

Schools Forum
School Funding and SEN Working Group
MS TEAMS MEETING

1st March 2021

Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, local authority (LA)), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), Neil Baker (Christchurch), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep), Catriona Williamson (Mere), Andy Bridewell (Ludgershall Castle), Lisa Percy (Hardenhuish), Helean Hughes (Director LA), Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND, LA), Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley) and Sam Churchill (Hilmarton)

Apologies: No apologies were received.

1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies MT welcomed Bea Seggari to the meeting, a member of Grant's team who has worked on the Schools Financing Scheme No apologies were received, <i>TEAMS meetings do allow school leaders to dip in and out to deal with matters arising at school, these are not minuted.</i> Outstanding action – to seek Special School representation on the group from a current SF member <i>Now actioned, Georgina Theobald-Kiely will be joining the working group for future meetings which is very welcome news.</i></p>	MT
2.	<p>Minutes from previous meeting The actions from the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 January 2021 were run through and the minutes had been accepted at the January Schools Forum meeting as an accurate and true record.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters Arising There were no matters arising.</p>	
4.	<p>Budget Monitoring for the period to 31st December 2020 (MT)</p> <p>MT shared her report with the group. The forecast overspend for 20/21 is £9.032m which is a small movement from the last report.</p> <p>Highlights: Early Years - No variance is forecast on 2, 3 & 4-year-old grant at this time due to January census and potential clawback.</p> <p>School Budgets – the underspend is largely driven by the growth fund and this offsets the DSG overspend position.</p> <p>The HNB forecast overspend is £11.634m – again, based on higher numbers of EHCPS and levels of support requested. This forecast includes an estimate of future growth based on historical trend.</p> <p>MT was confident around the accuracy of majority of forecasts with SEN AP being most likely to change due to the changing nature of learning opportunities.</p>	

	<p>The pressures on the HNB continue and the HNB working group will be prioritising demand management, savings projects, commissioning and spend controls.</p> <p>Of major concern remains 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 £19.843m.</p> <p>This overspend will continue to be cash flowed by the local authority as per the DfE guidance.</p>	
5	<p>HNB Recovery Group Update (HH)</p> <p>HH took the group through the action tracker and revised RAG rated timescales – post COVID</p> <p>The January meeting of the group was cancelled due to late DfE guidance around school closures. The group are meeting later this week to progress the plan.</p> <p>MT shared the f40 SEN report with the group and GD shared the data from the PowerPoint slides.</p> <p>The group discussed the data at length and the appropriateness of selecting comparators and examples of good practice.</p> <p>CM/MT to look at stat neighbours & SW comparators as the f40 group did not include all LAs.</p>	CM/MT
6	<p>DfE Consultation – HNB NFF Proposed Changes</p> <p>MT took the group through the DfE's 5 proposals, her initial thoughts and requested input from LA operational staff and school leaders.</p> <p>The group were concerned about proposals 1&2 and the negative impact on funding for Wiltshire. Especially as the majority of LAs would see a temporary uplift for 22-23.</p> <p>Views were welcomed and the draft document will be updated for sharing more widely with Schools Forum, colleagues and CLT, Councillors and MPS.</p> <p>LP suggested herself and NB take the draft and promote with a joint letter to school leaders through PHF and WASSH – encouraging completion of the consultation.</p> <p>Helean offered to take the updated draft to her MP meeting on Friday</p>	<p>MT</p> <p>MT</p> <p>HH</p>
7	<p>Schools Budget 21-22</p> <p>GD took the group through the report, highlighting areas of major change / interest.</p> <p>GD was able to submit Wiltshire's formula to the DfE earlier than the deadline which meant that maintained schools received their budget share certificates before the target date of 14th February. NB congratulated GD.</p> <p>Soft formula until 23-24 at least</p> <p>£10M real terms increase for schools, £5M HNB</p> <p>Pupils – interesting these are almost static for 21-22 compared to 20-21 – an overall increase of just 68, reflecting the low birth rate.</p>	

	<p>MFG – improved position with no schools capped in 20-21 or 21-22 and the value per school should drop over time Growth Fund – DfE methodology 19-20 MLSOA 21-22 is £1.814M Transfer to HNB – max of 0.5% £1.517M Top ups – remain at current levels – no reduction</p>	
8	<p>Schools Financing Scheme Update (GD & BS)</p> <p>The group welcomed the update which had been on hold in anticipation of the implementation of the hard formula. No consultation has been required as the changes are solely “DfE directed revisions” – Schools Forum will need to approve. The document now aligns to the latest DfE guidance (August 2020) – GD thanked BS for her hard work on the refresh. The scheme applies to all schools. It is proposed that the document now receives an annual update each October. CW welcomed the update as it was an outstanding requirement in her audit report. CW asked about credit cards in schools. GD confirmed that level of detail would be outlined in the more user friendly handbook which would be produced once the scheme was approved. NB raised a charge from Lloyds bank – HH asked that details were forwarded to her to look into.</p>	<p>GD NB HH</p>
9	<p>COVID & Other updates (verbal) GD</p> <p>GD updated the group on the latest funding from the DfE around COVID – a new education recovery package of £700M nationally – more info to follow, £302M into schools, average £6k primary & £22k secondary plus a national tutoring programme Exceptional costs – no update on current term Staff absences – Nov to Dec – claims process to be confirmed NB asked, will there be an audit of funding? GD responded unlikely however Ofsted may make enquiries Additionally, there is a FSM supplementary grant to pass additional funds to schools for rising numbers of FSM. F40 update – GD took the group through the f40 update. F40 taking more interest in EY than previously.</p>	
10	<p>Admissions Appeals – new charging arrangements</p> <p>Clara Davis, School Place commissioning lead joined the meeting. CD took the group through the admissions appeals paper which included a joint position statement co-produced with heads. The group welcomed the subsidised rates. CD was asked if schools could use alternative providers and confirmed this was the case and agreed to add this to the report for clarity together with a reminder about the statutory requirements and the importance of high quality reports if the appeal is to stand any chance of being refused. SC asked if the virtual appeals could continue? Clara said the DfE had to change legislation to allow virtual meetings so not a local decision MT suggested that the LA could raise with the DfE as this is preferred by parents and reduces costs and time.</p>	<p>CD CD</p>

	NB asked whether the guidance and link to rules could be added to the position statement. CD to action	CD
10	<p>AOB</p> <p>MT raised the DfE had updated the HNB Operational Guidance (Feb 2021) which was unusual for the time of year. A new appendix, Appendix 3, appears to provide clarity around where health and social care should contribute to costs. This will be examined in depth by the HNB recovery group.</p>	MT
11	<p><i>Date and Time of Next Meeting</i></p> <p>Next meeting – date provisionally set at: Thursday 27th May @ 8.30am This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p> <p>Next Schools Forum meeting Thursday 10th June 2021 @ 1.30pm. This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p>	