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	<i>Minutes from previous meeting</i> The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed.	
2	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	MT MT/GD
	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.	
3	Budget Monitoring for the period to 30th November 2019 MT shared her report	
	The pressures on the HNB continue during the planning and transformation around the SEN service and working with schools.	
	The forecast overspend for 19/20 is £7.314m.	
	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.	
	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</i> <i>investigated and it is due to actual hours from Autumn headcount data</i> <i>differing from the early years provider estimates supplied earlier in the</i> <i>financial year.</i>	MT
	The HNB forecast overspend is £6.494m – again, based on higher numbers of EHCPS and levels of support requested. This forecast will	

	continue to increase if requests continue to be received at the current rates. (12% growth in a rolling year.)	
	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 .	
	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.	
	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.	
	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.	
4	School Funding Settlement Report 2020/21	
	Grant shared his report with the group, outlining the DfE funding allocation for Wiltshire and increases received across all blocks.	
	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.	
	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.	GD
	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.	
	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.	
	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.	

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	The group were disappointed to be in this position and felt decision making was difficult with so many unknowns. GD to attempt to seek clarity from the DfE, MT to raise with Pauline Church and request that she raises with Michelle Donelan as an issue for Schools Forums.	GD MT
	Some good news, the support staff employers pension contribution will not increase for 2020-21 financial year.	
5	Schools Block Delegated Report 2020-21	
	Grant shared his report with the group, outlining the DfE funding allocation for Wiltshire and increases received.	
	De-delegated services – following an overwhelming consultation response to continue were approved in principle at the December 2019 meeting will form part of the decision making at the January meeting.	
	Army – only 600 pupils returned to Wiltshire rather than the 1500 the army estimated however, any capacity created should be filled over the next 3-5 years as the army will have BAU and will be sending more families back to Britain and will no doubt wish to fill the housing they have built in Wiltshire. 200 Stafford families are anticipated this year.	
	The formula is affordable without transfers out as you would anticipate – more modelling will be carried out over the following days to cost up the scenarios discussed.	GD/MT
6	High Needs Block Update 2020-21	
	Marie shared her report with the group, outlining the cost pressures accumulating on the HNB for 2020-21 and the funding gap created. Whilst the additional £4.441m is most welcome it does not reflect the level of demand from schools.	
	Marie will expand the table with the options Grant is modelling around potential levels of transfer from schools block. Although SF only wanted to transfer funds as a one off, it seems clear that the DfE have intention to change the legislation around the grant funding and are keen that deficit reserves do not exist indefinitely options do need to be explored.	
	The group feedback that more detail would be required to remind Schools Forum of the journey so far around the re-structure, recovery plans (a lift and shift of reports / presentations from the October and December meetings.) Helean to ask Matt & Louise to attend SF and update as she could not be there for the whole meeting.	НН
	There was much discussion around positive progress and the next steps such as exploring health's role to students with medical needs (physiotherapy, diabetes & speech & language.) Judith confirmed this was a grey area and health colleagues expressed they were paying for some children who had educational or social needs. It was greed there were other health contracts and funding in the system which should be	НН

	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.	
7	 Central Schools Services Block 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. Highlights 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	<i>Date and Time of Next Meeting</i> Next meeting – date set at: Friday 13 th March 2020, 8.30am North Wilts (1 st Floor, County Hall)	MT