

REPORT TO: Schools Forum

DATE: 14th October 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director - Finance

SUBJECT: Update from NW LMS meeting

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To report to the Schools Forum key issues discussed at the recent regional meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 The report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 NW LMS Group

The NW LMS group is made up of representatives from each local authority in the North West region, specifically those dealing with school funding/Dedicated Schools Grant. At some meetings we have representatives from the Department for Education and/or the Education Skills Funding Agency.

3.2 Virtual meeting held on 4th August 2020

- The bulk of the discussion was regarding the funding for 2021-22 which has been covered in the separate Schools Forum report.
- The High Needs national review is ongoing and a Green Paper is expected in Autumn 2020.
- The Teachers Pay & Pension Grants for centrally employed teachers are to be added into the CSSB in the December 2020 final allocations. However, at the DfE workgroups held on 16th September we were told that the Basic per pupil element of funding in the High Needs Block would be increased to cover these grants.
- A decision is still to be announced regarding the Maintained Nursery School transitional protection funding.
- The Primary PE & Sports Grant will continue in 2021-22 as current.
- The Pupil Premium Grant will carry on into next year as it is.
- No national conference will be held this year.
- The DfE are preparing a template for local authorities to complete where there is a deficit balance or where their DSG surplus has decreased significantly. This will be issued shortly.

3.3 DfE virtual meetings held on 16th September 2020

A number of virtual meetings have been set up during September and October, covering subjects that would normally have been individual seminars at the national conference.

Revenue Funding Policy & NFF in 2021-22

- The Schools Block NFF is the same overall structure as for 2020-21 but some factors have been increased by 3% and rounded to the nearest £5.
- IDACI is now based on ranks instead of scores. The average scores have decreased with the change to the 2019 index which would have seen a decrease in the proportion of pupils attracting funding. Ranks are not affected by this so by changing to IDACI ranks funding has been stabilised and future updates to the index will be easier to integrate into the NFF.
- A consultation is to be released shortly regarding the change to the Hard NFF for 2024-25. There is uncertainty around the Notional SEN and how that will fit with the Hard NFF.
- There is a plan to roll the Teachers Pay and Pension Grants into the Early Years Block for Maintained Nursery Schools. More details on this will be announced at a later date.
- There will be a condition of grant to ensure LAs allocate the Teachers Pay and Pension Grants within the High Needs Block at the equivalent funding level of this year, unless a provision is closed or place numbers reduce. If place numbers increase then the TPG/TPECG is to be increased accordingly.
- The DfE is starting to plan the SEN review, including what needs to be consulted on. They are focussing on changes for 2022-23, including the SEND review conclusions but acknowledge there may be a need for changes beyond 2022-23.
- For Early Years, the normal funding approach for Spring term 2021 is under review.

Covid-19 funding update

- Where schools submitted claims in July under the Exceptional Schools Fund with all amounts for either Free School Meal, premises or cleaning additional costs, these were paid at the end of August. Where schools submitted claims including some costs in the "Other" category, these are still being scrutinised and there is no date yet of when/if these will be paid.
- Schools who did not make a claim in July, or who forgot some items, will be able to submit a claim at some point during the autumn term but it will only be for additional costs between March and July. Additional costs after July will not be funded.
- The ESFA will be checking at a later point regarding school in-year surpluses. There are no plans to cover costs relating to staff who are having to self-isolate. The ESFA acknowledge the

situation has changed with local lockdowns so they are reviewing this but no change has been agreed as yet.

- The Covid-19 Catch-Up Premium allocations for the academic year have been released, as has the autumn term payment. The National Tutoring grant will be announced at some point this term.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Changes to and the introduction of school-related grants tend to be notified via the NW LMS slightly ahead of the DfE notifications. We will continue to share relevant information with schools as soon as possible.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children & Young People in Halton

It is essential that schools and education support services receive sufficient funding to allow them to support all children and young people.

5.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None.

5.3 A Healthy Halton

None.

5.4 A Safer Halton

None.

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 There is a clear risk that schools will not be able to recover all of the additional costs/loss of income incurred due to Covid-19 which will increase financial pressures.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings.