

Schools Forum
School Funding and SEN Working Group

MS TEAMS MEETING

30th November 2020

Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, local authority (LA)), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), Neil Baker (Christchurch), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep), Catriona Williamson (Mere), Andy Bridewell (Ludgershall Castle), Lisa Percy (Hardenhuish), Sam Churchill (Hilmarton), Helean Hughes (Director LA) Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND, LA), Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley)

Apologies: Gary Binstead (Children's Commissioning LA)

1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies Apologies were received from GB above. MT explained to the group that Phil Cook had not yet been replaced for the working group however, steps would be taken to address this.</p>	MT
2.	<p>Minutes from previous meeting The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters Arising There were no matters arising.</p>	
4.	<p>Budget Monitoring for the period to 31st October 2020 (MT)</p> <p>MT shared her report with the group. The forecast overspend for 20/21 is £9.105m.</p> <p>Highlights: Early Years - the DfE's adjustment for 19-20 was a positive £0.539m. This reflects the overspend in 2019-20. In addition, the in-year adjustment was a positive £0.943M. MT described the updated guidance and payments for providers around COVID to support the local authority's sustainability duty. No variance is forecast on 2, 3 & 4-year-old grant at this time due to uncertainty around January payments and census data and the local authority commitment to pass the maximum amount of support to providers in the Autumn term whilst there is flexibility within the guidance.</p> <p>School Budgets – the underspend is largely driven by the growth fund and this offsets the DSG overspend position.</p> <p>The HNB forecast overspend is £11.588m – again, based on higher numbers of EHCPS and levels of support requested. This forecast includes an estimate of future growth based on historical trend. The pressures on the HNB continue and the HNB working group will be prioritising demand management, savings projects, commissioning and spend controls.</p>	

	<p>Of major concern is the impact of this on the DSG deficit reserve balance which is held in the local authority's balance sheet. The reserve balance is now forecast to be £19.916m.</p> <p>This overspend will continue to be cash flowed by the local authority as per the DfE guidance.</p>	
5.	<p>Update from High Needs Working Group & Individual Savings Plans (HH)</p> <p>HH took the group through the minutes of the last meeting. COVID had inevitably caused delay to some projects and timelines will need to be recalculated. CM to progress with colleagues.</p> <p>Post 16 pathways to adulthood to be used to update plan AP work led by Vicky Dunncliffe is going well</p> <p>JH asked a question around pressures on the ISS budget, HH shared an extract from the work Lisa Fryer is leading on HH suggested LF attends a future SF or SFWG to explain progress and MT pointed out there have been £266k of costs avoided to date with this programme and suggested as have a "spotlight" on each of the workstreams so that SF can have a full understanding of the approach and successes. The group agreed.</p> <p>NB queried whether when an ISS is in a category, can they really meet need. LF will be able to update.</p> <p>RC asked what position other LAS were facing and MT responded that the majority of other LAS are in similar positions and the DfE appear to accept that there is a national funding shortfall and that although these pressures seem large to us, we are ranked 66th in the DfE's list and they have this year, provided additional DSG to the top 6 LAS.</p> <p>HH has made contact with Northumberland (Northumberland, Thurrock and Wolverhampton were identified by the DfE as LA's who had recovered from a DSG deficit reserve and of those three, Northumberland is statistically the most similar to Wiltshire.)</p>	<p>HH</p> <p>HH / (LD)</p> <p>HH</p>
6	<p>Schools Revenue Funding 21-22 (GD) Results of Autumn Consultations De-delegated Services (maintained schools) Transfer from Schools Block (all mainstream schools)</p> <p>GD took us through his paper.</p> <p>There was an overwhelming support (33/33 responses) to continue with all de-delegated services for 21-22. There were 22 responses to the transfer consultation, 15/22 supported the transfer and 4/22 preferred a hybrid model. No heads supported a % reduction in top ups.</p> <p>SF can approve a transfer of up to 0.5% this would be approximately £1.4 / £1.5M. The funding could be found as below</p> <p>GD initial modelling – the NFF will be affordable</p> <p>Mobility £571k freed up if we do not apply this factor again</p> <p>Sparsity £220k freed up if we do not apply the increase and retain the 20-21 funding rates.</p> <p>The balance would be found from available headroom or surplus Growth funding.</p> <p>LP pointed out that the NFF must be affordable before transfers are made and this is understood.</p>	

	<p>NB said group felt the historical model to exclude mobility and not apply increased sparsity would reflect Wiltshire's needs and asked GD to add a note to the report to refer back to the historical decisions.</p> <p>The report proposal is for SF to agree in principle in December to allow fewer modelling options at the January meeting.</p> <p>NB agreed an approach for fewer modelling options would be beneficial.</p>	
7	<p>The Growth Fund 21-22 (GD)</p> <p>GD took us through his report which included discussion of 'Falling Rolls Fund'.</p> <p>No change is proposed to the current methodology. A final DfE announcement on allocation is anticipated late December, based on the October 2020 census data. This is likely to be lower than 20-21 – this was a particularly high allocation due to the army pupils returning to Wiltshire.</p>	
8	<p>CSSB Update Report 21-22 (MT)</p> <p>MT took us through her report which explained the decisions SF will need to make when setting the budget for 2021-22 financial year.</p> <p>MT has made assumptions around licences and pay inflation which are subject to final confirmations. The CSSB historical allocation is reducing year on year by 20% and therefore the amount of CERA has been reduced to balance. Should the School Effectiveness grant not be received, the CSSB will need review and the transfer to HNB may not be possible.</p>	
9	<p>Early Years Update Report 21-22 (MT)</p> <p>MT took us through her brief report on EY which outlined the recent announcements in the Spending Review. This is good news for the EY sector which has seen a significant amount of turbulence through the pandemic. The EY provisional 21-22 allocations are not yet available.</p>	
10	<p>High Needs Update Report 21-22 (MT)</p> <p>MT took us through her report which explained the estimates of pressures on the HNB for 21-22 financial year. The provisional allocation, savings plans and potential transfers from other blocks will leave a shortfall of £8.091M which cannot be managed. This pressure is in line with recent financial years.</p> <p>Appendix 1 shows the make up of the HNB clock funding – 36% of Wiltshire's funding is calculated using historical data – our rising EHCP numbers means there is a shortfall in funding. Interestingly, average LAS have a historical funding level of 33%.</p> <p>Appendix 2 details the assumptions made in the HNB budget modelling.</p>	

11	<p>Verbal Update – COVID Costs & Funding for Schools (GD)</p> <p>GD updated the group on the funding from the DfE to support schools There is a particular issue around steep rises in numbers of children in receipt of FSM and the funding lag. GD had calculated this to be a minimum of £1.4m. Schools have received Summer term claims for cleaning and PPE however, additional claims for “other” we believe are being challenged and refused. The information will support further lobbying by the LA and the F40 group.</p> <p>GD shared a recent press release from Gavin Williamson around additional funding for the second half of the Autumn term (which means that September and October are not covered) there are new parameters around claims which will restrict schools claims. LP said it was very frustrating that schools who had reserves were punished for careful budget management</p>	
12	<p>F40 Letter (GD)</p> <p>GD shared the letter from the F40 with the group re: a campaign for financial support for schools (attached to minutes)</p>	
13	<p>Admissions Appeals (HH)</p> <p>Unfortunately, HH was called away to another meeting and so MT presented the paper around charging for appeals and the challenges that poses. Another paper will come to the January meeting with 21-22 charges which, can be updated for virtual appeals (lower cost to pass onto schools) Discussions continue with the LA around subsidies. NB asked what powers the LA had to intervene when a school goes over PAN? MT apologised for not knowing the details, but this could be responded to at SF NB suggested if no / limited powers, then a positional statement should be drafted to state the expectations. MT agreed to take forward with the service.</p>	<p>HH</p> <p>MT</p>
14	<p>Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools</p> <p>GD explained that he was finalising an updated scheme for the relationship between the LA and maintained schools, a requirement prescribed by the DfE. The new set of regulations for maintained schools will be taken out to consultation and presented to and signed off by Schools Forum GD explained that a more user-friendly version will be created to help schools with understanding the statutory regulations.</p>	GD
12	<p>AOB</p> <p>There was no AOB</p>	
11	<p><i>Date and Time of Next Meeting</i></p> <p>Next meeting – date provisionally set at: Monday 11th January 2021 @ 8.30am. This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p> <p>Next Schools Forum meeting Thursday 10th December 2020 @ 1.30pm. This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p>	