

School Funding Working Group and SEN working Group

26th September 2018

Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor, Grant Davis, Judith Westcott, Nick Breakwell, Neil Baker, Catriona Williamson, Sam Churchill, John Hawkins, Phil Cook, Jane Ralph

Apologies: Lisa Percy

1	<p><i>Minutes from previous meeting</i></p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. There were no matters arising that had not already been considered by Schools Forum at the June 2018 meeting other than the Income & Expenditure report on the Behaviour Support Service. MT shared the 17/18 outturn position and discussion was largely around the training income – the reason for requiring additional income is an alternative way of funding the team as no increment or inflationary increase for staff pay have been awarded from HNB DSG. NB was asked to provide information / performance data around the type of children BST work with and the impact of their work. It was noted that the de-delegated arrangement would cease after 20/21 and the service was well regarded so no plans to propose change prior to this.</p>	NB
2	<p><i>Election of Chair & Vice Chair at Schools Forum</i></p> <p>GD confirmed Democratic Services would lead on this.</p>	
3	<p><i>School Revenue Balances</i></p> <p>Jane Ralph presented her report and supporting appendices on 2017/18 school balances which was the subject of much discussion. Of particular concern were those schools with large and / or long-term deficits and those also with significant uncommitted / ringfenced surpluses without explanations such as rising or falling rolls.</p> <p>It was mooted that financial situation should be aligned with the challenge and support programme as the two may align (poor performance and poor financial performance) or contradict each other and the financial information may prevent further deficit or, be made available for further investment in schools to improve standards – links with CASP and annual conversation would be good practice.</p> <p>An offer of recovery planning assistance is made to schools identified as requiring support from Accounting & Budget Support Team and despite this being part of the LA's strategic role and not chargeable, the take up is low.</p> <p>Deficit budgets and recovery plans are approved and are supported by a local authority licenced deficit over an agreed payback period. The one school with significant deficit is being dealt with by the S151 Officer personally.</p> <p>I&E report – 3 schools did not send these in.</p> <p>GD to liaise with peer group from other local authorities to see what</p>	GD

	<p>actions are taken elsewhere to provide challenge to school balances and non adherence to required return deadlines.</p> <p>JH thanked the Jane and the team for their work on the report.</p>	
4	<p>Budget Monitoring – Period 10</p> <p>MT circulated a budget monitoring report giving the projected outturn as at period 5 (31 August 2018). The report showed a projected overspend for high needs budgets, offset somewhat by the early years block expenditure. This increase in central HNB expenditure is due to a whole plethora of factors from provision in school to complexity of children but the outcome being that activity (volume) has increased, forecast FTE exceeds budgeted FTE.</p> <p>The impact would be that the overspend would exceed the level of the DSG reserve resulting in a deficit to be rolled forward in to 2019-20.</p> <p>The group considered potential recovery options. It was noted that recovery options can only be looked at within the high needs blocks as budgets for other blocks had been finalised.</p> <p>Further work is required to minimise the overspend for the current year and to reduce future years costs. The new High Needs Block Working Group met for the first time in September with a view to identifying contributing factors and to make proposals to reduce the pressure on the high needs block. The Council’s internal SEN Placements Budget Monitoring Group will examine brokerage and commissioning opportunities.</p> <p>NB raised value for money from the Speech & Language contract and JW was tasked with providing contract monitoring performance data schools.</p>	JW
5	<p>School Funding 2019/20 Guidance Update</p> <p>GD circulated a paper outlining the changes from the DfE’s guidance.</p> <p>The actual DSG figures will not be released until December but they indicate positive news for Wiltshire Schools. One of the changes is that the growth formula will be calculated and allocated differently using lagged growth data. This will be a proxy for calculating the funding for Wiltshire but there is no requirement to to set the growth fund at this level.</p> <p>NB suggested as the soft formula would now be extended until 2020/21 that we would choose not to adhere to this for 19/20 and 20/21. GD confirmed £292k was currently distributed under sparsity in 2018-19. Schools Forum did not support the sparsity formula as a formula driver when setting the budget but agreed to set the budget as near to the national formula as possible. GD to look at alternative modelling or withdrawal of sparsity funding</p> <p>Double funding around deprivation and PPG was raised, GD reminded us that an adjustment had already been made in 2018-19 to reduce the impact of funding and the affordability of the NFF in Wiltshire.</p>	GD

6	<p>High Needs Block 2019/20 Guidance Update</p> <p>GD circulated a paper outlining the changes from the DfE's guidance.</p> <p>There are no significant changes to the formula proposed, an indicative increase of £730k is yet unconfirmed and should be treated with caution. NB asked GD to establish what might be driving the estimated increase.</p>	GD
7	<p>AOB</p> <p>Army Rebasing – GD reported that the DfE have confirmed at 7/12 funding for maintained schools wef September. Academies will require 12/12 as they have a different financial year end – GD is in discussions with the DfE as they do not appear to have planned for this.</p> <p>Teachers Pay Award – GD provided a verbal update on the teachers' pay award. Funding from the DfE will be awarded to schools on a per pupil basis and on a place funding for special schools. No clarity yet on when the funding will be received by the local authority to pass to schools.</p> <p>Teachers Pensions – GD provided a verbal update and some very recent information received from the Council's HR consultant, Janice Hiscock. The increase has been estimated at 7.12% (23.6% - current 16.48%) which was previously planned at 2%. There will be some funding from the DfE for 19/20 to help meet additional costs. Consultation is underway to determine the final funding arrangements.</p> <p>HCSS systems will need to be updated nationally following the actual confirmed increase.</p> <p>Interim Arrangements – The S151 Officer for the Council, Ian Duncan will be leaving for a new assignment in Northamptonshire around November 2018. Recruitment is underway for a replacement interim and dates have been set in November for interviews for the permanent Director of Finance. As a result, Marie Taylor Interim Head of Finance has been extended until 31st January 2019. Susan Tanner has now left the Council and Judith Westcott is acting up into the Head of Service for Childrens Commissioning post for 6 months.</p>	EW
8	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>Next meeting to be held on Monday 19th November 2018, Longleat Room at County Hall, Trowbridge</p>	