on the Early Years Team’s support for specified children would be sent out. It would also be included in Central Essentials.

Para 8 – Statements/ECH plans

Monitoring data to be submitted to the Forum on a monthly basis. Members sought assurance that the monitoring data would be precise and clearly set out the impact on costs in written form. It was also requested that the data be contextualised so that it could be easily understood.

Para 11 – Special Schools Outreach

Commissioning arrangements were being examined for this and other commissions funded by the High Needs Block.

Para 18 – DSG contribution to Central Overheads

Rolled over.

Para 20 – Special Schools banding

This task was in the work flow of the High Needs Technical Sub-Group
It had been agreed to work through the proposed banding changes with special school heads in December before further review by the Technical Sub-Group in the New Year.

12 June 2017

Matters Arising (Full Review of Special Needs and inclusion spend)

An update on the outcome to be provided to the Forum’s meeting in January 2018.

18 September 2017

CBSF/17/13 Chairman's Announcements and Communications (Note on LAG funding to be sent to all schools)

The note had not been despatched.

CBSF/17/17 Vacancies, training and Terms of Reference

This issue was related to Items 7 and 8 on the agenda. The membership of the various bodies required approval.

CBSF/17/19 Growth Fund responses

A meeting had been held in the previous week and an update on the outcome would be provided to the Forum's meeting in January 2018.

CBSF/17/20 School Finance update

This issue would be considered at Item 9 on the agenda. A meeting would take place with the relevant schools. An update on the outcome to be provided to the Forum's meeting in January 2018.

CBSF/17/21 DSG Update

This issue would be discussed at Item 11 on the agenda. A working group would consider the responses and the Forum then discuss the outcome.

CBSF/17/22 Dedicated Schools Grant Contingency Budgets

This issue would be discussed at Item 11 on the agenda.

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

This issue would be discussed at Item 12 on the agenda.

CBSF/17/28. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman had no announcements or matters of communication.

CBSF/17/29. Schools Forum powers and responsibilities**NOTED**

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

CBSF/17/30. Membership of the Schools Forum and Sub-Groups

The Schools Forum considered a report setting out a review of the Forum's membership, members' terms of office and any vacancies. In addition the report provided an overview of current sub-groups, their purpose and remit as well as recommendations for review regarding their future purpose.

Points and comments included:

- The Deputy Director for Education and Transformation advised that since the last meeting of the Forum its Operational and Good Practice Guide had been updated. The content of the updated Guide had a direct impact on the Forum's Constitution and he therefore recommended that a review of the later and the terms of reference take place prior to the meeting of the Forum in January. Any proposed changes could then be examined and signed off at that meeting.
- The Director of Children's Services referred to the requirement for elections for school members after they had served their three year term of office. Whilst members could continue for a further term of office if re-elected she emphasised the need to ensure that the proper process was being followed and members were not merely perceived as continuing in office without formal appointment. She pointed out that the last election was in July 2015 so elections would be required in the New Year.
- The Chairman asked that any information on terms of office and past election dates be forwarded to the Committee Services Officer.

RESOLVED

- 1 that a detailed review of the Schools Forum's Constitution and Terms of Reference be undertaken having regard to the impact of the amended Operational and Good Practice Guide and any proposed changes be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum on 29 January 2018 for consideration and adoption;**
- 2 that the Forum consider its own size and composition as a part of the detailed review outlined to in resolution 2 above;**
- 3 that elections be held in 2018, following the above review, in order to fill any vacancies and for those posts where members have served their three year term of office;**
- 4 that the detailed review be undertaken by the Deputy Director for Education and Transformation.**
- 5 that the membership of the technical sub-groups, including their purpose, remit and Chairs, be revised.**

CBSF/17/31. Election of Members of the Schools Forum and Sub Groups

In view of the Forum's decision in minute CBSF/17/30 above it was felt that no action should be taken at present.

RESOLVED

that consideration of the membership of the Schools Forum and its sub-groups be deferred until after the meeting of the Forum on 29 January 2018.

CBSF/17/32. Update on the National Funding Consultation

The Schools Forum received a presentation which provided an update on the National Funding consultation. In particular consideration was given to the funding of the High Needs Block and the extent to which meeting its funding gap could impact on other Blocks.

Points and comments included:

- Concern that although the consultation had been circulated by a variety of different means some head teachers had not received it. The Deputy Director for Education and Transformation offered to recirculate the consultation with other information.
- The Deputy Director stated that he believed the consultation had also been circulated to the chairs of governing bodies but he undertook to confirm this point.
- The Senior Finance Manager introduced the presentation slides and provided some background information. She offered to make the slide pack available if requested.
- The Deputy Director stated that the High Needs Block was overspent partly due to a rise in demand. He stressed that this was not merely a local issue. He explained the work which had been undertaken in relation to this challenge. The Senior Finance Manager advised that it was possible for the transfer of 0.5% of DSG funding between Blocks if the Forum agreed to do so.
- Full and frank discussion took place on such issues as the availability of data to schools to ensure that they were fully aware of any possible financial impact should a transfer of funds from the General Block to the High Needs Block take place, concern regarding the quality of the past management and spending of the High Needs budget, the acceptability of requesting that all schools, which were already under financial pressure, accept reductions in funding and the measures that were being taken by other councils and their school fora in response to this national issue.
- Members noted that an additional meeting of the Forum would be held on 14 December to consider the consultation responses.

RESOLVED

that a range of three options be presented to schools setting out alternative funding proposals and that the options be accompanied by an explanatory covering note jointly prepared by the Chairman of the Schools Forum and the Director of Children's Services.

NOTE: THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 4.47 P.M. AND RECONVENED AT 4.55 P.M.**CBSF/17/33. Sub-Groups of Schools Forum**

Members considered agenda item 5 (Sub Groups of Schools Forum (Record of the meeting of the High Needs Block Technical Sub-Group)) in conjunction with agenda item 12 (High Needs Block – Budget Monitoring and next steps).

The Deputy Director for Education and Transformation referred to the note of the Sub-Group meeting held on 17 October 2017 before introducing the High Needs Block update. He stated that regular update reports on spend would be shared with the Forum.

Points and comments included:

- A reference to the considerable amount of work generated as a result of examining High Needs in greater depth and clarification as to whether the Council had sufficient capacity to deal with the increased work load. The Deputy Director confirmed that capacity existed although discussions on the possible need for additional staffing was to take place that week.
- A timeline of activity would need to be created for the work to be undertaken which would be presented to the next Technical Subgroup.
- The draft revision of banding was being undertaken. Further dialogue was taking place with Special School heads with any changes to then be submitted to the technical sub-group
- Reference to the growth in permanent exclusions, the requirement for alternative provision for those children with behavioural issues and the need to take action to prevent the matter worsening
- Debate on the proposed greater focus on early intervention and support in relation to SEND. Whilst recognising the positive impact this could have there was reference to previous debate on the topic and the subsequent lack of action.
- That the decision on the proposed mitigation measures to meet the future spend in the High Needs Block in the form of the transfer of 0.5% of the Central Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2018/19 would be discussed at the December Forum following the consultation with schools on the 2018/19 funding formula.

NOTED

- 1 the record of the meeting of the High Needs Block Technical Sub-Group held on 17 October 2017;**
- 2 the update on the High Needs Block spend for the financial year 2017/18;**
- 3 the current work plan for the High Needs Block Technical Sub-Group.**

RESOLVED

that the proposed measure to transfer 0.5% of the Central Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2018/19 be deferred for determination at the meeting of the Forum to be held on 14 December 2017.

CBSF/17/34. High Needs Block - Budget Monitoring and next steps

Minute CBSF/17/33 above refers.

CBSF/17/35. School Admissions Team Funding

Members considered a report which set out an overview of the current funding of the School Admissions Team, its performance and recommendations for future funding.

NOTED

the high performance of the Schools Admission Team including the changes made to improve responsiveness and customer satisfaction.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Schools Admission Team continue to be primarily funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant, as is the case in most local authorities across the country;**
- 2 that members of the Schools Admissions Team who do not currently have permanent contracts be made permanent;**
- 3 that an annual report is provided to the Schools Forum on the work delivered by the Schools Admissions Team, performance nationally and changes in demand volumes to ensure that the Team remains high performing and of sufficient depth to deliver the required functions.**

CBSF/17/36. Update on School Surplus Balances

The Schools Forum considered an update on schools' surplus balances for 2016/17.

Points and comments included:

- Following the completion of 2016/17 financial year accounts and the submission of the consistent financial returns, those schools holding surplus balances had been identified.
- A report on this issue had been considered at the Forum meeting held on 18 September and, with Members' agreement, all maintained schools with such surpluses were contacted and asked to justify any excess.
- The reasons supplied had been considered by the Director of Children's Services and Schools Forum representatives and the Director had subsequently decided on the creation of a panel which would be chaired by her with assistance from the Deputy Director for Education and Transformation. Six schools to be invited to attend the panel (on a date to be agreed) and present their case for holding excess balances. Based on the outcome the Council would then determine whether to 'claw-back' any funds for redistribution to other maintained schools.

NOTED

the update on the action taken with regard to schools holding excess surplus balances following the completion of 2016/17 financial year accounts and the identification of those schools holding surplus balances.

CBSF/17/37. Early Years funding update

Members considered a report which provided an update on the anticipated spend of the Early Years Block for 2017/18 with particular regard to the impact of the additional 15 hours offer for 3 & 4 year olds of eligible parents arising from the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2017.

Points and comments included:

- The availability of sufficient early years providers and the possibility of difficulties arising should some current service providers cease to do so.
- The possibility that if funding rates began to fall behind the real cost of delivery there was a risk that places would be lost.

NOTED

the anticipated spend of the Early Years Block for 2017/18 with particular regard to the impact of the additional 15 hours offer for 3 & 4 year olds of eligible parents.

CBSF/17/38. Next steps for school funding in England

The Schools Forum received details of a Westminster Education Forum Keynote Seminar entitled “ Next steps for school funding in England”. Members noted that the seminar would be held on the morning of 16 January 2018. A delegate was sought from the Schools Forum to attend. It was noted that all travel costs would be paid.

RESOLVED

that Ms A Moyle will attend the Westminster Education Forum Keynote Seminar entitled “ Next steps for school funding in England” on the morning of 16 January 2018 in central London as the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum delegate.

CBSF/17/39. Work Programme

The Forum considered its Work Programme.

NOTED

the Work Programme for the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.

CBSF/17/40. Date of the Next Meeting

The Schools Forum was aware that an additional meeting would be held on 14 December 2017. Members were advised that formal notification of the meeting would be circulated within the next few days.

NOTED

- 1 that an additional meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum will be held on 14 December 2017 to consider the outcome of the National Funding consultation;**
- 2 Mr Foster’s apologies for absence for the above meeting.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 3.00 p.m. and concluded at 5.45 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated

This page is intentionally left blank