

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 15 January 2020 at the Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present:

A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
A. McIntyre, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
R. Sprigings, Financial Management, HBC
K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery Representative
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
A. Sheppard, VA Schools Representative
J. McConville, Secondary Academy Representative
H. Austin, Community Special Schools Representative
L. Roberts, Small Primary Representative
E. Hall, All Through Schools Representative (Sub)

Action

SCF18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Thalia Bell, Kathryn Albiston, Ian Critchley, Jackie Coughlan and Simon Corner.

SCF19 MINUTES

The minutes from the meetings held on 16 October 2019 and 11 December 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF20 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FORECAST OUTTURN 2019/20

The Forum received a report which gave the DSG forecast outturn for 2019-20 (as at 09.12.19) for the four schools blocks: Schools Block, Central School Services Block (CSSB), Early Years Block and High Needs Block. Members were provided with a detailed breakdown for each which was appended to the report.

Officers advised that the CSSB overspend was likely to be offset by the underspends as described in paragraph 3.2. In response to a query, suspension costs were explained – only in exceptional circumstances would these

be reimbursed by the Authority as schools were expected to include this in their own insurance policies.

It was noted that the overspends in Early Years Block and High Needs Block were likely to change, as outlined in the report. Overall Members noted that the forecast outturn for 2019-20 at the present time was £374,027 over budget.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

SCF21 SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FOR 2020/21

The Forum received a report which presented the Schools Block Funding for 2020-21. It was reported that the Dedicated Schools Grant settlement was announced on 19 December as a total of £92,581,025 for 2020-21, an increase of £5,649,868 on the previous year.

Officers tabled the indicative allocations to schools and the proposed de-delegation budgets for 2020-21, as these were not available at the time of writing the report.

The Forum was asked to agree the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) at this meeting and maintained schools representatives were asked to decide which de-delegated budgets they wished to fund for 2020-21. The Forum agreed that the MFG could be set at 1.84% and maintained representatives agreed to the de-delegations for 2020-21, as proposed.

It was noted that the indicative Schools Block Budgets for 2020-21 would be emailed to all schools following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the report;
- 2) agrees that the Minimum Funding Guarantee be set at 1.84% to the Schools Block funding formula; and
- 3) agrees to fund the following de-delegated budgets in 2020-21: Schools Contingency, Staff Responsibility, FSM Eligibility, Financial Management, Capital Works, Health and Safety and Dismissals.

Financial
Management,
HBC

SCF22 HIGH NEEDS COMMISSIONING TEAM PRESENTATION

The Forum received a presentation from Claire Gurney, from the newly implemented High Needs

Commissioning Team, who provided an overview of the progress and work of the team to date.

Members were advised that the aim of the Commissioning Team was to improve educational, health and emotional wellbeing outcomes for children with a Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND) in Halton.

Information was provided on: the purpose of the Team, which now had a full complement of staff; SEND placements; residential and fostering placements; education placements; the commissioning cycle; monitoring processes of individual schools and the challenges faced overall. The ongoing and future plans were also outlined.

The Forum highlighted and discussed the challenges faced by schools with regards to the perceptions and expectations of parents with a child with SEND.

It was commented that it was crucial to improve the quantity, quality and type of provision on offer within the Borough, so that out of Borough placements could be brought back into the Borough and future new placements could remain in the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and comments made be noted.

SCF23 INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HIGH NEEDS

The Forum received a progress report on the independent review of high needs provision in Halton.

This was further to the report submitted to the October meeting of the Forum on the progress each of the three workstreams had made. Previously December 2019 had been set as a target for the completion of each of the three workstreams. However, given a number of local developments, the scale and complexity of the task and the need to ensure participation by all stakeholders in the proposed redesign and the sustainability of any future changes, the date for completion had been reviewed and the revised indicative target date was now March 2020.

It was noted that the findings would then be reported to the Senior Management Team of the Council for consideration after which a report would then be produced for: the Executive Board of the Council; the Health and Wellbeing Board; and the SEND Strategic Board. If the

recommendations in the report were agreed, formal consultation on the revised arrangements would then be undertaken.

It was reported that there had been a number of issues that had emerged as part of the review and redesign which Schools Forum may wish to consider and take a view on, so that changes could be made for the 2020-21 financial year. In summary these were:

- a) the proposal that funding of the Psychology Service be transferred to the High Needs budget and cease to be a traded service;
- b) the proposal for full funding to all schools (which would see a significant increase for all) with no transfer to High Needs; and
- c) the proposal for a different way of funding the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

The report provided details of these and Forum Members discussed them in detail, with Officers providing responses to queries made.

A decision was requested regarding the funding of the Educational Psychology Service at this meeting; the Forum agreed that the current traded element of the service could be funded through the High Needs budget so that all schools could access support. Schools would also be provided with the opportunity to buy additional Educational Psychology support and should sufficient requests be received, additional staff would need to be employed.

With regards to the PRU proposal, the Forum was advised that this would be presented at the Halton Association of Secondary Headteachers (HASH) meeting in February and the outcome of this would be reported to the February meeting of the Schools Forum. The Forum was advised that there would be no transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2020/2021. A letter would be sent to all schools informing them of the reason for this change and strongly encouraging them to invest in increasing support for children and young people with SEND.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the report;

Operational
Director -
Education,
Inclusion and

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">2) supports the progress of the revision and redesign of High Needs;3) agrees to the funding of the Educational Psychology Service; and4) requests a further report be submitted at the next Schools Forum meeting. | Provision |
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Meeting ended at 6.00 p.m.