

School Funding Working Group and SEN working Group

7th January 2020

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), Andy Bridewell (Ludgershall Castle) Judith Westcott & Gary Binstead (Children’s Commissioning LA), Phil Cook (Larkrise), Helean Hughes (Director LA) Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley)

Apologies: Matt Sambrook (Exeter House / Secondee LA)

1	<p>Minutes from previous meeting The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed.</p>	
2	<p>Matters Arising Andy raised a general query around £85k investment income & insurance – Marie agreed to share with all schools via Right Choice & to ask SWAP to offer advice to schools to share deposits between banks where reserves are in excess of £85k Lisa asked for papers to be pre-circulated to allow all to digest – Marie apologised, January being the most challenging turnaround as the DfE do not provide the 20/21 budget allocations until the penultimate day of the Autumn term. Schools Forum for January 2021 will be pushed back a week to allow detailed modelling to feed into budget option reports.</p>	<p>MT</p> <p>MT/GD</p>
3	<p>Budget Monitoring for the period to 30th November 2019 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 £7.314m.</p> <p>Highlights: This comprises £1.036m early years – based on higher than budgeted FTE of 2, 3&4-year olds, higher take up of the EY ISF and the DfE’s negative in year adjustment of £0.359m.</p> <p>There was a swing noted between the forecast from the October report and November, between 2 and 3&4-year-old forecasts. <i>This has been investigated and it is due to actual hours from Autumn headcount data differing from the early years provider estimates supplied earlier in the financial year.</i></p> <p>The HNB forecast overspend is £6.494m – again, based on higher numbers of EHCPS and levels of support requested. This forecast will</p>	<p>MT</p>

	<p>continue to increase if requests continue to be received at the current rates. (12% growth in a rolling year.)</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 £9.580m.</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>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 significant concerns remain around the level of spend exceeding grant and the cumulative result on the DSG reserve in the balance sheet.</p>	
4	<p>School Funding Settlement Report 2020/21</p> <p>Grant shared his report with the group, outlining the DfE funding allocation for Wiltshire and increases received across all blocks.</p> <p>The DfE have calculated Wiltshire's growth fund to be £2.6m. GD estimates £1.0m leaving the balance of £1.6m available to transfer to HNB.</p> <p>The DfE have calculated Wiltshire's mobility to be £0.570m – this group continued their discussions around whether this needed to be allocated as it was potentially double funding (growth fund) and could also be a one-off spike due to the military movement into the County creating a windfall rather than funding which as part of a useful 3-5-year planning process. Of Wiltshire's 232 schools, 97 primaries would be eligible and 5 secondaries which is a significant proportion of schools would benefit. Grant to amend proposal wording.</p> <p>Minimum per pupil funding levels set at £3,750 for primary and £5,000 for secondary for 2020-21 MFG – 1.84% for all schools, cost to formula of £146k which is the lowest it has ever been and is really positive news. Indicates that the NFF is ironing out any funding differences, caused by the MFG.</p> <p>Whilst the budget allocations have been shared, there are still many unknowns with regard to grant allocations for schools. These are significant sums; PPG, Year 7 catch up, FSM, Teachers pay grant – these are anticipated at the end of February. Concerningly, the School improvement monitoring & brokerage grant is transitional, and no 2020-21 allocation has been received to date. Some grants are at risk of ceasing or reduction.</p> <p>Additionally, the DfE have not yet shared the results of their Autumn consultation on the treatment of the DSG as a ringfenced grant nor, updated the 2020-21 NFF operational guidance around this change as indicated.</p>	GD

	<p>Whilst work is underway, there is still much to be done to change hearts and minds around our inclusion journey. A move towards outcomes focussed EHCP with shorter timeframes to measure progress against for both external providers and schools will benefit pupils.</p>	
7	<p>Central Schools Services Block</p> <p>Marie shared her report with the group. Overall the DfE allocation means an affordable central services function however we must factor in the DfE's intention to reduce historical spending over time.</p> <p>Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal to subsidise admission appeals with a £70k transfer from schools block into CSSB – this will mean appeals can be purchased at a flat fee of £300 for all schools (per appeal) • Proposal to add inflation to central teams – thus avoiding an in year overspend • Proposal to add the balance of historical allocation (£14k) to bolster safeguarding in schools • Transfer of overall surplus of £185k to HNB • Caveat – if the school improvement grant ceases / reduces significantly – we review budgets in year as we will have missed the opportunity to transfer from SB 	
11	<p><i>Date and Time of Next Meeting</i></p> <p>Next meeting – date set at: Friday 13th March 2020, 8.30am North Wilts (1st Floor, County Hall)</p>	MT