

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

6 May 2023

Executive Response to the Final Report of the High Needs Block (HNB) Funding Rapid Scrutiny

Purpose of the report

1. To present the response of the Cabinet Member to the Final Report of the High Needs Block Funding Rapid Scrutiny.

Background

2. On 17 January 2023 the Children's Select Committee endorsed the Final Report of the Task Group.
3. The Committee resolved to refer the following Task Group's recommendations to the relevant Cabinet member for response at the Committee's next meeting.

Executive response to the Rapid Scrutiny's recommendations

The first recommendation was to the Children's Select Committee.

Recommendation No.2	To consider offering a place for an overview and scrutiny member on the council's governance body linked with the "Delivering better value in SEND (DBV)" DfE-led programme.		
Reason for recommendation	This would enable overview and scrutiny's involvement without creating any additional work for officers involved. This would also provide the Children's Select Committee with regular updates from the appointed member.		
Cabinet member	Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Anthony Fennell
Executive response		ACCEPTED	
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review/update existing terms of reference & governance arrangements to reflect and support the Delivering Better Value (DBV) workstream and the new transformation-funded programme team.• Establish revised governance arrangements prior to start of DBV diagnosis phase (Aug 2023).		Success criteria
			Member involvement supported for duration of DBV programme (Jul 2023 – Jan 2024), and beyond through implementation phase if required.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, and brief scrutiny task group member in advance. 	
Target date	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Terms of Reference/governance for consultation - June 2023 Revised governance arrangements operational - July 2023 	

Recommendation No.3	To ensure that the issue of timeliness for EHCP and EHCNA is regularly reviewed by the relevant performance and outcome board and to ask officers to provide a briefing for the chair and vice-chair of the Children’s Select Committee in 6 months-time (June / July 2023) on improvements made to timeliness. Members of the rapid scrutiny exercise would also be invited to the briefing. Based on information provided at the briefing a decision could then be made on the benefits of further scrutiny of this particular issue.		
Reason for recommendation	To offer continued reassurance of monitoring and addressing of a recognised issue.		
Cabinet member	Jane Davies	Lead Officer	Cate Mullen
Executive response		ACCEPTED	
Action		Success criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue regular monthly collation of EHCNA & EHCP timeliness via SEND and Inclusion dashboard and reporting to SEND Board and the Performance and Outcomes Board. Compile latest available performance & trend plus analysis prior to CSC 12th July 2023. 		Regular monitoring and appropriate escalation of performance risk/issues.	
Target date			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief CSC Chair w/c 3/7/2023. 			

Recommendation No.4	Raise Wiltshire Councillors’ awareness of the lobbying tools they can use on behalf of the young people and school(s) in their division as well as encourage them to explore how inclusive the school(s) in their division are. This could be a light touch approach through the regular communications to Councillors or via the Councillors’ Hub.		
Reason for recommendation	To ensure that all councillors are familiar with the lobbying tools available to them. To ensure that all councillors give consideration to the level of inclusiveness at the schools in their division area.		
Cabinet member	Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Marie Taylor
Executive response		ACCEPTED	

Action	Success criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If agreeable, share a list of chairs of local groups/forums (including area boards) with a lobbying remit with Cllrs. • Share f40 lobbying group details (lowest 41 funded local authorities in the UK) • Prevalence of SEN Support and EHCP at individual school level is collected in the school census. This will form part of the HNB sustainability dashboard that will be reviewed by new governance arrangements (with member involvement) nb it is important that this data is analysed/interpreted in the context of other relevant information (e.g local deprivation levels). • One off exercise to assess/quantify perceived negative impact of historical spend element of HNB funding formula on Wiltshire allocation compared to statistical neighbours.. 	<p>Cllrs aware of mechanisms for lobbying and a coordinated local area approach in place.</p>
Target date	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload information to Councillors Hub by May 2023 • HNB Sustainability Dashboard (first draft) July 2023 	

Recommendation No.5	<p>To ensure that the HNB deficit and risks associated to it are brought to councillors' attention when they receive information and / or training on the budget, as well as when the budget is presented. Consideration could be given to a standalone page, with an explanatory note, as part of the budget papers.</p>		
Reason for recommendation	<p>To ensure all councillors are fully aware of the current situation and potential risks to the council.</p>		
Cabinet member	Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Marie Taylor
Executive response		ACCEPTED	
Action	Success criteria		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide specific information on the Dedicated School Grant financial position & risks through existing mechanisms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Induction Training after elections (all Cllrs invited) ▪ Annual Cllr budget briefing and signposting to Schools Forum ▪ Budget monitoring reports to Financial Planning Task Group and Overview and Scrutiny Mngt Committee 	<p>Cllrs remain aware of national and local financial context & stay abreast of emerging proposals for, and impact of mitigation of HNB deficit.</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness sessions for Governance and Audit Committee • Financial reporting to be expanded to include emerging findings on cost-drivers and opportunities for High Needs Block mitigation from the Delivering Better Value (DBV) diagnosis phase.(including via member involvement in DBV governance. 	
Target date	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand DSG (dedicated school grant) / HNB financial reporting – ongoing from Sept 2023 	

Recommendation No.6	To provide an update to the Children’s Select Committee in June / July 2024 on the success of Resource Bases in Secondary Schools (as started in September 2023).		
Reason for recommendation	To keep the committee informed of progress.		
Cabinet member	Jane Davies	Lead Officer	Cate Mullen
Executive response		ACCEPTED	
Action			Success criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing paper on evaluation on x2 secondary Resource Bases operational from Sept 2023 and plans for further 2-3 bases from Sept 2024. 			Cllrs aware of plans and progress.
Target date			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing Paper – June 2024. 			

Recommendation No.7	To consider investing more officer time into the roll-out of costed provision maps (CPMs) to enable these to be undertaken for all EHCP within a reasonable timeframe. This may be an “invest to save” approach as it should provide better monitoring of impact and performance.		
Reason for recommendation	The Rapid Scrutiny members recognised the potential savings in both efficiency and cost of this initiative.		
Cabinet member	Jane Davies	Lead Officer	Cate Mullen
Executive response		ACCEPTED	
Action			Success criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit to a dedicated HNB Finance Lead role, with responsibility for defining evidence-based options & recommendations for extending current reach of Cost Provision Maps (CPM) i.e. to target/prioritise specific 			An effective and sustainable suite of approaches is in place to assure

<p>settings and/or cohorts identified with best opportunity for cost-avoidance (nb. It is unlikely to ever be cost-effective or practicable to introduce costed maps for all existing EHCP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define investment strategy for operationalising agreed option(s) including potential use of HNB additional grant and DBV grant. Explore options for expanding CPM approach to encompass: defining good-practice (outcomes and financial efficiency) staffing models for types of setting (e.g. resource bases); conduct school-level whole provision audits to assure targeted funding is being used to support pupils. 	<p>effective use of schools' HNB funding, with associated officer capacity.</p>
Target date	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HNB Finance Lead in post - July 2023 Cost-drivers and opportunities for cost-avoidance identified (output from DBV diagnostic phase) – Dec 2023 CPM Strategy & Investment Plan – Jan 2024 Extended CPM operational roll-out – start April 2024 	

Recommendation No.8	<p>To provide a briefing for the chair and vice-chair of the Children's Select Committee in 6 months-time (June / July 2023) on the roll-out of costed provision maps(CPM). Members of the rapid scrutiny exercise would also be invited to the briefing. This could be part of the same briefing as proposed in recommendation 3 (EHCP timeliness).</p>		
Reason for recommendation	<p>To keep the committee informed of progress as the outcome of the briefing would be reported to the committee by the Chair.</p>		
Cabinet member	Jane Davies	Lead Officer	Cate Mullen / Marie Taylor support
Executive response		ACCEPTED	
Action		Success criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop plan (aligned to DBV timetable) for taking forward actions set out in recommendation 7. 		<p>Cllrs aware of strategy and kept up to date with progress in implementing.</p>	
Target date			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal is that briefing is deferred to Oct 2023 to align with DBV timetable and recruitment of HNB Finance Lead. Regular reporting on development of CPM strategy, plan and progress to Cllrs via member involvement in DBV governance – ongoing from July 			

Recommendation No.9	<p>To use one of the regular updates from Schools Forum to the Children's Select Committee to provide further information</p>
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	on the HNB working group, including terms of reference and membership.		
Reason for recommendation	To provide further clarity on existing scrutiny of the HNB.		
Cabinet member	Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Anthony Fennell
Executive response		ACCEPTED	
Action		Success criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and re-shape current HNB-specific governance (including internal and external working groups) to reflect and support DBV requirements. (see recommendation 2.) Consult on revised terms of reference with Schools Forum and other stakeholders and brief CSC on proposals. 		All external HNB stakeholders are identified and their involvement in HNB governance and developmental workstreams fully supported.	
Target date			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief CSC Chair – July 2023 Revised HNB governance operational – July 2023 			

Recommendation No.10	For committee, or at least the chair and vice-chair of Children’s Select Committee, to receive a briefing about what performance measurement methodology would be used by the council for any performance that is not captured through the costed provision map (based on the assumption that the costed provision map would focus on funding linked to EHCPs).		
Reason for recommendation	Recommendation 10 was added by the Children’s Select Committee on 17 January 2023 to address a concern raised by the Rapid Scrutiny members in paragraph 47 of their final report.		
Cabinet member	Jane Davies	Lead Officer	Marie Taylor
Executive response		ACCEPTED	
Action		Success criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current mechanisms in place (in addition to provision maps) to assure school funding is being used effectively/appropriately and develop as required. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEN School Governor role/responsibilities Ensuring transparency of SEND school budget through SENDCo awareness of whole-school notional SEN funding and individual EHCP 		Clear HNB financial baselines, targets and measures defined and regular performance monitoring processes established.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual EHCP reviews (expected outcomes for funding) ▪ Role of school effectiveness in assuring whole-school approach to SEND and quality of support • Improved performance monitoring through development of a comprehensive, integrated HNB finance and activity 'dashboard' and associated performance monitoring processes, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trends and projections in unit and aggregate costs by educational phase and setting ○ S251 benchmarking comparison of spend with statistical neighbours ○ trends in the demand, banding and placement type for new EHCP ○ comparison of size/growth of Wiltshire HNB deficit with statistical neighbours and future projections ○ Benchmarking of % SEN Support and EHCP • Identify and monitor key financial impact measures and targets associated with agreed DBV cost-avoidance initiatives 	
<p>Target date</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief CSC Chair – July 2023 • DBV financial impact measures and targets defined – Nov/Dec 2023 	

Proposal

To note the executive response to the Final Report of the **High Needs Block (HNB) Funding Rapid Scrutiny**

Cllr Jane Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion
Cllr Laura Mayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, and Skills

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