

UPDATE FROM THE HIGH NEEDS BLOCK WORKING GROUP

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Schools' Forum on the work of the High Needs Working Group to address budget pressures with the High Needs Budget.

Main Considerations

2. As outlined under agenda item 6, the HNB is under pressure and there is an urgent need to ensure that spending in future years matches the available budget.
3. To date, a number of actions have been taken to address the on-going demands on the budget; these include:
 - Increasing the number of special school places available in the LA. Springfield South is due to open in February 2019 and phase 2 is planned to open in September 2019. This will provide an additional 32 places in the south
 - 15-25 SEND Transition Project with estimated local authority savings of £500K 2019-2020 and £500K 2020-2021. This will have a positive impact on high needs budgets re: changes in commissioning, brokerage and partner contributions
 - Review of unfilled places in resource bases has led to savings to be recycled back into the HNB in year
 - Central Schools spend block transferred an amount of £0.263 million into the HNB in the 2018/19 budget setting process to aid HNB funding pressures
 - Creation of increased capacity for strategic vision and leadership with a new Director for Skills & Education post in the local authority
 - Additional Children's Commissioner consultant resource to examine complex needs and other placements 18-25 years focus
 - Centre of Excellence (SEMH) at Castlemead Primary School opened September 2018 – 12 places
 - Creation of 50 additional places at Wiltshire College for Post 16 provision
 - The Council has been taking part in surveys and research from groups such as F40 and the Local Government Association (LGA) the results of which will be shared with the Secretary of State for Education
 - Consultation using a school's survey in November 2018 seeking views on transfer of between blocks to reduce pressure on the HNB. A 0.5% top slice would create approx. £1.3M capacity in 2019/20. School views were also sought on alternative service / system changes
 - Cabinet are considering Special School Provision in the North of the County at their meeting on the 24th March 2019
 - Longer term the local authority has been exploring opportunities to secure funding to invest in Special Schools. A Free School Bid has been submitted around Special School Provision in the South – this fund has been previously oversubscribed so the success factors were thought to be approximately 50% - in Damien Hinds additional funding announcement in December 2018, he confirmed that all acceptable bids would be given the "green light."

- Military Families - a bid to the MOD Education Support Fund has been submitted to assist with the pupils currently in Germany in receipt of SEN support.
4. ISOS is being commissioned to lead a strategic review of the SEND provision to identify cost saving projects. ISOS is a research and advisory company with a track-record in developing policy, improving delivery, and building capacity within the public sector. (<http://www.isospartnership.com/>)
 5. Ben Bryant and Karina Kulawik will be working on this project. Both are highly experienced in leading projects of this type and have a proven track record in this field. Due to the pressure on the HNB, the local authority are funding this consultancy work.
 6. The High Needs Block Working Group will reconvene as part of this work.
 7. Phase 1 of the project will commence February 2019.

Phase	Scope and outcome	Duration
Phase 1	Review key data, financial benchmarking etc. Student demand by age, need etc. Review key document Meet with key personnel: Head of Finance, Principal EP, Head of SEND, Lead Member, DCS and WPCC. High-level view of pressures on the HNB, lines of enquiry for Phase 2 clarified. Key themes presented to Schools' Forum along with the scope of Phase 2 and 3.	February to end of March 2019.
Phase 2	Broader engagement from stakeholders: schools, parents. Detailed view of the pressures on the HNB. Key themes presented to Schools' Forum along with the scope for Phase 3	April 2019 to June 2019
Phase 3	Report created with recommendations and a costed action plan.	June 2019-July 2019

Proposals

8. For Schools' Forum to note the proposals outlined above.

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