

Schools Forum
School Funding and SEN Working Group
MS TEAMS MEETING
23rd September 2022
Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, local authority ((LA)), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), Debbie Williams (Finance, LA) Lisa Percy (Chair of SF / Hardenhuish), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep), Catriona Williamson (Mere) Georgina Theobald-Kiely (Downlands) John Reed (Lyneham) Sharon Buxton (Business Manager, Walwayne Court, Observer)

Apologies: Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND, LA), Helean Hughes (Director LA), Graham Nagel-Smith (Morgan's Vale & Woodfalls), Andy Bridewell (Ludgershall Castle), Simon Thomas (LA), Gary Binstead (LA), Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley) Graham Shore (Deputy Chair SF / Holy Trinity)

1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>MT welcomed the group to the virtual meeting and explained that the rearrangement due to Her Majesty the Queen's funeral on the 19th September 2022 meant that higher numbers of officers and school leaders than usual were able to attend.</p> <p>MT welcomed John Reed (Lyneham Primary) to the group as PHF rep replacing Sam Churchill.</p> <p>GD introduced Sharon Buxton, Business Manager at Walwayne Court who was observing the meeting as part of her CPD.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes</p> <p>MT ran through the actions - complete with no outstanding actions.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	
4.	<p>Schools Funding (DSG) Budget Monitoring (MT)</p> <p>MT shared her report & appendices – highlights, underspends in EY will be subject to a post financial year adjustment in June/July 2023 by the DfE. Schools block growth fund small underspend offsets the HNB pressures. HNB pressures in line with demand for services and previous years demand patterns – and the focus on assessments and September placements means that the current forecast is now believed to be understated. Joint schools and local authority recovery work in this area on going – Wiltshire have joined the DfE's Developing Better Value programme offer (phase 2) which gives us the opportunity to apply for transformational funding.</p>	
5.	<p>Schools Revenue Surplus & Deficit Balances (DW)</p> <p>DW shared her report & appendices – overall the number of maintained schools has fallen however the net combined balance has increased from £11.671m at the end of the 20-21 FY to £13.353m at the end of the 21-22 FY. Some of this increase is due to the pandemic and schools closures, being unable to spend ringfenced grants such as PPG PE grant. There was a lively discussion around appropriate levels of reserves in school and links to school performance and inspection outcomes. DW confirmed that some of the balances were genuine and ringfenced for capital programmes (GT-K confirmed this was the case for a joint LA project at her school) GD's view is that with the future pressures facing schools such as teachers pay award and starting pay bands, support</p>	

	<p>staff pay increase of £1,925 per full time employee and increases in inflation generally, especially energy costs, the schools would need those to manage the pressures. GD asked LP to confirm the advice for academies from the ESFA and LP explained that there was no guidance but that adequate reserves were expected. CW clarified that the LA no longer had no statutory powers to reclaim excess surplus deficits from maintained schools.</p> <p>Action: DW to update SS budgets to include top up funding in the 'total funding' for Special Schools for comparative purposes.</p>	DW
6.	<p>NFF – for Schools & High Needs 2023-24 (GD)</p> <p>GD ran through his report which outlined the impact of the DfE's July publication. A positive is that we advised schools to budget for a 2% uplift and in the event, it is 2.4% The DfE recognise that Wiltshire is closely aligned to the NFF already and we anticipate the full hard NFF to be in place by 2027-28. As we know nationally HNB is poorly funded, and this is especially compounded for Wiltshire as so much of the formula is based on historic data.</p> <p>There are challenges for schools, around the pay award, inflation and energy costs and schools will need to use balances where they have them to manage this across the short to medium term.</p> <p>Decisions will need to be made in principle in December and once the actual allocations are received, the final budget set in January – consideration will be given to transfers between blocks, de-delegation, and minor formula factors not aligned to the NFF.</p>	
7.	<p>Consultations (GD)</p> <p>GD shared his report including the results from the second stage of the NFF consultation (July – Sept 21) from the DfE.</p> <p>As Wiltshire aligns closely with the NFF there are no issues however it will be interesting to see how the DfE develop their formulaic approach towards split site allowance, PFI, exceptional circumstances, growth & falling rolls fund. GD went on to explain how the DfE intended SF to have a role moving forward but that this would be more consultation around early years, SEND and de-delegation.</p> <p>There were two questions for Schools Forum to consider which will give the local authority a steer when modelling for the December report suite.</p> <p>Following the extraordinary meeting of the SFWG in the summer, the f40 published their responses and these were aligned to our own.</p>	
8.	<p>AOB (MT)</p> <p>MT explained that the Council was taking steps to consider support for staff, residents and businesses with regard to the current financial situation in the UK. Alongside, HH, MT had been invited to attend a meeting later that day where she intended to represent EY settings and schools which form part of the business work cell.</p>	
9.	<p><i>Date and Time of Next Meeting</i></p> <p>The next Schools Forum meeting after our October meeting will be Thursday 8th December 2022 @ 1.30pm. This is planned as a face-to-face meeting.</p> <p>The date of the next meeting of this group is scheduled for Monday 21st November at 8.30am. This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p>	