

Schools Forum

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2021 AT ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

Aileen Bates, Nikki Barnett, Andy Bridewell, Rebecca Carson, Sam Churchill, Stella Fowler, Jon Hamp, John Hawkins, Graham Nagel-Smith, Lisa Percy (Chair), John Proctor, Giles Pugh, John Read, Nigel Roper, Graham Shore (Vice Chair), Trudy Srawley, Ian Tucker, David Whewell, Karen Walker and Lynn Yendle

Also Present:

Jackie Day (Observer – Early Years sector), Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager), Helean Hughes (Director – Education & Skills), Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND), Cllr Laura Mayes (Cabinet Member – Children, Education & Skills), Cllr Dominic Muns (Portfolio Holder for Education), Lisa Pullin (Democratic Services Officer), Marie Taylor (Head of Finance – Children and Education), Simon Thomas (FACT Programme Lead) and Cllr Suzanne Wickham (Portfolio Holder for SEND)

14 Election of Chair

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to appoint Lisa Percy as Chair of Schools Forum for 2021-22.

15 Election of Vice Chair

Resolved:

The Forum agreed to appoint Lisa Percy as Chair of Schools Forum for 2021-22.

16 Apologies/Substitutions and Changes of Membership

Apologies were received from (Andy Bridewell - Maintained Primary Representative), Michele Chilcott (Secondary Academy Representative), Jo Grenfell (Observer – Post 16, Wilts College), Jon Hamp (Special School Academy Representative), Ross Henning – (Observer Local Youth Network) Georgina Keily-Theobald (Maintained Special School representative), Debbie Muir (Early Years representative) Catriona Williamson - (Maintained Primary Representative)

We have also received apologies from Lucy Townsend –Corporate Director – People/Director of Children’s Services.

Substitutions

The following substitutions were confirmed at the meeting:

Nikki Barnett is substituting for Jo Grenfell
Karen Walker is substituting for Andy Bridewell
John Read is substituting for Catriona Williamson.

Membership changes

The Chair welcomed Graham Nagel-Smith who is the new Primary Academy representative, Deborah Muir who is the new Early Years representative (replacing Mark Cawley) and Stella Fowler who is the new Primary Governor representative (replacing Mel Jacobs).

Jo Grenfell (Vice Principal Curriculum and Student Services – Wiltshire College) is replacing Denise Lloyd as the Post 16 observer representative but was not able to make the meeting today.

17 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021 were approved.

Resolved:

That the Chair approve and sign the minutes of the meeting of Schools Forum held on 10 June 2021.

18 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements:

Review of Membership

The Clerk had contacted PHF, WASSH and WGA in September to ask them to confirm their representatives for Schools Forum for this academic year. As you will recall, at our meeting in January 2021 following a review of the proportion/membership it was identified that there should be a change to primary school representation from 4 maintained and 2 academies to 3 maintained and 3 academies. At that time it was agreed that this change would take effect from September 2021.

Accordingly PHF appointed Graham Nagel-Smith to take that position. WASSH confirmed that their membership would remain the same and the WGA confirmed that Stella Fowler would replace Mel Jacobs (who is now a Wiltshire Councillor) as a Primary School Governor representative and there remains a vacancy for another Primary School Governor representative.

On 15 September 2021, Grant Davis carried out a review of the proportion/membership of Schools Forum. He has looked at the October 2020

census information and confirms that three primary schools converted to academies since that time (Greentrees Primary, Pitton Primary and Winterslow Primary) and those are included these in the updated proportions.

This review shows that the proportions that were agreed at the January meeting this year still stand and we don't need to make any adjustments to our membership. Whilst strictly speaking, the proportions would suggest that we should have 4 academy secondary representatives and 0 maintained secondary representatives, we do need a maintained secondary representative on the Forum to represent maintained secondary schools so the split will remain as 3 academy and 1 maintained representative.

Comfort break

As the Agenda was quite lengthy it was agreed that a 5-minute comfort break would be factored in at an appropriate point.

19 **Declaration of Interests**

There were no interests declared.

20 **Public Participation**

No questions or statements were received in advance of the meeting.

21 **Updates from Working Groups**

The Forum noted the update received by way of the minutes of the meetings of the School Funding and SEN working group held on 8 and 27 September 2021. There were no questions arising.

The Forum noted the update received by way of the minutes of the meetings of the Early Years Reference Group meeting held on 21 September 2021. There were no questions arising.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the minutes of the joint meetings of the School Funding and SEN working group held on 8 and 27 September 2021 and the Early Years Reference group meeting on 21 September 2021.

22 **School Revenue Surplus and Deficit Balances 2020-21**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which presented the position of revenue balances for Wiltshire maintained schools as at 31st March 2021 and identified those schools in surplus and deficit. Grant highlighted the following:

- The number of LA maintained schools had decreased from 130 to 126 between 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021. Three special schools

amalgamated to become one school and two schools converted to an academy;

- The net surplus balances for the financial year 2020/21 were £11.67 million with 113 schools holding surplus balances of £14.39 million and 13 schools in deficit to a value of £2.72 million;
- For special schools, we show any surplus or deficit balance as a % of place funding – however it should be noted that place funding is only part of the funding for special schools. In special schools funding comprises place funding and top up funding on a roughly 50% place funding and 50% top up funding basis. The reason for using place funding only is due to the variable nature of top up funding;
- The DfE may ask local authorities to provide additional information where:
 - a) the authority has 5% of schools that have had a surplus of 15% or more for the last 5 years and where the individual surplus is least £10,000 each year. Authorities will only be asked for more information if at least 3 schools meet the criteria.
 - b) the authority has 2.5% of its schools in deficit by 2.5% or more for the last 4 years and where the individual annual deficit is at least £10,000.
- The number of schools in deficit has decreased from 20 in 2019/20 to 13 in 2020/21, and the value of the deficits has decreased by £0.8 million from £3.52 million in 2019/20 to £2.72 million in 2020/2;
- The number of schools in surplus has increased from 110 in 2019/20 to 113 in 2020/21 with the value of surpluses increasing by £4.43 million, from £9.96 million in 2019/20 to £14.39 million in 2020/21;
- The appendices to the report highlight that the LA may trigger an investigation from the DfE due to the number of schools holding excess revenue and deficit balances. However, for a number of schools that were holding a surplus above 15% there were reasons for this, e.g. they would be undertaking a capital funded project in the year to be able to achieve works at the school and they would not appear on the surplus balance list in the next financial year;
- The LA would continue to work with the schools in deficit to come up with a recovery plan; and
- Due to the restrictions imposed, because of Covid 19, the 2020/21 financial year was not a normal operating year for schools. Schools were fully funded during this period and faced restrictions regarding occupancy

and delivery of teaching which might explain in part the increase in the net revenue balances from 2019/20 to 2020/21 of £5.2 million.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the report.

23 **Dedicated Schools Budget - Budget Monitoring 2021-22**

Marie Taylor (Head of Finance – Children and Education) referred to the budget monitoring report as at 31 August 2021 that was circulated with the Agenda. Marie highlighted the following:

- An overspend of £8.227M was currently projected against the overall school's budget;
- There was a forecast underspend on early years budgets which related to the vacant posts within the entitlement and early years teaching teams;
- The take up of early years placements was 5% less than planned which was disappointing due to parents choosing not to send their children back into settings following Covid, the LA were keen to get disadvantaged learner 2 years olds back into settings. The underspend is not highlighted until the September term however any underspend will be re-couped by the DfE in the post year adjustment;
- Unrelated to DSG, the Council has continued to allocate Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) funding to support settings with a range of schemes from a universal offer to support specialist kit and cleaning to lost income. The ringfenced sum for 2020-21 and 2021-22 is £1.6M. The amount paid out to date to settings is £0.912M;
- The forecast underspend on the school's budgets largely related to the school's growth fund which currently shows an underspend and is helping to offset the overall pressure on the DSG;
- The high needs budgets were projected to overspend by £9.643M with the biggest areas of overspend being Independent Special School packages, named pupil allowances and top ups in special schools, enhanced learning provision and post 16 funding. Some children found the return to school following lockdowns challenging and easing them back into learning with post pandemic re-bandings being requested puts pressure on the high needs budgets;
- The DSG reserve brought forward is a deficit of £19.474M. As previously agreed by Schools Forum with effect from 1 April 2021, the early years reserve would be ringfenced. The current forecast overspend would take the reserve into an overall deficit position of £27.701M; and

- The DfE had taken interest in the LA's budgets and had asked for a meeting to discuss the recovery plan and progress made – challenging questions were expected. Cabinet were also being kept informed of the position via their quarterly budget monitoring reports.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the budget monitoring position at the end of August 2021.

24 **Families and Children's Transformation Programme (FACT) Update**

Simon Thomas (FACT Programme Lead) gave an update on the FACT programme and highlighted the following:

- The FACT Partnership mission is 'Working together to improve opportunities and outcomes for children, young people and families across Wiltshire by developing excellent system wide approaches that make best use of all available resources'. There was also a vision for our Children, Young People and Families and for the Partnership;
- Partners feeling engaged is critical to the work on a number of priorities;
- Over the last 12 months the partnership had reviewed the project work they were doing. There had been a total of 27 projects and the partnership felt that this was too many and the work was getting a bit lost. The group of partners then decided to review their activity and pinned the work down to 7 priority multi agency projects;
- Speech language and communication – This project was a looking at the fundamental stepping stones for a good start at school and was moving along really well;
- Earliest support in communities – This was a project to push and develop early support in communities;
- Young People's Service – This was looking at multi agency responses to ensure good wrap around services that work together in the best possible ways to provide a great service for Wiltshire's young people;
- Transitional safeguarding – There had been a real push with this project and they were about to go live with a pilot for 16-25 year olds. This was focusing on putting the right services in place for young people who were vulnerable to exploitation/ on the edge of care/suffering drug and or alcohol issues/living chaotic lifestyles, having identified that when they move from children to adult services the risks don't get managed as well as they could. This project would look to ensure that their safeguarding and the transition is as solid as it can be and that the right services are in place for them to transition;

- Integrated working – This project was looking at how the Council and health partners work together to ensure that they commission the right services and how are they working for the young people and families;
- Alternative provision – All schools will already be familiar with alternative provision;
- Early Support Assessment - Following feedback from practitioners about the need for lots of school involvement the partnership had developed the ESA to replace the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which was easier for schools to navigate – the project had another 6 months to run and the partnership would appreciate school input into their learning and would be reflecting on their feedback with the implementation of this change;
- Coming out of Covid – the partnership had agreed that an area of development would be Early Help. They know that a lot of work is going on but they are told by practitioners, schools and families that it is hard to find out what services are out there and how to get in touch. They had identified some gaps and were working to really reflect what they Early Help Strategy should look like and what could they learn from other Local Authorities and partnerships? This project was still to be scoped and schools' input would be vital; and
- Six key elements of a Partnership Early Help Strategy had been identified and they would build on the good things already in place and look at what could be done better.

Resolved

That Schools Forum note the FACT programme update.

25 Update from the High Needs Block Working Group

Simon Thomas (FACT Programme Lead) gave an update on the FACT programme and highlighted the following:

- The FACT Partnership mission is 'Working together to improve opportunities and outcomes for children, young people and families across Wiltshire by developing excellent system wide approaches that make best use of all available resources'. There was also a vision for our Children, Young People and Families and for the Partnership;
- Partners feeling engaged is critical to the work on a number of priorities;
- Over the last 12 months the partnership had reviewed the project work they were doing. There had been a total of 27 projects and the partnership felt that this was too many and the work was getting a bit

lost. The group of partners then decided to review their activity and pinned the work down to 7 priority multi agency projects;

- Speech language and communication – This project was a looking at the fundamental stepping stones for a good start at school and was moving along really well;
- Earliest support in communities – This was a project to push and develop early support in communities;
- Young People’s Service – This was looking at multi agency responses to ensure good wrap around services that work together in the best possible ways to provide a great service for Wiltshire’s young people;
- Transitional safeguarding – There had been a real push with this project and they were about to go live with a pilot for 16-25 year olds. This was focusing on putting the right services in place for young people who were vulnerable to exploitation/ on the edge of care/suffering drug and or alcohol issues/living chaotic lifestyles, having identified that when they move from children to adult services the risks don’t get managed as well as they could. This project would look to ensure that their safeguarding and the transition is as solid as it can be and that the right services are in place for them to transition;
- Integrated working – This project was looking at how the Council and health partners work together to ensure that they commission the right services and how are they working for the young people and families;
- Alternative provision – All schools will already be familiar with alternative provision;
- Early Support Assessment - Following feedback from practitioners about the need for lots of school involvement the partnership had developed the ESA to replace the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which was easier for schools to navigate – the project had another 6 months to run and the partnership would appreciate school input into their learning and would be reflecting on their feedback with the implementation of this change;
- Coming out of Covid – the partnership had agreed that an area of development would be Early Help. They know that a lot of work is going on but they are told by practitioners, schools and families that it is hard to find out what services are out there and how to get in touch. They had identified some gaps and were working to really reflect what they Early Help Strategy should look like and what could they learn from other Local Authorities and partnerships? This project was still to be scoped and schools’ input would be vital; and

- Six key elements of a Partnership Early Help Strategy had been identified and they would build on the good things already in place and look at what could be done better.

Resolved

That Schools Forum note the FACT programme update.

26 National Funding Formulae for Schools and High Needs - 2022-23

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which outlined the DfE's funding proposals for schools and high needs in 2022-23. Grant highlighted the following:

- There was positive news to report regarding funding for the 2022-23 year. It would be the final year of the "Boris billions" with an extra £7.1bn which was an increase of £2.3bn on 2021-22;
- Indicative figures had been given based on the October 2020 census data. The proposed total funding was £417M which was an uplift of almost £15.5M in 2021-22;
- There would be a 3% in uplift in Pupil-Led Factors led factors; the minimum per pupil funding level would increase by 2%, the FSM factor would increase by 2%; changes to sparsity would be reported later in the meeting;
- The October 2021 census (running today) would be used for calculating the Deprivation FSM6 funding rather than the previous January census which would reduce the lag;
- There was a proposed increase to the high needs block of 8% and the LA would still hopefully have the ability to transfer between blocks up to 0.5% of the budget, subject to Schools Forum approval;
- 2022-23 would be another "soft" year which would give Schools Forum the ability to determine how the Wiltshire's funding methodology would work for that year. The only mandatory factor for 2022-23 would be the application of the minimum per pupil funding levels being £4,265 in Primary and £5,525 in Secondary schools;
- As part of the budget setting process, when the final budget allocations had been confirmed to the LA in December, this would be put forward to Schools Forum in January for decision and then on to the Council for political ratification and approval in February 2022;
- Local authorities are required to submit the proposed delegated budget for schools in their areas to the DfE in January 2022. The DfE are required to confirm the formula is fully compliant with the funding

regulations and then the budgets will be confirmed to academies during February 2022. The LA will need to notify maintained schools of their budget shares by the end of February 2022 as in previous years.

- The new approach introduced as part of the NFF for calculating the Growth funding would continue in the 2022-23 year. The County will be broken down into middle layer super output areas (MSOA's) and the growth between the October 2021 census and October 2020 census would attract funding at £1,485 per primary pupil, £2,220 per secondary pupil and £70,800 for each new school (however there were no new schools in Wiltshire this year);
- The level of growth funding required and the size of the Growth Fund would be determined later in the year along with confirmation of the Growth funding criteria;
- As previously, there were a number of budgets included in the local formula that maintained schools only, can agree to de-delegate so that certain services continue to be provided centrally by the LA. Schools Forum would be asked to take this decision on behalf of maintained schools based upon the results of the consultation responses;
- Mainstream schools and Academies would continue to receive a clearly identified budget for SEN (Notional SEN budget) and would be expected to use Notional SEN to meet the needs of their SEN pupils; and
- Schools Forum would be asked to consider sparsity funding and a separate report was to be presented later in the meeting which detailed the results of the DfE's consultation on sparsity funding.

The Chair asked if Schools Forum would be asked to make "in principle" decisions at the December meeting in preparation for the decision making at the January 2022 meeting. Grant Davis confirmed that this would be the case as it would enable them to model the budgets and create recommendations/options for decisions in January.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the report.

27 Update on DfE Consultations

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which sought to provide an update on the DfE's national consultations impacting on schools and Local Authority budgets and highlighted the following:

- Business rates – between March and May 2021 the DfE consulted on the centralisation of business rates for schools. On 18 August they published their response and changes to the current process. The key proposal was to centralise the payment of business rates on behalf of all

schools, both maintained and academy schools from April 2022. The impact would be minimal for maintained schools as Wiltshire is both the billing authority and funding body, therefore in essence schools don't physically receive funding for or pay for their school business rates. For academy schools, this will be a welcome change as at present, academy schools must pay for their business rates before recovering the monies from the DfE. The proposals should create efficiencies for schools as well as cashflow benefits for academy schools;

- Fair School Funding for All – As the deadline for responding to this consultation was prior to this meeting of Schools Forum an extraordinary meeting of the School Funding and SEN working group was held on 8 September to compile a response on behalf of the working group (shown in the minutes of the meeting attached to the agenda). This was shared with Headteachers, Governors and School Business Managers via Right Choice, Helean's Weekly Newsletter and the respective Headteacher and Governor 'Briefings'. All schools were also asked to respond to the consultation and the LA also submitted a response in its own right. It was noted that Wiltshire had a good response rate to the consultation;
- Sparsity – A separate report would be shared later in the meeting regarding the current sparsity consultation;
- SEN Review – This DfE review was still outstanding and the consultation was awaited.

An Early Years representative asked if Officers has raised the issue of nursery schools with the business rates consultation? Grant Davis reported that the DfE had advised that nurseries were outside the scope of this at the present time.

The Special School Governor representative asked if these consultations were sent out to Governors? Grant Davis reported that all consultations were shared via Rightchoice and would be shared via Headteacher/School Business Manager and Governor termly briefings so should reach Governors through those avenues and as soon as the SEN Review consultation was launched, they would share in the same way. Grant reported that email notifications can be set up to receive updates through Rightchoice and guidance on how to set that up could be shared outside of the meetings if helpful.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum

- 1. Note the DfE's consultation information around fair school funding and the SEN review.**
- 2. Note the changes and impact of the DfE changes to business rates payments following the DfE consultation.**
- 3. Refers to the separate paper for the consultation on Sparsity.**

Changes to Sparsity Funding 2022-23 - Government Consultation Response

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which sought to outline the Government's response to the Schools National Funding Formula: Changes to Sparsity funding from 2022-23 and the changes which have been implemented into the NFF sparsity factor from 2022-23 and highlighted the following:

- The report sought to bring the latest government led changes to the attention of members of the Schools' Forum rather than for consultation. All funding decisions relating to the 2022-23 year would be taken later this year, following the announcement of the 2022-23 funding settlement;
- In the Spring of 2021 the DfE held the consultation – a total of 618 responses were received with Wiltshire making up 7% of the overall total number of responses submitted – thanks to all those that responded recognising that there are a large number of rural schools in Wiltshire;
- The proposals consulted upon were:
 - a) Measure sparsity distances by **road** journeys rather than as the **crow flies**, to better identify schools' remoteness.
 - b) Retain the same distance thresholds of 3 miles or 2 miles
 - c) Increase the maximum amount that schools can attract through the sparsity factor by £10,000 to
 - i. £55,000 for primary schools
 - ii. £80,000 for all other schools
- Previously there have been inequities for similar Wiltshire schools where some would attract funding and some would not;
- For the 2021-22 year Schools Forum agreed that the sparsity funding would be increased by 3% in line with other funding factors and the maximum funding was set at £26,780 for primaries and £69,525 for secondaries;
- 97% of respondents agreed that sparsity funding should be allocated to a greater number of schools. 95% of respondents agreed that sparsity distances should be measured by 'road' distance rather than 'crow flies' distance and 60% of respondents agreed to maintain the distance thresholds of 2 miles and 3 miles respectively for primary and secondary schools;
- The Council supports the proposal that sparsity distances will be measured by road distance and the increase to sparsity factor values;
- The DfE will also be introducing a 'distance threshold taper' which means that schools that are marginally below the main distance thresholds of 2

or 3 miles can now attract some funding through the sparsity factor but tapered to mean that they would receive less funding than if their sparsity distances were at or above the main thresholds;

- The 'distance threshold taper' has been set at 20% below the main distance thresholds, making it 1.6 miles for primary and 2.4 miles for secondary schools. In essence, a primary school with a sparsity distance between 1.6 and 2 miles (and met the other sparsity criteria) would now be allocated some sparsity funding and this would be a large impact for Wiltshire schools;
- A school is eligible for sparsity funding where the school's sparsity distance is above the tapered distance threshold and the school is considered small. For primary schools, this is less than 150 pupils or average year group size of 21.4 pupils. For secondary schools, this is less than 600 pupils, or average year group size of 120 pupils;
- Schools which are both equal to or above the main distance threshold and equal to or below the main year group threshold would be entitled to receive the maximum sparsity unit values. Where a school is between either or both of the main and tapered thresholds, a sparsity weighting would apply;
- The DfE are proposing three options for the LA and Schools Forum to choose how to fund schools – if using the NFF basis, this would accord with the level of funding to be received from the DfE;
- Detailed analysis using the October 2020 census data had shown that whichever method is used there would be 50 eligible primaries and 3 eligible secondaries. It showed that £1.7M of funding would be received but depending on which option was chosen this would not meet the funding requirements if the fixed option was chosen but would enable the NFF or tapered options to be used;
- Schools Forum would be required, as part of its funding decisions later this year, to confirm the preferred methodology for funding sparsity, including the maximum sparsity funding values. When funding moves to the 'hard' formula, schools will be funded using the proposed NFF methodology.

The Salisbury Diocesan representative asked how many schools in Wiltshire would be affected by this? Grant Davis confirmed that of the 202 primary schools, 29 secondary and 4 special schools in 2021-22, 30 schools are funded under sparsity for 2021-22 (28 primary and 2 secondary) and for 2022-23 this would rise to 50 primary and 3 secondaries. As Wiltshire is a rural county 1 in 4 (25%) would benefit from the planned changes to sparsity funding.

The Salisbury Diocesan representative was keen to ensure that members were aware that sparsity is a big issue. In Dorset this has been a key decision too

and they were keen to support at funding at NFF levels. This was to ensure that we achieve for the most impact for children in small and rural schools.

Grant Davis agreed that the impact for Wiltshire was huge that national recognition included the significant number of responses from Wiltshire schools was good.

A primary academy representative asked if Officers knew which schools would now become eligible for sparsity funding. Grant Davis reported that they had carried out some indicative modelling based on the October 2020 and could share the details of those schools with Schools Forum members at our next meeting.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the report.

29 **Annual Schools Consultation - De-delegation and School Funding 2022-23**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which sought to brief Schools Forum about the proposed consultation to schools and to agree the questions to be sent out to schools and highlighted the following:

De-Delegation

- De-delegation of a limited number of budgets/services was available to maintained schools only and they would be consulted on their views on the delegation or de-delegation of central budgets for the following budgets/services:
 - i) Free School Meal Eligibility Service
 - ii) Licences (Access Budget Planning)
 - iii) Trade Union Facilities costs
 - iv) Maternity costs
 - v) Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
 - vi) Travellers Education Service
 - vii) Behaviour Support Service
- As part of the consultation, maintained schools could agree that budgets should be de-delegated and retained centrally by the LA with services provided to all maintained schools, or agree that budgets should be delegated, and schools make/purchase their own provision as appropriate or agree that budgets should be delegated, and they then cluster together to purchase or deliver services;
- Under the second and third options above, the LA would not be able to continue to deliver a service unless there is sufficient buy back on a traded basis from schools (maintained or academy) to enable retention of sufficient staff. This will be difficult to predict, and the LA will need to decide whether it can afford to continue to deliver services centrally on a

fully traded basis with full cost recovery. This would require a risk assessment;

School Budgets

- In previous years Schools Forum had agreed to a transfer from the school's block to the high needs to contribute to the high needs recovery plan. The high needs block overspend for 2020-21 was £11.507M which correlates to the continuing rise in request for new Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and banding/funding increases. At the end of the last financial year the DSG reserve held an £18.717m deficit;
- Although the deficit is supported by a recovery plan, this is a long-term programme of change. The requirement for significant additional funding at national level is clear and acknowledged by the DfE; and
- It is recommended that we seek views of all schools on the questions in Appendix 2 which covers a range of options ranging from transferring funding from the Schools Block. The results of the consultation would be presented to Schools Forum in December.

Marie Taylor reported that the DfE were not keen to disapply the regulations and Gemma Donolly from the DfE had reported that as there had been a change in Minister they may not agree to transfers of over 0.5%. It had been suggested that as part of the consultation a figure of over 0.5% transfer could be added back into the list of options to see what schools think of this as an option to close the gap.

The Chair reported that if they did agree to more than a 0.5% transfer that would only fill the hole a bit more and not fully and felt that we needed to have the findings of the SEN review to see a way forward but agreed that it could be added as an option in the consultation but that she had a view on what schools' responses would be on that.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum:

- Agree the consultation questions for maintained schools around delegation/de-delegation of budgets for central services within the schools' block as set out in Appendix 1.**
- Agree the consultation questions for all schools around setting the 2022-23 Schools Budget as set out in Appendix 2.**

30 **Update on Covid Funding**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) gave a verbal update on Covid funding/costs and funding for schools and early years settings and highlighted the following:

- The Recovery Premium funding was announced in February 2021 but the detail of which was not received until recently – this would be a minimum of £2,000 for primaries and £6,000 for secondaries based on the number of Pupil Premium pupils and deprivation and post LAC that were eligible, as at the October 2020 census. Service pupils were not included in the eligibility criteria;
- The allocations were £145 per mainstream pupil and £290 per special school
- In addition, School-Led Tutoring had been announced. School-led tutoring documentation has recently been announced as part of national tutoring funding for some vulnerable learners. It is felt better for them to be taught by existing staff that they are familiar with, 60% of pupil premium eligible pupils would drive the funding at rates of funding £13.50 in mainstream and £35.25 in special schools – 15 hours for each eligible pupil. Schools are funding at the 75% level and are expected to fund the 25% from either existing budgets or other Covid tutoring funding.

Marie Taylor reported that £1.6M of COMF funding had been ringfenced for early years with £900k being spent and £400k being earmarked for flexible pastoral support for those struggling to come back into early year settings or struggling in life generally.

Yesterday it was announced the previously named Winter Grant (now called the Household Support Grant) was for those who were struggling with costs of their essential living needs and support for families. Funding would be allocated to families whose children were eligible for free school meals. Officers would be in touch with schools and families with their plans for distributing funding.

The Chair reported that it was good to hear that these grants were coming through but it did make it hard to plan with them not receiving the details of them until the last minute. The tutoring funding was coming automatically but would be clawed back if not used appropriately.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the update on Covid funding.

31 Confirmation of Dates for Future Meetings

The Forum noted that the future meetings would be held on:

9 December 2021 face to face subject to guidance
 20 January 2022
 17 March 2022 (if required).

32 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 4.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Lisa Pullin, of Democratic Services,
Tel 01225 713015 or email committee@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114 or email
communications@wiltshire.gov.uk

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