

## School Funding Working Group and SEN working Group

2nd December 2019

### Minutes

**Present:** Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, LA), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), Neil Baker (Christchurch), Lisa Percy (Hardenhuish), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep), Catriona Williamson (Mere), Sam Churchill (Hilmarton), Matt Sambrook (Exeter House / Secondee LA), Andy Bridewell (Lugershall Castle)

Libby Johnson (Democratic Services) and Kathryn Davis (Virtual Head) attended for the first part of the meeting.

**Apologies:** Judith Westcott (Childrens Commissioning LA), Phil Cook (Larkrise), Helean Hughes (Director LA), Nick Breakwell (SEN LA) & Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley)

1	<p><b>Minutes from previous meeting</b> The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed.</p>	
2	<p><b>Matters Arising</b> Marie welcomed Andy to the Group as a new member Marie introduced Libby &amp; Kathryn attending for their items only</p>	
3	<p><b>Verbal Update – Admissions Appeals Charging (Libby)</b> Libby updated the group; the cost of the LA providing support for an average appeal has been calculated at around £900. Schools have indicated they can get an alternative provider for around £300. A report is to be taken to CLT (Corporate Leadership Team) at the Council to see whether the service can be provided at a subsidised level to schools. The benefits of this will be to ensure due process is being followed, thus protecting reputational risk for schools and the council. The group raised conflict of interest; independent panel members are used, whether trading training on how to conduct an admissions appeal would be an alternative; possibly and CW said that negotiation was also an option for some appeals.</p> <p>The group agreed the principle and look forward to the CLT decision.</p>	LJ
4	<p><b>DSG Expenditure – Wiltshire Virtual School</b> Kathryn presented her report; there is a forecast overspend against the DSG for CLA (Children Looked After) however, this will be met from PPG for CLA in 19/20. Kathryn confirmed there was additional funding to be allocated for Post 16 PP and the total PPG for CLA was £772,800. Approx. 300 CLA are of school age.</p> <p>The group welcomed the clarity and transparency of the report and thanked Kathryn for preparing it.</p>	No actions
5	<p><b>Autumn Consultations</b> MT shared her report which covers: a. Local Authority Consultation Results: De-delegated (maintained schools only) b. Local Authority Consultation Results: Transfer of Schools Budget to support demand on HNB 20/21 (all schools)</p>	

	<p>c. DfE Consultation on Clarifying the Specific Grant &amp; Ring-Fenced Status of the DSG</p> <p>Responses (although limited in number) for consultations a &amp; b will be used to inform setting the Schools Budget at the January 2020 meeting.</p> <p>Consultation c from the DfE (11/10/19-15/11/19) was seeking views on the treatment of overspends leading to deficit DSG reserve balances – the proposals are around changing the conditions of grant so that any overspend is carried forward to the schools budget in future years. On a positive note, we hope this will push the inclusion agenda forward however, there is little incentive within this for the local authority to achieve value for money – Marie reassured the group of two things, firstly that the local authority would not be reacting in this way but would continue with the recovery actions and sufficiency planning and that there is a strong relationship between Schools Forum and the local authority which gives us the opportunity to ensure our partnership approach to problem solving continues.</p> <p>The group noted the report but had concerns around the lack of responders in a and b and the financial burdens in c.</p>	
6	<p><b>Budget Monitoring as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019</b> MT shared her report.</p> <p>The pressures on the HNB continue during the planning and transformation around the SEN service and working with schools.</p> <p>The forecast overspend for 19/20 is £6.429m. Highlights: This comprises £0.995m early years – based on higher than budgeted FTE of 3&amp;4-year olds. The HNB forecast overspend is £5.685m – again, based on higher numbers of EHCPS and levels of support requested. This forecast will increase if requests continue to be received at the current rates.</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 £8.695m - deficit.</p> <p>The additional monies pledged nationally for 20/21 will assist but not resolve this issue and certainly not for overspends relating to 18/19 and 19/20 financial years.</p> <p>There was much discussion around reasons for this overspend (parent preference, threat of tribunal, provider placement choice, inclusion &amp; CCG / health funding.) Nick Breakwell has done some analysis on primary need – can this be shared with the group? MT to check with NB</p> <p>MT speak to Directors around discussions with CCG &amp; requests for information around joint funding arrangements being shared amongst local authority finance officers.</p> <p>MT reminded the group of Bristol's judicial review in recent years where savings were mooted without sufficient consultation and consideration.</p>	<p>MT &gt; NB</p> <p>MT</p>

	<p>This overspend needs to be considered moving forward in conjunction with the DfE Consultation proposal to carry forward DSG overspends to Schools in future years.</p> <p>The group noted the report but had concerns around the level of spend exceeding grant and the cumulative result on the DSG reserve in the balance sheet.</p>	
7	<p><b>Update on Schools Revenue Funding 20/21</b>  GD shared his informative reports on NFF and Growth Fund which were supported by the group.  After much debate, the group felt that there was insufficient reasoning / need for schools to introduce the mobility factor whilst local flexibility remains (prior to the national hard formula being rolled out.) The additional funding (£ tbc) could be used to offset significant budgetary pressures in the HNB.</p> <p>In addition, the group discussed the option of introducing a Falling Rolls Fund and the criteria for such a fund. Given the nature of the DfE criteria, it is very difficult to predict that rolls will rise in the following years and any fund would require a top slice of the Schools Block DSG. To be discussed at Schools Forum further and to be taken into account when setting the budget at the January 2020 meeting.</p> <p>Marie to add EY to report for SF.</p>	MT
8	<p><b>Verbal Update – ESF MOD Funding 2021</b>  Grant gave a verbal update on the success of the local authority bid. The total bids submitted were £1.8m of a £2m total fund. The Council only succeeded in £54k for a SEND national trainer however, several of our schools were successful in their own bids so some positive news.  When the 19/20 bids were put forward, the MOD believed 1500 children would be returning to Wiltshire, in the event only 609 have arrived and so the likelihood of the same level of success as 19/20 were slim.</p>	
9	<p><b>Verbal Update – High Needs Recovery Action Planning</b>  Unfortunately, Helean could not attend the meeting so Matt highlighted the main actions which savings have been attributed to – namely;  Dyslexia Friendly Schools  School Inclusion &amp; Effectiveness  SEND assessment &amp; EHCPs  Use of technology  ISS Placement Review (NB)  Post 16  AP  Pre EHCP-District Specialist Centres  Banding Review</p> <p>The group had a lively discussion around the issues and potential resolution moving forward including SLAs for RB &amp; ELP provision, inclusion, limitations, joined up approach, Support at lower tiers.  Sam asked do primaries need re-educating about the benefits of ELP provision for children to avoid special school place requests?  Sam asked would it be better not to issue EHCPs prior to age 7?</p>	MS MS

	<p>Matt confirmed when YP get older, they want their EHCP and diagnoses removed in order to gain certain types of employment for example.</p> <p>Work is on going and will be presented to Schools Forum on 12/12/19.</p>	
10	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>John asked about Budget Roadshows</p> <p>Marie responded that rather than run evening events as in previous years, it was intended to run these through the Head Teacher Briefings (geographical x 4 each term) plus an event for governors and school business managers</p> <p>Marie to discuss with Helean</p>	MT
11	<p><b><i>Date and Time of Next Meeting</i></b></p> <p>Next meeting – has already been set – 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 8.30am – room tbc by Marie</p>	MT