

Schools Forum
School Funding and SEN Working Group
5th October 2020
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), Phil Cook (Larkrise), Lisa Percy (Hardenhuish), Sam Churchill (Hilmarton), Helean Hughes (Director LA) Alison Enever, Head of Special School Transformation, Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND, LA), Lisa Pullin (Democratic Services)

Apologies: Gary Binstead (Childrens Commissioning LA) Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley)

1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies Marie welcomed Cate to the group. Cate started working for Wiltshire as Head of Inclusion & SEND on 1st September 2020.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes from previous meeting The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters Arising Lisa Pullin reminded the group that the Chair and Vice Chair would require re-electing for 20-21 at the October meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>Budget Monitoring for the period to 31st August 2020 (MT)</p> <p>MT shared her report with the group. The forecast overspend for 20/21 is £8.618m.</p> <p>Highlights: Early Years - the DfE's adjustment for 19-20 was a positive £0.539m. This reflects the overspend in 2019-20. In addition, the in-year adjustment was a positive £0.943M. MT described the updated guidance and payments for providers around COVID to support the local authority's sustainability duty. No variance is forecast on 2, 3 & 4-year-old grant at this time due to uncertainty around January payments and census data.</p> <p>School Budgets – the underspend on the growth fund offsets the DSG overspend position.</p> <p>The HNB forecast overspend is £11.003m – again, based on higher numbers of EHCPS and levels of support requested. This forecast includes an estimate of future growth based on historical trend. 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 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 £19.429m.</p> <p>This overspend will continue to be cash flowed by the local authority and has been identified on the Council's risk register.</p> <p>MT and GD had a positive meeting with Gemma Donnelly from the DfE last week around our DSG deficit issues. Gemma has kindly agreed to attend Schools Forum and speak to us about our deficit in comparison with that of others. We spoke at length about our findings and planned actions and Gemma confirmed she was reassured that we knew the cost drivers for Wiltshire. Gemma confirmed the focus for the DfE was for Schools Forum to set a balanced and achievable budget for each year moving forward and that the DfE hoped to assist with historical deficits but for those with the largest proportionate deficits and that was not Wiltshire at this time. Gemma had some suggestions around – using SEN2 data to set an inclusivity target / challenge – better marketing of our own provision – research around outcomes of ex ISS pupils in adulthood. Other than that, we were taking similar action to other local authorities which was reassuring to hear.</p> <p>MT to pass Gemma's details to LPu to invite to Schools Forum.</p>	MT
4.	<p>Update from High Needs Working Group & Individual Savings Plans (HH)</p> <p>HH took the group through the minutes of the last meeting. COVID had inevitably caused delay to some projects. The new academic year together with Cate taking up post mean workstreams can be prioritised and progress made against target.</p> <p>Notional SEN was discussed at length, the DfE funding factors do not necessarily correlate to SEN however, these are the funding mechanism and the LA confirmed the necessity to request funding details from schools prior to applying for additional HNB funding. The messaging to heads and governing bodies is on-going. GD looked at benchmarking for SEN notional funding – we are not an outlier - GD will review this for 21-22 financial year. NB pointed out it was not an individual funding per pupil purse but an overall pot to be used to support pupils with SEN support & EHCP needs. CM to ensure the process includes notional SEN funding request (GD to share list of notional SEN funding at school level with CM)</p> <p>NB asked about measuring against savings targets. MT confirmed the 10-year recovery plan was likely to be replaced by the DfE workbook however, if it was not sufficiently explicit in the workbook, it would continue to be used to aid planning. Difficult to measure success apart from numbers of EHCPS falling and forecast spend reducing.</p> <p>LP suggested that if the SoS was not minded to approve a disapplication regarding a transfer from SB to HNB then we would need to consider this in our planning to ensure non inclusive schools contribute to the cost of high needs pupils.</p> <p>GD and MT have been taking part in national and local research around DSG deficits which mirrors Gemma's evaluation of being 66th in the Country. MT/GD will be taking part in the F40 survey (received 5/10/20 during the meeting) and will circulate the results when these are published.</p>	GD CM GD

	<p>These will be useful to share with MPS / Lead Members / CLT / as well as Schools Forum.</p> <p>Discussion around HNB generally SC – supportive of marketing - parents are not always aware of our offer in mainstream SEND lead workers unable to recommend a school but what can they do? CM responded they could direct parents to Wiltshire’s graduated approach and provide a link to information (marketing.) LPe – Post 16 providers are requesting EHCPs for high functioning ASD pupils – recommended by paediatrician – CM raise with health colleagues? NB – paediatricians also requesting a full EP assessment when EP time is limited</p>	
5	<p>Special School Transformation Update (AE)</p> <p>AE updated the group on the System of Excellence in the North – the three special schools officially became one on 1st September the interim executive head Sean McKeown is now in post. Temporary name “North Wilts School.” The name for the new school is being consulted on this term, following a full tender process, the build contractor appointed was Wilmot Dixon and we are now at the co-design stage. The build is on track despite COVID.</p> <p>The Free School in the South – Reach South have been appointed as the provider, the site feasibility is underway, Alison is part of the project working group which is largely led by the DfE.</p> <p>AE has taken on board the DfE’s commentary around publicity and market positioning to parents on both projects</p>	
6	<p>Schools Revenue Funding 21-22 (GD)</p> <p>GD took us through his paper which is earlier than usual as the DfE published indicative allocations in July which has allowed earlier modelling. 3.4% uplift of real change plus a significant increase due to teacher pay and pensions grant transferring to base funding when the grant ceases in 21-22.</p> <p>Sparsity funding increases from £26k to £45k for Primary Same methodology for the growth fund with protection in place around reduction – this will be set post census AWPU uplifted to include TP & pension grant Vore funding factors increasing by 3% 21-22 will continue to be another “soft” year where local factors can be applied, and the only mandatory factors are the minimum per pupil amounts £4,180 and £5,415 GD initial modelling – the NFF will be affordable Mobility £571k freed up if we do not apply this factor again Sparsity £220k freed up if we do not apply the increase. GD explained that Gemma from the DfE had explained that there was to be a focus on supporting small schools and a consultation would follow later in the year.</p>	
7	<p>Split Site Funding (GD)</p> <p>GD took us through his report which explains split site funding. The group discussed increasing the amount of split site funding as a way of</p>	

	<p>supporting the small schools agenda in Wiltshire as a way of replacing in part – the lost lump sum if schools were to amalgamate over 2 sites. Lump sum increased to £110k and for 21-22 is set at £117k/ Wiltshire’s split site allocation has not been increased since the lump sum was ££85k. The group felt it was appropriate to review.</p> <p>LPe – parity and fairness – should we ask schools what their additional costs are and check whether they require the increase GD responded that the last split site school Greentrees calculated their additional costs at higher than the split site allowance. SC was supportive of supporting school schools. NB raised concerns around larger split site schools where synergies were made across many schools / sites of a MAT for example. GD to check guidance – see if there is scope to differentiate on NOR. Rather than an amount, NB suggested that a % was used which was then automatically uplifted in line with the lump sum although there were GD to model up $65/85 = 76\%$ of the lump sum funding</p>	<p>GD</p> <p>GD</p>
8	<p>Consultation Report – De- Del & Transfer between blocks (GD)</p> <p>GD took us through the proposed De-delegation survey questions (for maintained schools only)</p> <p>CW raised the level of service being received by schools from the BST and EMTAS teams, there are currently teacher vacancies and schools are struggling to receive support through the gateway referral process. MT explained from a financial perspective, she kept any variances to the DSG rather than the De-Del in order to protect schools from overspends which, as the local authority only budgets at 95% of salary budget – is a constant risk of a fully staffed team. CM promised to look into the service and have an offline conversation with CW around her particular concerns</p> <p>NB referred to an SLA – CM/MT to search for SLA which mentioned team teach and CPD (could be in need of a refresh as needs change over time)</p> <p>GD took us through the transfer between blocks survey questions (as previous years)</p> <p>NB raised adding per pupil impact of transfer would be useful GD to add MT suggested lowering the number of options as Gemma had indicated the SoS would be unwilling to approve a disapplication. GD to reduce</p>	<p>CM</p> <p>CM/MT</p> <p>GD</p> <p>GD</p>
9	<p>Schools Revenue Balances 19-20 (GD)</p> <p>GD took us through the report and appendices. Overall the surplus balances have decreased and the deficit balances primary – increased 😊 secondary decreased 😊 and special decreased 😊</p> <p>GD explained that balances above DfE tolerance levels could trigger an investigation by the DfE. SC queried how, with the LA having such limited influence over schools, how they could be judged. GD responded unlikely to happen as the DfE were likely to have other priorities and we do know the reasons for example, one of our small primary schools with a high surplus had 3 legacies left when villagers passed away. Abbeyfield has a long-term recovery plan and the causal factors are linked to PFI – Emma Brown now employed as a PFI expert who is helping to ensure costs are scrutinised. There is a whole LA approach to supporting their recovery plan. We have met with the new HT and governing body to agree a way forward and model of support and monitoring.</p>	

10	<p>Verbal Update – COVID Costs & Funding for Schools (GD)</p> <p>GD shared slides on the funding for schools re: COVID costs. Schools who had claimed for premises, FSM and cleaning had been reimbursed, whilst schools who had submitted claims for other costs were awaiting DfE approval.</p> <p>COVID Catch up Grant £1Bn nationally is allocated per pupil and payments are being made termly. The DfE are speaking to the treasury around additional COVID costs for schools. NB said the cost of COVID for him was 3 x maternity cases and 2 x self isolating staff. SC had said she was struggling to recruit to a cleaning post. AB said costs were manageable within the savings from closure however, MDSAs were being redeployed to cleaning as teachers and TAS were covering lunchtime duties to reduce the number of people in the bubbles.</p>	
11	<p>F40 Letter</p> <p>GD shared the letter from the F40 with the group re: a campaign for financial support for schools (attached to minutes)</p>	
12	<p>AOB</p> <p>There was no AOB as CW had raised the BST query under de-delegated discussion</p>	
11	<p><i>Date and Time of Next Meeting</i></p> <p>Next meeting – date set at: Monday 30th November 2020 @ 8.30am This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p> <p>Next Schools Forum meeting Thursday 10th December 2020 @ 1.30pm. This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p>	