

SCHOOLS FORUM

THURSDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Martin Tinsley, Michael Wallace, Joolz Scarlett, Sarah Cottle, Hugh Boulter

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Kevin McDaniel, Tracey Anne Nevitt and James Norris

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Chris Tomes.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 be approved.

BUDGET MONITORING AND FORECAST NOVEMBER

James Norris, Head of Finance (RBWM), explained the purpose of the report was to provide the Schools Forum with the projected financial position for 2019/20 with associated schedule of Risks & Opportunities; the projected reserve balance as at 31 March 2020 and to provide an understanding of the financial pressures which are currently being faced.

The Chairman stated the financial position was £56k better off compared with the last month, Sarah Cottle commented that there was an early years underspend, the money was there but it was not getting to the children. Terry Anne Nevitt responded the underspend related to last year and it could not be given out to providers so, they were looking at distributing the money under deprivation as the formula for distribution was set on the hourly rate, but they were trying to get more money out via the supplementary rate; the underspend would go into reserves to clear any deficit. Terry Anne Nevitt added the formula was higher to get more money back to providers. Kevin McDaniel, Director of Children's Services stated many families did not take up the full 15 or 30 hours of free childcare so providers were running about 78% of capacity, there was not a waiting list of children waiting for early years education either. Hugh Boulter said it would be a good idea to get the level of service. James Norris responded he would get a view of that for the January meeting. The Director of Children's Services said his team were looking at the whole structure of High Needs spend and how the Borough supported children at risk of exclusion in primary schools. James Norris added there was a consultation on Early Years Funding in December 2019 so it was important for Members to have their say.

SCHOOL FUNDING 2020/21 CONSULTATION REVIEW

James Norris, Head of Finance (RBWM), explained that the purpose of the report was to provide the Schools Forum with a summary and brief analysis of the results of the consultation; provide details from the consultation to enable a decision on which budget model should be implemented; provide an update on the Growth Fund allocation 2020/21; and to provide an introduction to the consultation in respect of the Early Years Block Funding 2020/21. The Chairman stated it was disappointing that only 19 responses to the consultation had been received out of more than 60 schools.

The Head of Finance (RBWM) stated at the Schools Forum in September 2019, it had been agreed that a consultation would be undertaken on the principles relating to a number of formula factors impacting on the Schools Budget Allocation, funding formula for 2020/21 and migration towards the National Funding Formula (NFF). Three models were put forward in the consultation and the majority of responses favoured Model 3 (six responses received for that Model). There had been a mixed response in the treatment of headroom being used to target the Free School Meals factor with 58% in support, 21% opposed and 21% unsure.

Model 1 was the preferred model of 10% of primary and 44% of secondary schools, representing 26% of the total responses. Model 2 was the preferred model of 30% of primary and 11% of secondary schools, representing 21% of the total responses. Model 3 was the overall preferred model receiving support from 50% of primary schools and 33% of secondary schools, representing 42% of the total responses. The formula for responses was one vote per school as opposed to per pupils at the school. The Chairman stated the consultation backed up what the Forum believed.

The Head of Finance (RBWM) explained appendix A listed the breakdown of consultation responses and that they were waiting on what the Growth Funding will be for 2020/21. The Early Years National Funding Formula will be a short consultation and that will be communicated as quickly as possible. Tracy Anne Nevitt stated she was waiting on operational guidance to tell her team what they can and cannot do and then when they have received that guidance, there will then be a very brief consultation sent out in January 2020.

Mike Wallace stated that only 31% of schools replied to the consultation on funding and asked if there was any way of going back to schools that did not report to help them respond, perhaps they did not understand the consultation or, they were part of a cluster group so assumed only one response was required per cluster; it could have affected the results. The Director of Children's Services stated he was certainly willing to talk to all that needed any help to complete the consultation. The Schools Forum was a fully representative Forum and he asked if all the Members could talk to their partner schools to encourage them to respond too. The Chairman stated they needed to get the message out that the Schools Forum was their voice and that schools needed to use it. If they want their voices heard, they should respond to the consultation.

The meeting, which began at 2.00 pm, finished at 2.30 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....